

## **COVID 19 and Archaeological Heritage**

### **Report**

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Many thanks to those who took part in our survey :

- Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands
- Historic England, UK
- Flanders Heritage Agency
- National Institute of Cultural Heritage (Poland)
- National Heritage Institute, Czech Republic
- Department for Cultural Heritage, Sites and Monuments (Agency for Culture and Palaces-Denmark)
- National Archaeological Institute with Museum, Bulgaria - Sofia
- State Service for archaeological heritage, The Netherlands
- Section d'archéologie et paléontologie, Office de la culture, République et Canton du Jura, Suisse (Switzerland)
- Israel Antiquities Authority
- STARQ – Sindicato dos trabalhadores em arqueologia (Portuguese Union of Archaeology Workers), Portugal;
- prof. Mehmet Özdoğan, retired member of the Istanbul University Prehistory Department, Turkey

And 6 more who haven't identified themselves.

### **Main conclusions:**

**The biggest problems that archaeological organisations across Europe have encountered since the start of the Coronavirus COVID 19 pandemic were the following:**

- Health and safety issues, including illness of employees as a direct result of COVID 19 – both developing COVID and suffering from mental health issues, such as stress, isolation and solitude when working from home for an extended period of time – according to more than 70 % of the respondents;
- Additional costs e.g. investment in IT/home working – 50 % of the respondents

- Loss or postponement of work, Postponement/cancellation of planned income-generating events, Inability to continue working – 33.33 %
- Inability to keep in contact with partners / clients / beneficiaries – 27.78 %
- Have had to furlough staff, Delayed payment by debtors, Have had to terminate the contracts of members of staff – 11.11 %

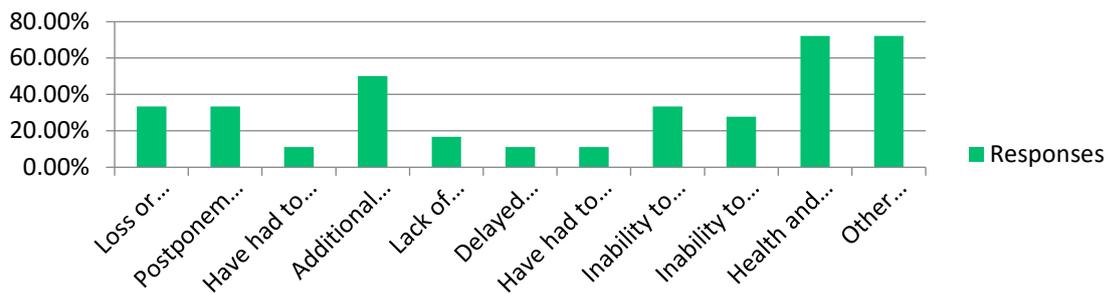
More than 72 % of the respondents listed other issues as well, such as:

- Disruption to working process when working at home (including difficulty to concentrate due to the presence of household members, especially children (need for child care), difficulty to keep employees motivated and involved. (The Netherlands);
- Increased workload, especially in terms of volume of emails received, due to focusing on desk-based work when field work was suspended or limited (The Netherlands)
- Universities, labs and research centres closures, resulting in delays to the implementation of projects. (Turkey)
- Lack of flexibility demonstrated by European institutions, regarding deadlines for completing projects and project phases, causing stress and increased workflow. (Turkey)
- Limitations of interactions with colleagues, clients and partners, as a result of restrictions for travel and social distancing requirements;
- Cancellation of non-income generating events, which were still important for networking and knowledge exchange – i.e. decrease in non-monetary value of such events (Poland)

A positive issue was also identified, i.e.

- Change in the way meetings (and lectures) are conducted, both locally and internationally, to online services (Zoom, etc) , which has changed work patterns, reducing unnecessary travel. There is every reason to believe that this change is permanent and will continue after Covid-19. (Israel)

What were (are) the main problems that you and your organisation have encountered since the start of the Coronavirus COVID 19 pandemic? Please select all that are appropriate and indicate which organisation you work...



The reasons for the problems, mentioned above, were identified as the following:

- The spread of COVID 19 in Europe and around the world, fear from catching the disease
- The restrictions on travel and public gatherings
- The request to work from home - and consequent need for new IT and office equipment
- Closure of offices, universities, labs – not all functions could be undertaken in home conditions (labs)
- Pausing of all field work: later (May - June) this was eased, but site work requires risk assessments and office capacity is significantly limited (England).
- Additional requirements were imposed for the organization of archaeological studies.
- No or less efficient training (online training less efficient at times than face-to-face one)
- Lack or poor adherence to occupational health and safety plans (Portugal)
- Dependency of the archaeological sector on the (private) construction sector; Labour insecurity, due to construction projects postponement / cancellation (Portugal)

**It was noted that the organisations responsible for the management of archaeological heritage often had different experience than other archaeological organisations, as they were either state funded or not involved directly in many of the archaeological activities.**

**To explore the range of challenges in front of the wider archaeological community in Europe over the last six months, we asked what problems were encountered by other archaeological organisations in the respondents' countries.**

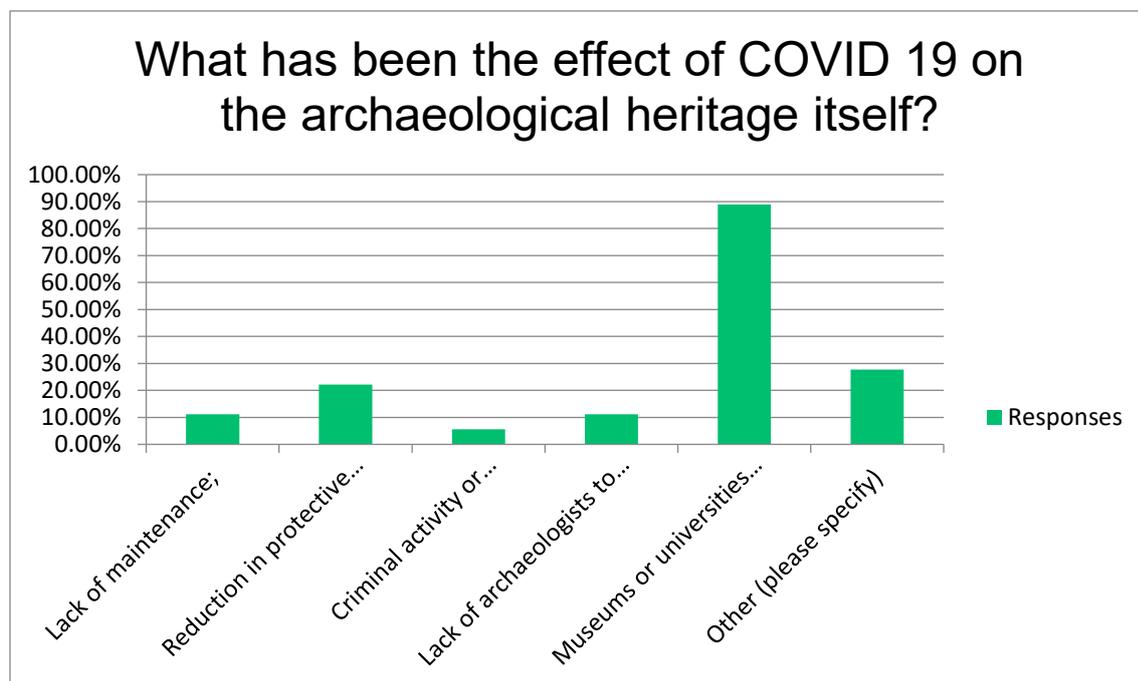
- Archaeological field work was uninterrupted in some places (usually field work involves a limited number of people, work is done in the open air and distances between workers are within the required 2 m distance), but in others excavations were postponed or cancelled, and planned works delayed; In rural areas there were less problems, while in urban ones excavations were more difficult or impossible. Archaeological companies and projects within development-led archaeology suffered less of an impact, as construction was mostly allowed to continue. Other archaeological businesses focused on desk-research, prepared archaeological notes or did research from the office.
- Some archaeological companies had to furlough staff and terminate (temporary) contracts because the bigger archaeological projects were postponed. Smaller projects went on, but the bigger ones came to a halt. The future became insecure for many companies.
- Projects involving volunteers or public outreach came to a sudden stop (for at least three months). The professionals working in this area of expertise lost their income altogether. Volunteers stayed at home and visitors stayed away.
- Students weren't able to take part in field work and excavations - Foreign team members couldn't join due to travel restrictions
- Some archaeological management staff (eg in Local Authorities) moved to other front-line duties, leading to decreased protection and inconsistent care for the archaeological sites
- Threats to the funding of museums with archaeological archives
- Closure of some visitor attractions, incl. archaeological museums, where the impact has been massive, due to lack of visitors in that period. The museums have been closed which have led to economic problems and in a few cases to redundancies. No income for museums and archaeology-related events organisers and re-enactors. In some places (like Denmark) archaeology is almost exclusively carried out by a smaller group of appointed museums (24).
- Closed universities (incl. laboratories) and libraries slowed down or led to cancellation of research projects.
- Extra cost for Covid 19 measures. i.e. extra rental cars for doing field work (due to limited number of people sharing a car), more Equipment (no sharing of equipment allowed), extra Offices (no sharing of rooms allowed).

## Effect of COVID 19 on the archaeological heritage itself

The main effect of the pandemic on the archaeology itself seems to be the closure of museums or / and universities, according to 88% of the survey respondents;

Other 28% listed the following additional effects:

- Increase in heritage crime and vandalism in heritage (including archaeological) sites;
- Decrease in discovery, interpretation and research, due to closure of labs for chemical analysis and dating closing down;
- Less public engagement via the usual channels (Public outreach projects closing down, no or less visitors to museums and archaeological sites);
- Less support for archaeological excavations as students and volunteers either hesitated or weren't able to travel and work on field jobs.
- Less opportunities of networking and sharing knowledge, as archaeology-related events had to be postponed or cancelled.;
  
- As a positive effect, people started to notice and appreciate their local heritage and archaeological assets / sites more, as a result of lockdowns and people spending more time exploring their villages, towns and local areas - more public engagement via less used (unorganised) channels, and in localities



### Support from Government (or elsewhere)

**Government support was provided in most places, but it varied widely between countries in terms of its volume and effectiveness:**

Most countries report the provision of some generic government support for overcoming loss of income during the Covid-19 pandemic, but not specifically addressed to heritage or archaeology

- In Portugal – Due to the fact that most archaeologists are self-employed workers, they have been even more vulnerable in the pandemic crisis, as support for self-employed people is scarce and difficult to obtain, and do not cover the national living wage;
- In The Netherlands - There has been financial support for companies which suffered over 20% income loss, and for professionals working alone. On that basis, some archaeological companies and experts have had financial support, but its unclear how helpful it has been;
- In Poland - There were no measures devoted specifically to archaeology. The state introduced several general measures, but they are seen as too short-term and not quite effective. In some areas, Heritage (and presumably, archaeological) institutions dealt with secondary issues on their own, for example the need to develop further their digital capabilities;
- In Denmark - Some of the museums involved in practical archaeological work have received state support, but there isn't information about support specifically aimed at archaeological activities or organisations.

Other countries report mainly on the provision for working from home as a support measure from their government (Czech Republic, Switzerland), while others don't elaborate as they are representing the government distributing the funds (Israel, Bulgaria). Still, Israel reports on 30 % decrease in issuing contracts in that period, which is an indication of a lower level of state subsidy available.

In a few occasions, there have been specific heritage / cultural funds made available for the industry (including archaeology):

- In England - The UK government announced a £1.57Bn Cultural Renewal Fund which covers both the performing arts and heritage. It is aimed at ensuring the survival of cultural organisations at immediate risk of financial failure due to Covid. Historic England will be distributing some of this funding to help archaeological organisations in England;

- In Flanders (Belgium) - They continued their regular programme of subsidy, alongside the adoption of a new Immovable Heritage Emergency Decree, which announced an emergency fund for the cultural sector in the country. The general measures to help businesses survive the coronavirus crisis, included postponement of tax payments and provision of additional subsidies for companies that were forced to close or had significant reduction in income – which benefited archaeological organisations too.

**Some of our members reported no state (or other) support:** It is possible that some of those members meant that their organisations didn't receive support, as they are the ones providing the support to the sector - being government agencies themselves.

Overall, however, it transpires that the state support is often only general, patchy at places and does not always cover specifically heritage and archaeological organisations.

Most respondents find it difficult to assess how effective the provided support has been, as it either didn't reach them or the consequences of the experienced hardship are yet to be fully evaluated.

#### **Most efficient measures:**

##### More than 50 % selected

- Government support for wages for individuals and organisations – to compensate for the losses and temporary insecurity of income;
- Structural support for archaeological organisations – to enable their basic functioning during and after the crisis through specific financing;
- Flexible subsidies and grants to allow the sector and individual organisations to recover from the losses and missed opportunities;
- Mutual support in the professional communities, support by regions, joined initiatives etc.

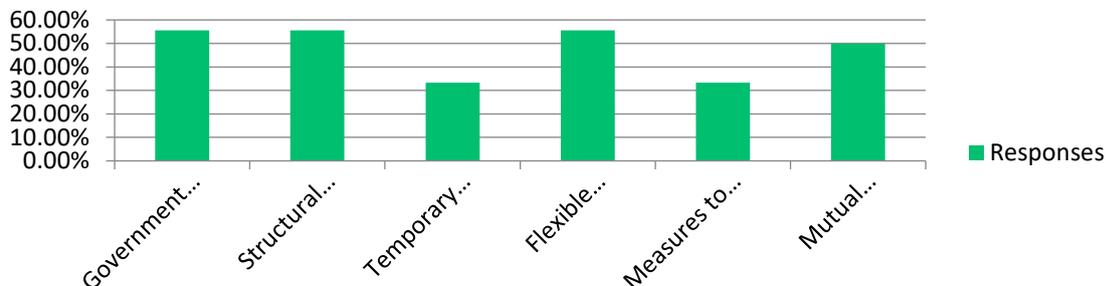
##### About 40 % chose other measures, such as:

- Flexibility of funding institutions, extended time limits of heritage protection procedures, appeal procedures and grant applications
- Support to save archaeological sites or monuments where the responsible organisation has already had to cease operations - a means of ensuring the state does not lose its heritage assets through degradation, loss, dispersal, destruction or sale.
- Provision of an emergency fund for the cultural sector

##### Around 30 % selected

- Temporary tax relief for the archaeology sector during and after the lockdown;
- Measures to enable the archaeological heritage sector to switch to new innovative and technological solutions; Investment in digital skills in the sector;

What support measures would help (or have already helped) the most, in your opinion, and why (please explain why in the comment box below. If there are measures that are not listed here, please add them in the comment box as well -...



**One of the most important question is to identify the immediate and long-term risks and opportunities for the protection of the archaeological heritage in Europe. We have asked our members what will be the short and the long-term effect of COVID 19 on the archaeological sector in their country, in their opinion.**

Interestingly, there is quite a variance in the answers provided. It is linked to a different perception of what short-term and long-term mean, as well as to the different conditions in each countries (or the different experiences of the respondents).

In the short term, most members expect:

- financial problems, insufficient funds for archaeology projects and research;
- decrease in the numbers of new contracts for salvage and conservation work
- job losses at some places, temporary cutdowns in salaries
- in England, recent changes to the land planning process (partly linked to Covid) may mean that fewer archaeological sites can be subjected to preventive archaeology – this links to an expected long-term effect on the sector's future
- a potential second “wave” of Covid will lead to local or regional lockdowns and thus causing new closures for archaeological organisations and museums.

- Less public engagement with archaeology and less appreciation of its benefits for society

Some members identify positives in the short term, such as

- The strengthening of IT infrastructure / digital development in the sector
- Greater opportunities to undertake archaeological investigations, as a result of increased investment in infrastructure and housing. (The expected increase in development as a positive factor for boost on demand for archaeology is in other places given as an example of a long-term effect – potentially because the countries have different experiences in terms of development rates during the pandemic – in some places it has stalled, in others – never stopped, and in third – has even increased its intensity in the last six months)
- Increased appreciation of local heritage and archaeological sites / monuments as a result of people discovering more of the area they live in during lockdown periods

In the long-term, the expectations list:

- Decreased support for culture and archaeology, as a result of financial and economic difficulties (austerity measures)
- Uncertainty of business relations
- Worsening of working and employment conditions for archaeology workers.
- Less people going into the archaeology profession.
- Decreased interest in foreign culture and heritage, impact on tourism and funds released towards heritage and archaeological monuments protection and maintenance
- Overseas tourism may be hit badly and thus income at visitor attractions and museums be reduced permanently, meaning closures and a reduced heritage offer;
- the replacement of face-to-face events like conferences, symposia, seminars, with remote/digital meetings will erode professional unity and / or decrease the human factor of the knowledge exchange in the sector
- Decreased amount of commercial development in historic towns and cities, as a result of a mass move to home working and access to digital technologies; also traditional population densities may change, as people who do work at home choose different places to live. This may mean that fewer investigations take place overall, but new places become subject to more investigation (the latter forming more of a positive effect).

On the positive side, members often mention:

- the potential increase in infrastructure development and investments (which usually accompanies governmental action to combat economic crisis), leading to increased demand for archaeological work, raise in contracts and employment in the sector;
- increased interest in national and local heritage and archaeology

- significant advancement in digital technologies and increased investment in improving the digital and IT capabilities of heritage and archaeological organisations

**In order to fight any negative effects of the pandemic and build a resilient sector, we may need effective policies to protect archaeology in Europe. We asked what policy changes (if any) are needed to protect your organisation and the archaeology sector in your country from the effect of future pandemics of this type.**

Some members do not think that archaeology needs industry specific policy interventions (Israel). They suggest that the general measures adopted across society for these crisis situations apply equally to the archaeology sector.

Many argue that it is difficult to predict the effects of pandemics of this type (or develop effective protection measures), as they occur rarely and are impossible to predict.

Others however insist that the archaeological heritage sector will definitely benefit from the development of “good pandemic plans”, “larger financial reserves for the cultural sector”, becoming more sustainable and resilient as a sector (The Netherlands), establishing more regulation and worker protection (Portugal) and better links with communities and local political representatives / decision-makers (Czech Republic).

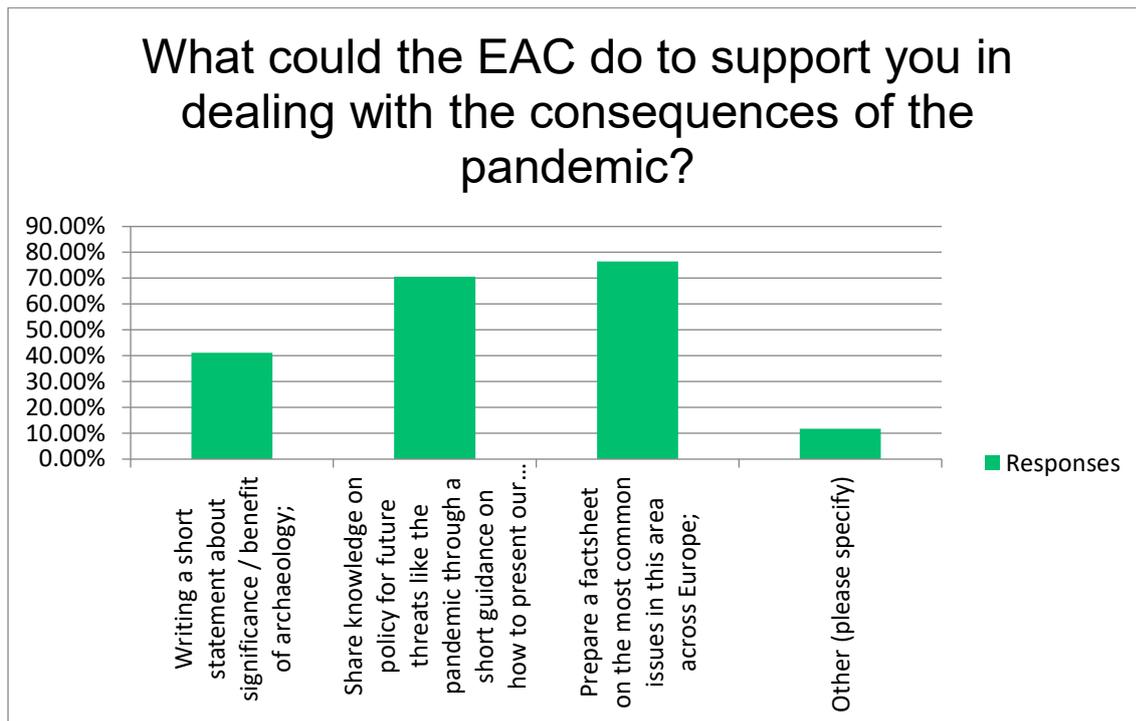
It seems that the transition to working from home and access to digital technology is often seen as an area in which further investment of resources will be very welcome in a number of countries (Switzerland, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Flanders).

Some countries feel pretty content with what has been done so far for archaeology during the crisis (Denmark), whilst others appeal that the archaeology sector is divided and needs more unity in order to be treated better and more fairly (Poland).

Several interesting issues have been raised, such as the extent to which heritage organisations are encouraged to be entirely dependent upon private income (ie ticket sales etc) when the complete disappearance of that income stream would threaten their existence (UK), or that local agencies need to become more efficient, flexible and autonomous, so that they can act quickly when necessary and be able to step in and protect archaeology in localities with full responsibility and authority (Turkey).

A very valid point is also made on the need to maintain high quality and standards of overall archaeological work in Europe (including in research, data and education), which will consequently raise the profile of the profession and will showcase successfully its public benefits (Netherlands, Portugal).

**The EAC wanted to know what the most efficient way to support our members will be, and this is why we asked what could the EAC do to support you in dealing with the consequences of the pandemic?**



More than 76 % think that a factsheet on the most common issues for archaeology across Europe, as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic will be the most useful product.

Almost equal percentage of respondents think that sharing knowledge on policy (for future threats like the pandemic) through a short guidance on how to present our case to stakeholders - the significance, the threats etc., will be most welcomed.

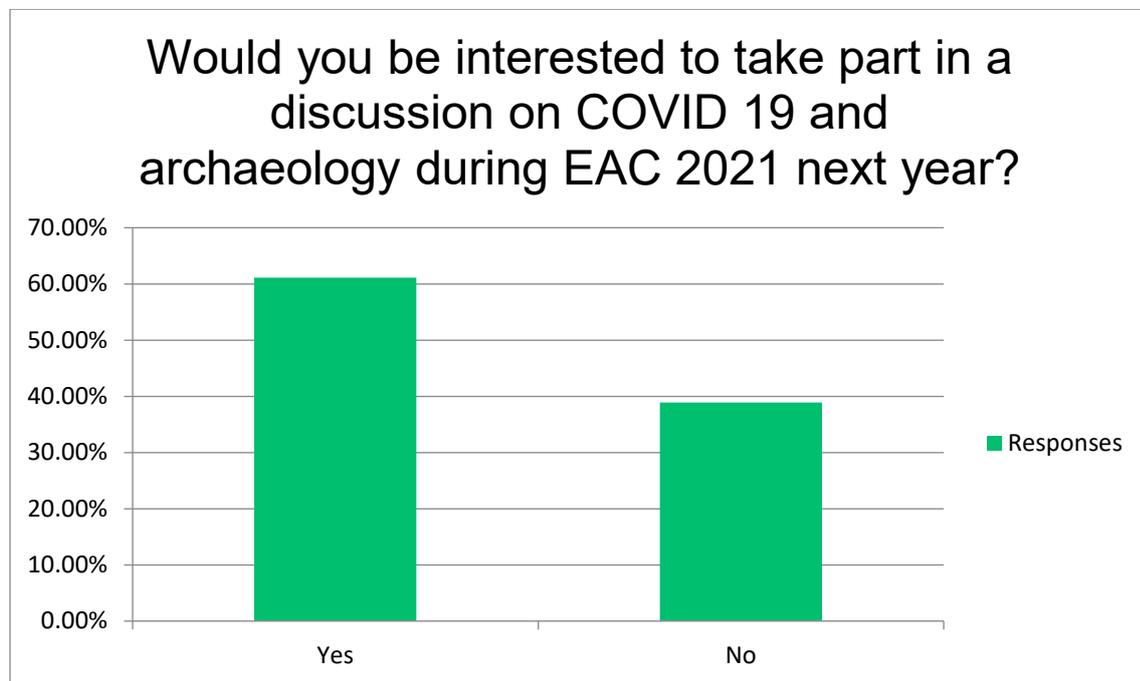
About 40 % chose “writing a short statement about significance / benefit of archaeology”.

11 % offered alternative suggestions, such as:

- a document on how to "Learn from history/the past"; How to link the archaeological research to actual themes as COVID and climate change (how to translate the archaeological knowledge in relation to current problems/topics) (Flanders);
- Make more efforts to develop awareness on local level (Turkey)

**At the end, we asked the EAC membership whether they would be interested to take part in a discussion on COVID 19 and archaeology during EAC 2021 next year.**

Although dominantly positive, the membership seems to be not entirely convinced about the need of the proposed seminar. 61 % approved of the idea (11 respondents), while 39% (7 respondents) are saying that they will not be interested.



The relatively high percentage of the negative response could be due to the fact that some of the respondents are not full EAC members but individuals or professional archaeological organisations, which were invited by an EAC member to take part in our survey, but will not normally attend EAC Annual meeting or heritage symposium. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, there seem to be quite a difference in how COVID has affected the work of archaeological organisations in various countries – while there has been significant disruption in many places, some managed to continue their work to almost regular levels (at least up to this moment), and may not feel the need to discuss pandemic and resilience measures to that extend.

**Still, we wanted to have a good insight into our members views and take more suggestions on board, so we asked those who answered "Yes", what subtopics they think this discussion should cover. The proposed sub-topics ranged as follows:**

- The impact of the pandemic and present/future measures to exit the Covid crisis. (Israel)
- How digital technologies will change the way we work during and after the Covid crisis. (Israel)
- Positive effects of the Covid-19 pandemic (Bulgaria)
- Discussion on a common approach to a possible next crisis. (Czech republic)
- Define chances and opportunities (Flanders)
- Pandemic histories / case studies (Flanders, others)
- What actually happened - changes, losses, benefits (England)
- What each state thinks might be the 1-5 year impact (England)
- The elements of a sustainable archaeological heritage management, how to endure a crisis (The Netherlands)
- Labour rights in archaeology (Portugal)
- Planning and implementation of health and safety plans in archaeological works (Portugal)

### **Additional findings for the period September 2020-March 2021**

The European Archaeological Council invited its members to continue the discussion about the effects of Covid-19 on the archaeological heritage management across Europe. During the Annual meeting of the EAC in March 2021, we organised a “Covid 19 and archaeology” webinar, when we evaluated the impact of the pandemic on the sector (overall and in the last six months after the completion of the survey) and discussed how we can collaborate efficiently to help raise the profile of archaeology in Europe.

We tried to capture all views and suggestions expressed during the webinar to produce this updated report on Covid-19 and archaeology in Europe. We hope that it can assist you in making that case for the value of archaeology in your countries.

### **Challenges, opportunities and impact of Covid 19 on archaeology across Europe**

#### **Challenges:**

- There was a need to introduce additional safety measures at sites, offices and universities, such as wearing masks, organising meetings in larger rooms etc. This led to additional cost for many archaeological and academic institutions.
- Increased pressure to switch to digital solutions and adopt working from home practices – this resulted in some technical difficulties at places, but also to lower motivation amidst work force and students; online learning hasn't been ideal for students, who experienced disruption to their learning and difficulty getting to do fieldwork practice;

- Continued lack of income for sites and archaeological museums due to consequent lockdowns;
- Loss of contact with certain social groups, such as older people with Alzheimer's disease and other vulnerable groups, as these groups had to be protected;
- The strife for economic expansion after the pandemic may diminish the mitigation measures for heritage and archaeology – we need to be careful and continue to advocate strongly for archaeology.

#### Opportunities:

- The wide adoption of digital technologies and their development proved the benefits of their use and we don't need to advocate for this anymore;
- Working with new partners, which were more difficult to reach before;
- Diminished or altogether non-existing travel costs, due to home working and cancelation of events and activities;
- Greater engagement with various stakeholders in heritage activities;
- Greater response from regions (for archaeological meetings);
- Greater numbers of the public participated in government consultations due to the process and related communication moving online;
- Remaining flexible in our approach to working practices, meetings and organising events in future;
- We should be better prepared now if something like this happens in the future

#### Impact:

- Greater pressure on digitization of resources and heritage practices (e.g. in administration). COVID-a9 advocates for us in this regard.
- Development of digital networking technologies.
- Modification of the scope of interest and workflows of various heritage organisations.
- Permanent changes in procedures and working practices.
- Need for flexibility in the future.

### **Government (and other support) to archaeology during the pandemic across Europe (and what were the best / most efficient support packages);**

- With different responses to the pandemic across Europe, different measures of support were used / needed. Some countries remained more open, while others (like UK and Ireland) had very restricted measures. In Ireland, archaeology as part of the construction process effectively stopped and no excavation took place in the last six months;
- No specific support for the archaeology sector – it is usually a part of the generic wage support schemes;
- Some sort of support was offered to event companies to compensate for cancelled events;
- Greater effectiveness in administration (from public sector point of view)
- Greater move to digitisation (similar to reported above);
- Greater and user-friendlier online permission process (Austria, Norway)
- Financial support for archaeology in some places (Ireland benefited from 2 million euro Monument fund, designed to support jobs in the archaeology sector);
- Some public health costs
- We all recognised that we have seen a greater appreciation of the value of archaeological heritage overall (during local day exercise walks and runs, or during staycations). In many countries people got to know their heritage better, which had a very positive effect on community wellbeing and local tourism.

### **Sensitivity and justification for supporting archaeology across Europe (links to public benefit).**

- Concerns about the future effect on the funding for archaeology after the pandemic , as it may be seen as a stop to a very needed development;
- The effect on students and their training has been and may continue to be significant – their learning has suffered during the pandemic and decreased quality of training and communication will not support the case for public benefit of archaeology;
- People are connecting more with their local heritage – they are going out more and take walks in local areas, which is very positive for archaeology, as people have increased interest in their local archaeological heritage;
- Increased cases of vandalism of heritage sites (less control on sites);

- Digital ways of working and communication helped reach greater numbers of people; The EAC could collate case studies of best practices in digital communications and share with the membership
- As we all expect that archaeology may be put in a unfavourable position to pay the price for the need of economic recovery, it is very important that we remain in the public eye and continue to advocate for the public value of archaeology;
- In Iceland, following the decrease of international tourism, the government paid people to travel within their own country, which helped local interest in heritage as well.

**Policy and communication changes needed to protect the archaeology sector in Europe from the effect of future pandemics (and how to make the sector more resilient / expected long term effects and resilience plans).**

- EAC and its members have to continue make the case for development-led archaeology - the pressures on the perceptions of archaeology's value increase, as attention focuses on the economic development after the end of the pandemic;
- There is a need to develop new approaches to museums' resilience (or at least to suggest developing these approaches), such as setting up a contingency fund to keep them going in case of something similar happening in the future;
- Digital is a big issue – it has a massive potential for reaching out more people, building on the increased consumption during lockdown;
- Lessons learned – what preparations could be done in advance (for example, how to open museums safely after lockdown, how to look after portable antiquities during lockdown, etc);
- Evidence gathering – how to collect the data from the last year and ensure that we don't lose it, as it holds answers which maybe needed in future;
- The impact on communities was raised, but it was difficult to spot a single policy that may help that – although digital solutions are part of that, we have to also think of new ways to connect with communities;

- Planning for a potential criminal impact of the pandemic – through looting and the loss of control to portable antiquities – what can we put in place to protect us in future, how can the archaeological community work with the police to put adequate guidance in place;
- How do we make the case for archaeology so that we are not left behind – let us show how archaeology can help social cohesion; Messaging is especially important, the issue of selling the value of archaeology to government and policy makers. In the next 10 years funding will either go into development or public health – and actually rebranding our message to demonstrate our sector's contribution to public health is really important.