



**International
Law
of Culture
Interest
Group**



Call for Papers

The International Law of Culture at a Crossroads: Past Developments and Future Directions

**ESIL Annual Conference 2026 – Málaga, Spain
Pre-Conference Workshop of the International Law of Culture Interest Group**

3 September 09:00-12:00

Workshop Theme

Since the Second World War, the international law of culture has undergone significant normative and institutional development. A growing body of international instruments has emerged to regulate the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflict, the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, the promotion of cultural diversity, and the protection of cultural rights, amongst others. As a result, culture has increasingly been recognised as a matter of international legal concern, embedded within a complex landscape of global, regional, and domestic legal regimes.

At the same time, contemporary challenges have cast doubt on the coherence and effectiveness of existing legal frameworks. The large-scale destruction of cultural heritage during armed conflicts, renewed debates surrounding restitution, return and reparations, the accelerating impacts of climate change, rapid digital and technological transformation, and the increasing politicisation of culture have all placed considerable strain on existing legal frameworks. These developments suggest that the international law of culture may be at a crossroads, calling for renewed critical reflection on its past trajectories and future directions.

These concerns resonate with broader debates on crisis, fragmentation, and transformation within public international more generally. The international law of culture is increasingly entangled with neighbouring legal regimes, including humanitarian law, human rights law, environmental law, economic law, and criminal law. Such interactions may give rise to tensions and conflicts, but they may also provide opportunities for productive rethinking.

Against this backdrop, this workshop invites participants to engage critically with the evolution of the international law of culture and to explore its capacity to respond to emerging and future challenges. It seeks to provide a forum for discussion on whether existing legal instruments remain fit for purpose, how they may be reinterpreted or reformed, and how the field might develop in the years ahead.

The present call for papers explicitly adopts a broad conceptualisation of the ‘international law of culture’. Contributions may address cultural heritage law narrowly conceived, but are equally encouraged to engage with wider questions concerning culture, cultural governance, and cultural rights across different legal and institutional contexts.

The convenors welcome contributions from scholars and practitioners that explore the above themes, while also encouraging proposals addressing related topics. Submissions from early-career scholars are particularly encouraged, as are proposals adopting an inter- or multidisciplinary approach.

Format

The workshop will take place in person at the Universidad de Málaga on 3 September 2026. The convenors strongly encourage in-person participation in order to facilitate interactions among participants. However, in the interests of equity and accessibility, the convenors will also accept applications from those unable to attend in person, in which case participants will be able to present their papers online. Unfortunately, due to technical constraints, it is not possible to provide for full hybrid participation.

Members are reminded that a limited number of travel grants and carers' grants are available in order to encourage and facilitate attendance at ESIL events (see below).

Submission of Proposals

Abstracts of no more than 500 words (in English) must be submitted to the IG convenors at: ESILIGCulture@gmail.com by **10 April 2026**.

Your submission should include:

- The author's name, affiliation, and email address;
- The author's CV, including a list of relevant publications;
- Whether the author is an ESIL member;
- To the extent the author(s) may wish to disclose it, any information that responds to the [ESIL Statement of Principles on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion](#);
- Please indicate whether you plan to attend the workshop in person in Málaga or if you would like to be considered for an online presentation;
- Please indicate whether the abstract should be considered for the ESIL Early-Career Scholar Prize, and, if so, the relevant information about eligibility. Upon acceptance of the abstract for presentation at the Interest Group and confirmation that they are eligible for the Prize, authors must submit a paper of between 8,000 and 12,000 words (including footnotes) to the ESIL Secretariat by 1 July for consideration by the jury.

Authors of successful abstracts will be notified by 24 April 2026 at the latest.

Contact

For enquiries, please contact the convenors at ESILIGCulture@gmail.com.

The International Law of Culture Interest Group is convened by Andrzej Jakubowski, Giovanni Carlo Bruno, Lucas Lixinski and Sophie Starrenburg.

The Interest Group is unable to provide funding for travel and accommodation. Selected speakers will be expected to bear the costs of their own travel and accommodation. Some [ESIL Travel Grants](#) and [ESIL Carers' Grants](#) will be available to offer partial financial support to speakers who have exhausted other potential sources of funding.

Please visit the [ESIL Annual Conference website](#) for all relevant information about the event.

All participants, including speakers and chairs, at ESIL Interest Group workshops are required to register and are warmly invited to attend the whole Annual Conference. Detailed information will follow on the registration options including information on preferential fees for ESIL Members and the option to register to attend the pre-ESIL Annual Conference workshops only.

Selected speakers should indicate their interest in being considered for the ESIL Early-Career Scholar Prize, if they meet the [eligibility conditions](#) as stated on the ESIL website. **The [ESIL Secretariat](#) must be informed of all selected speakers who wish to be considered for the Prize before 30 April.**