BEST PRACTICES RELATED TO UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE

Following Resolution 4/5MSP of the 5th session of the Meeting of States Parties to the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (28-29 April 2015), States Parties are invited to provide examples that demonstrate Best Practices related to Underwater Cultural Heritage (see document UCH/15/5.MSP/11). The Meeting recalled Article 2 of the Convention and considered that Best Practices should aim notably at:

a. encouraging responsible and non-intrusive public access to underwater cultural heritage in conformity with articles 2.5 and 2.10;

b. increasing public awareness, appreciation and protection of heritage;

c. promoting the Convention and the implementation of national juridical frameworks for protection;

d. supporting scientific research in accordance with the Convention and the Rules and capacity-building in that regard; and

e. the appropriate conservation of the heritage;

The Meeting invited States Parties to the Convention to provide examples demonstrating Best Practices related to Underwater Cultural Heritage according to the following criteria:

a. the heritage falls under the definition of Article 1 of the 2001 Convention or less than 100 years of age, but is classified as underwater cultural heritage according to national law,

b. the heritage is appropriately protected both legally and in practice; in particular through the implementation of the Rules,

c. responsible non-intrusive access is respected;

d. the heritage has a framework to ensure sustainable management; and

e. a special and outstanding effort has been made to make the site accessible to the public.

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Body of the 2001 Convention will review the examples of Best Practices provided by the States Parties and evaluate them with a view to making recommendations for sharing and diffusion. Please note that the Meeting of States Parties also recommended States Parties to include appropriate stakeholders, at local, national and international levels in the process of identifying Best Practices, and to cooperate in the promotion and application of the identified Best Practices.

The annexed form has been elaborated by the Secretariat to facilitate the submission of Best Practice examples for their evaluation.
Short Title of the Best Practice: Deltebre I. The History of a Wreck

Presented by (State Party): SPAIN

Location: Deltebre, Baix Ebre, Catalunya, España

Brief Description of the Underwater Cultural Heritage Site concerned:

In 2008 a fisherman discovered a shipwreck from modern period in the Delta of the River Ebro. Immediately he declared the finding to the authorities.

The Subaquatic Archaeological Centre of Catalonia, the CASC responsible for the inventory, protection, conservation, study and spreading of the archaeological heritage of Catalonia realized a first inspection of the wreck. Its good condition and historical interest led the CASC to begin its excavation in 2009, finishing it in 2016.

Work done so far has allowed knowing that this ship sunk in 1813 during the French War. It was part of a convoy under English command, coming from Alicante after retreating from attacking the city of Tarragona. On return trip, several ships sank also at this point.

Most of the cargo consists of different types and calibre ammunition and thanks to the sedimentation of the river has been preserved in excellent conditions as well as the shipwreck and crew associated objects.

Brief Description of the Best Practice in responding to the criteria set by the Meeting of State Parties (see above):

The whole project of excavation, conservation, study and diffusion of the Deltebre I wreck is according with the Best practices related to underwater cultural heritage.

It encourage a responsible and non-intrusive public access to underwater cultural heritage and increase the public awareness, appreciation and protection of heritage, through the exhibition realized about this shipwreck (Deltebre I. La Història d'un Naupragi), the publications in magazines of cultural heritage dissemination, press, documentary, etc.

It Support scientific research in the site in accordance with the Convention and the Rules and capacity-building in that regard and the appropriate conservation of the heritage.

How is the site protected legally?

This shipwreck is protected as archaeological good, by the Catalan autonomic law for cultural heritage protection (Law 9/1993, of September 30 of the Catalan cultural heritage). It must be protected in a special way, by the administration that has the competences on culture, as well as by the state security forces and bodies.

What practical measures have been implemented to ensure the protection of the site?

The principal difficulty for the protection of this site is the regression process of the Ebro’s Delta.

The first actuation in 2008 in the site was a protection with sand bags doing a wall around the shipwreck, in order to contain sand, and protect the wood of the action of Teredo Navalis.

Between 2009 and 2016 CASC has excavate the site, discovering only the sand in the excavation area planned for every season and covering it at the end of the excavation.
The enormous amount of material coming from the cargo of the wreck rendered unfeasible the extraction and conservation of all these materials. For this reason the procedure used during the excavation of this shipwreck has been to excavate, to record and to remove only the archaeological materials that belongs to the cargo required for the study or for dissemination. The remaining archaeological material is preserved in situ next to the site, covered by sand. The naval architecture of the ship is recorded and preserved in situ, covering it with sand at the end of every excavation period.

The totally excavation of the shipwreck has finished in 2016. Summer of 2017 it is planned to realize a strongest coverage in the site, using sand bags and Geotextil.

Once this protection has been carried out, CASC must realize periodic inspections on the site to verify its conservation.

How is responsible and non-intrusive public access to the underwater cultural heritage encouraged? What special and outstanding effort has been made to make the site accessible to the public?

During the underwater archaeological works, CASC and FECDAS have organized public visits for divers to the shipwreck, showing not only the site otherwise the work realized by the archaeologist.

The conservation problems of the wood of the shipwreck cause the teredo navalis don’t allow to keep the site permanently uncovered for to visit it.

It has been designed an itinerant exhibition for to divulge this site and to understand the history context and his significance as cultural heritage. This exhibition has been realized thanks to the collaboration between the Museu d’Arqueologia de Catalunya, Museo Arqueológico Provincial de Alicante and Denominación de Origen Vinos de Alicante (thanks to the discovery in the shipwreck of a wine bottle that belongs to this wine origin denomination).

This exhibition has been showed in Girona Archaeological Museum, Alicante Archaeological Museum, Tarragona National Museum of Archaeology, Barcelona Archaeological Museum, Deltebre municipality, and Archaeological services of Culture of Tortosa. The catalogue of this exhibition can be consulted in the following link:

http://www.mac.cat/Seus/CASC/Publicacions/Catalegs-d-exposicions

How is public awareness, appreciation and protection of the heritage increased?

The wreck has not been subject to spoliation since its discovery in 2008. In addition, all the initiatives carried out around the diffusion of this wreck have had a remarkable impact of the public.

This impact has also served to publicize other wrecks to the public by disseminating knowledge and awareness on the protection of underwater cultural heritage.

How does the example support scientific research and appropriate conservation in accordance with the Rules of the Annex to the 2001 Convention?

We have already explained the procedure used during the excavation of the shipwreck, extracting only the materials necessary for study or musealization. Remaining materials are preserved in situ once is finished its documentation.
Between the seasonal works in the site the shipwreck is covered to prevent its degradation.

Priority is given to the use of non-destructive methods as far as possible for the documentation and study of the wreck.

Have local, national and international stakeholders been involved in the process of identifying the Best Practices example? If so, please list them.

Various organizations have been involved in the process of identifying the Best Practices example at every level. The municipal government of the Deltebre, The Serveis Territorial de Cultura de les Terres de l’Ebre, El Museu d’Arqueologia de Catalunya, and for the exhibition too the Museo Arqueológico Provincial de Alicante and Denominación de Origen Vinos de Alicante.

It is necessary to point out that this wreck has served as a practical school for many university students both nationally and internationally.

Please attach documents giving evidence for the information provided and any other documents you may consider relevant.

The forms are to be submitted in English or in French, electronically or in hard copy. They are to be signed and sent to the following address:

UNESCO
Secretariat of the Convention on the Protection for the Underwater Cultural Heritage
7, place de Fontenoy, 75007 Paris, France
Tél. : + 33 (0) 145684406
Fax : + 33 (0) 145685596
E-mail : u.guerin@unesco.org

Stamp:
Signature(s):

Name of the signatory(ies): LUIS LAFUENTE RATAÑERO – GENERAL DIRECTOR OF FINE ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

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