

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2024 | ISSUE #1

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the [RITHMS](#) Project community! We are pleased to introduce the first issue of our Newsletter, targeted to all those involved or interested in tackling the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

With funding from the [European Union's Horizon Europe Work Program](#), the three-year Project RITHMS (Research, Intelligence, and Technology for Heritage Market Security) aims to build and validate a prototype intelligence IT resource for investigating illicit trafficking in cultural goods.

RITHMS will develop, test, and roll out a digital solution based on Social Network Analysis and Artificial Intelligence as well as practical operational procedures, in compliance with ethical and legislative data-protection standards, to make the Art Market and civil society more secure.

RITHMS is being delivered by a multi-disciplinary consortium of 19 partners representing 11 countries. Our project outputs will be primarily validated by European Law Enforcement Agencies.

In the first year and a half of the project, RITHMS focused on laying the groundwork for our innovative platform. This included comprehensive



background research, stakeholder engagement, and assessing the initial legal, security, and technical requirements for the development of the RITHMS digital platform.

Currently, in the middle of the second phase, the Consortium's activity is dedicated to constructing the core of our innovative technological system and expanding the community of stakeholders and testers.

The final and crucial phase will involve the actual deployment of the platform and its testing in real-world scenarios to ensure the practical effectiveness and usability of our solution.

We are excited to have embarked on this journey and invite you to join us in our efforts to combat the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Warm regards,
Arianna Traviglia

[Center for Cultural Heritage Technology -
Istituto Italiano Tecnologia](#)

RITHMS Project Coordinator



RITHMS conference
in A Coruña

Sister projects
in focus

[PERIVALLON](#)

WHAT IS RITHMS

RITHMS project's main endeavour is to develop a ground-breaking digital tool to tackle the illicit trade of cultural goods. The RITHMS platform is designed to be an innovative, interoperable, and multifunctional system capable of identifying, evaluating, and analysing the relations between criminal and non-criminal actors. By highlighting the networks involved in the illicit trade of cultural property and their potential evolution, the platform will enhance the reach and accuracy of the information available to Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs).

At its core, the RITHMS platform is based on Social Network Analysis (SNA), which is a method of mapping and analysing social connections between entities, by network and graph theory. SNA methodology will help understand how

actors (both individuals and groups) are connected and how cultural objects flow through these connections.

Thanks to a combination of research, technological development, and training programs providing LEAs with the knowledge and skills required to operate the platform, the RITHMS project aims to define a global strategy to effectively counter the cultural and financial challenges posed by the trafficking of looted and stolen cultural goods. By doing so, the project intends to ensure a tangible positive impact on European citizens and society.



THE OBJECTIVES

Understand the criminal phenomenon of cultural heritage trafficking

Promote cross-sectoral research bringing together all relevant fields (art market, criminology, legal studies, forensic science, etc.) to broaden the understanding of the criminal phenomenon against cultural property and grasp its connections with other kinds of organised crime.

Provide Law Enforcement Agencies with new technological tools

RITHMS will provide an operational, technological tool to enhance the investigative capabilities of Law Enforcement Agencies: a digital platform based on SNA methodology, developed and validated according to the users' needs and requirements.

Operationalise the collected knowledge and the developed technologies

Trigger all the necessary steps to make RITHMS SNA Platform effective, ensure its implementation, longevity, and exploitation after the Project's end, and foster the validity of RITHMS intelligence results as evidence in court.

Promote cooperation to tackle illicit trafficking in cultural goods

Foster collaboration between the different actors involved in countering this type of crime. Given its organised and mobile nature, addressing the phenomenon from different angles and complementary fronts is necessary to tackle it efficiently.

RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

RITHMS Progress: the Operative Internal Workshops

RITHMS Kick-Off Meeting and RITHMS First Public Conference took place in Venice, in the wonderful halls of the Ateneo Veneto on October 12-14, 2022.

After that, RITHMS Partners have been meeting up for several operative workshops, each pivotal in advancing the diverse lines of development of the project.

Munich Meeting - Overall Requirements

The first workshop took place in Munich and laid the groundwork by discussing the overarching requirements of the project. Hosted at the Bayern School of Police, this gathering set the stage for subsequent discussions on legal, security, and technical aspects.

Sofia Meeting - Technical Requirements

In Sofia, the focus shifted to technical requirements, with partners convening to delve into the intricacies of the platform development. The European Software Institute - Center Eastern Europe (ESI CEE) hosted the fruitful and multifaceted discussion for defining parameters for data management, access systems, and use case structures.

Venice Meeting - Organized Crime

The Venice meeting delved into the nexus between organized crime and cultural heritage. Held by the Coordinator, at the Centre for Cultural Heritage Technology of IIT, discussions centered on understanding the implications of criminal activities on cultural treasures.

Second Sofia Meeting - Technical Development

Another session in Sofia honed in on technical development, refining the architecture and strategies for the RITHMS digital platform's advancement. Gathered at Sofia Tech Park, the partners collaborated in laying the foundations for integrating data collected from different sources and their processing through the platform.

Antibes Meeting - Exploitation Strategy

The Antibes meeting was dedicated to devising the next steps of the exploitation strategy, crucial for maximizing the impact of RITHMS. Participants strategized on leveraging project outcomes to combat illicit trafficking effectively.

Each workshop has been instrumental in fostering collaboration, sharing practices and hands-on knowledge, and charting the course forward in the project's advancement.





tural Heritage and the Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia - Centre for Cultural Heritage Technology, both members of the RITHMS Consortium.



⇒ RITHMS News

⇒ RITHMS Results

RITHMS co-participated in the exhibition "Arte Ritrovata. Ritorni in Laguna"

The exhibition was hosted from December 19, 2023, to February 25, 2024, at the Museum of Palazzo Grimani, Venice (Italy).

It was organized by the Segretariato Regionale per il Veneto of the Italian Ministry of Culture together with the Direzione Regionale Musei Veneto, in partnership with the Soprintendenza Archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio per il Comune di Venezia e Laguna, and in collaboration with the Arma dei Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cul-

The exhibition offered an opportunity to explore various episodes related to the recovery and restitution of cultural heritage, highlighting the commendable collaboration between the Carabinieri TPC and the various bodies of the Italian Ministry of Culture operating in the metropolitan area of Venice. The showcase illustrated various types of offenses – from forgery to illicit export, clandestine excavations to fraud – emphasizing the work of recovery, restitution, and protection carried out by the Carabinieri TPC Venice Unit.

It also represented a chance to understand the protective procedures implemented by the Italian Ministry of Culture in synergy with the Carabinieri TPC Venice Unit, leading up to the enhancement of the recovered assets. The exhibition displayed archaeological artifacts from various eras and origins, as well as modern paintings. Original pieces were accompanied by a series of forgeries, presented in a setup that encouraged visitors to engage in comparison and curious scrutiny, inviting them to observe the artworks while empathizing with the professional figures who facilitated their recovery.

RITHMS at CULTNET Annual Meeting

In October 2023, RITHMS project had the great opportunity for attending as guest **CULTNET** meeting in Madrid. An Informal Network of Law Enforcement Authorities and Experts Competent in the field of cultural goods, CULTNET was hosted during, hosted during the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, brought together industry experts and institutions devoted to preserving our cultural heritage. Notable members of **CULTNET** include the European Commission, Europol, and INTERPOL.



The primary focus of this year's meeting was addressing the challenges of crimes against cultural heritage in Spain, with a special emphasis on fostering collaboration among various institutions engaged in this important endeavor. A significant spotlight was also placed on the protection of cultural heritage in conflict zones, particularly focusing on the cultural heritage of Ukraine.

Law enforcement agencies from across Europe gathered to share their experiences in combating the illicit trafficking of cultural treasures and art-related crimes. Three key RITHMS partners took center stage:

The Brigade of Cultural Heritage of the Spanish National Police, chair and organizer of this year's CULTNET meeting, shed light on the "Leona" operation, revealing the case of clandestine excavations and the illicit sale of Iberian artifacts.

The Carabinieri of the Italian Cultural Heritage Protection Unit showcased the "Artemis" operation.

The Dutch Police led the discussion on the future development of the CULTNET network.

RITHMS Coordinator, the Centre for Cultural Heritage Technology (Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia) and, presented the project's goals and current activities, highlighting how RITHMS can evolve into a vital tool for law enforcement agencies in the ongoing fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

RITHMS was also pleased to continue the fruitful discussion in Bruxelles, at the CULTNET meeting, organized by the Belgian Federal Police last March.

RITHMS at the International Conference on the Nicosia Convention - Riga, Latvia

At the International Conference on the Nicosia Convention in Riga, organised by the Council of Europe, Dr Arianna Traviglia (CCHT-IIT), RITHMS Project's Coordinator, delivered an inspiring speech on the power of technology in safeguarding cultural heritage and combating looting and illicit trafficking.



Sharing the stage with RITHMS' Coordinator, Mr Maurizio Pellegrini and Ms Daniela Rizzo, former officers of the Italian Ministry of Culture and renowned experts in judicial cases addressing looting activities at archaeological sites.

As members of the Art Crime Project Association, RITHMS Consortium's Affiliated Entity, they are also involved in the project.

Furthermore, the conference provided a valuable opportunity to meet Ms Monica Redondo Alvarez and Dr Oscar Alarcon Jimenez, Programme Managers of the Nicosia Convention and esteemed Advisory Board Members of RITHMS project.

UPCOMING EVENT

Trafficking in Cultural Property: a Criminological Perspective

On April 30, the RITHMS Consortium is organizing the international conference "Trafficking in Cultural Property: a Criminological Perspective", that aims at providing participants with an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon.

The conference will assess the state of the art and the gaps in the common understanding of the problem to develop adequate measures to improve EU policy and law enforcement practices for the protection of cultural heritage.



⇒ [The program and more information here](#)

SISTER PROJECT IN FOCUS

PERIVALLON: ONE OF OUR SISTER PROJECTS

Among its communication and dissemination activities, RITHMS project is also carefully developing a network that integrates various projects with shared objectives, especially supporting Law Enforcement Agencies in combating different types of illicit trafficking. PERIVALLON project is one of them

PERIVALLON Project aims to provide an improved and comprehensive intelligence picture of organised environmental crime and develop effective and efficient tools and solutions for detecting and preventing such types of criminal activities and for assessing their environmental impact based on geospatial intelligence, remote sensing, scanning, online monitoring, analysis, correlation, risk assessment, and predictive analytics technologies, by leveraging the latest advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the fields of computer vision and multimodal analytics. As a result, enhanced investigation processes and methodologies will be derived through the capabilities provided by the developed tools and solutions, and the insights obtained through the proposed Environmental Crime Observatory.

PERIVALLON is on [LinkedIn](#) and [X/Twitter](#) and its project objectives include:



- Provide a rich suite of advanced AI-based geospatial intelligence and remote sensing solutions to improve the detection and investigation capabilities of European Police, Border Guard, National, and Regional Authorities to tackle organised environmental crime in a more efficient and effective way.
- Develop improved AI-based extraction, analysis, and correlation technologies to identify illegal environmental crime activities by detecting irregularities in (online) data generated across the processing, shipment, and trafficking ecosystem for waste management and refrigerant trading.
- Develop a trustworthy, transparent, and easy-to-use environmental crime monitoring platform that collects court-proof crime evidence and provides decision support by fusing heterogeneous data for identifying patterns, assessing the likelihood of criminal activities, and forecasting trends.

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