



The 26th Annual Meeting and Heritage Management Symposium of the European Archaeological Council in 2025 (Gdańsk, Poland) and the launch of Guidelines for the Use of Airborne Laser Scanning (Lidar) in Archaeology (EAC Guidance 10)

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The European Archaeological Council (EAC) (<https://www.europae-archaeologiae-consilium.org/>) serves as a network of principal organizations responsible for heritage and archaeological management across various European countries. Institutional participation through delegates provides a valuable platform for sharing contemporary trends in archaeology at both national and international levels.

The National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (NAIM–BAS) has been a member of EAC since early 2017. In 2018, it even hosted the 19th Annual Meeting in Sofia (<https://www.europae-archaeologiae-consilium.org/annual-meetings-past>). Bulgarian participation in annual meetings since 2017 has consistently included reports showcasing various case studies aligned with the symposiums' topics, except for the most recent one held in 2025 in Gdańsk, Poland. This absence relates to the theme of the conference, discussed below.

The symposium was preceded by meetings of the EAC Working Group (<https://www.europae-archaeologiae-consilium.org/workinggroups>) and a Board meeting on 26th of March. The author of this article participated in the EAC Remote sensing working group, which brought together specialists from the Aerial Archaeology Research Group (AARG) (<https://aargonline.com/wp/>) and the International Society for Archaeological Prospection (ISAP) (<https://www.archprospection.org/>). The meeting was held in hybrid format, with only three participants physically present in Gdańsk (Chris Gaffney, Rebecca Bennett, and the present author). The key topic discussed was the launch of the EAC lidar guidance: Guidelines for the Use of Airborne Laser Scanning (Lidar) in Archaeology (EAC Guidance 10) (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14609210>). This comprehensive work involved three years of online collaboration among 49 contributors¹ from nearly 20 European countries – specialists in airborne laser scanning (ALS, lidar) in archaeology and with diverse experiences and backgrounds. The effort was coordinated by R. Bennett. The aim of the guidance is to bring together for the first time a reference document that combines the experience of these special-

¹ Including the author of the article.

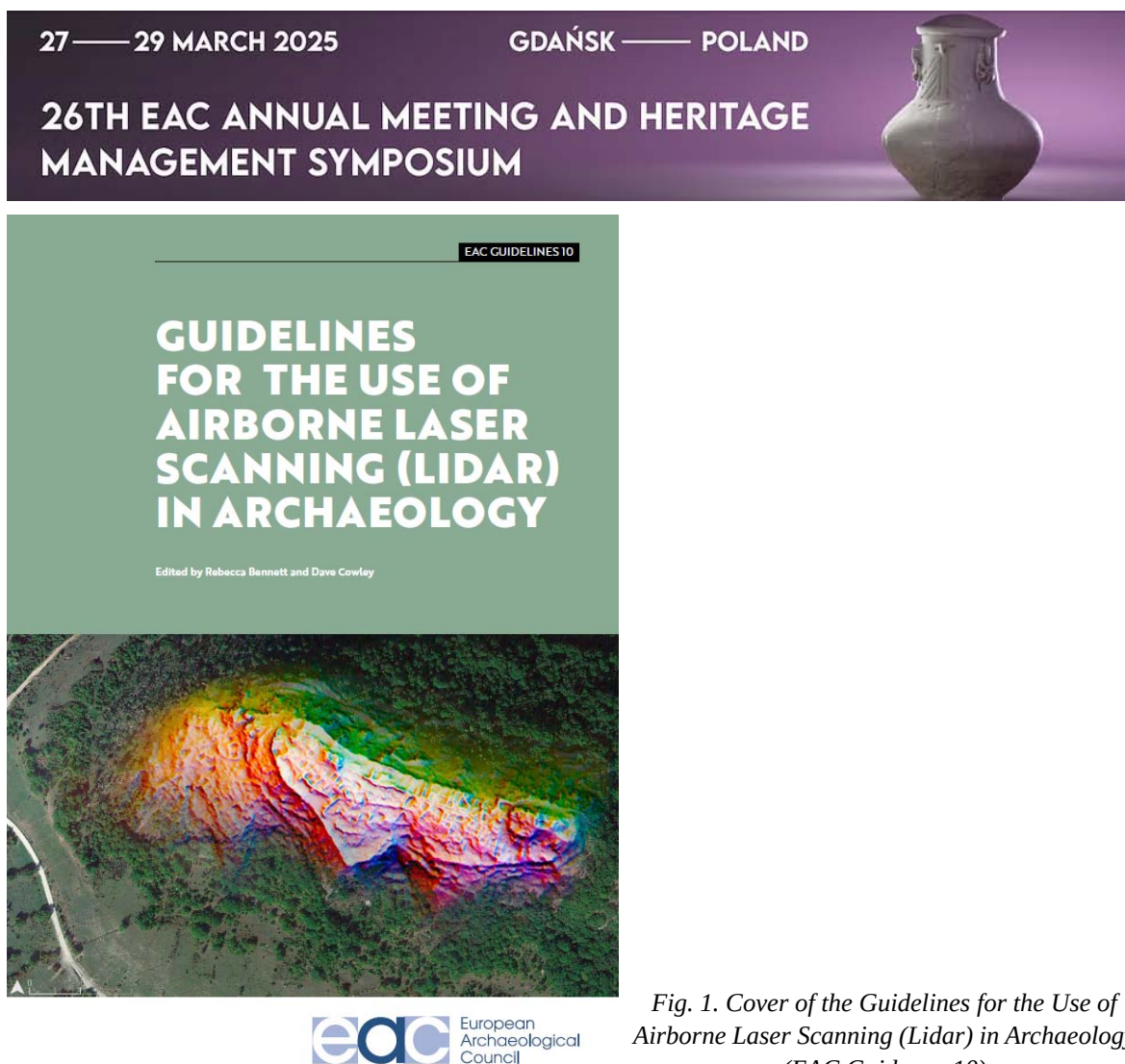


Fig. 1. Cover of the Guidelines for the Use of Airborne Laser Scanning (Lidar) in Archaeology (EAC Guidance 10)

ists across Europe (fig. 1).

Unlike previous EAC guidelines, which typically have one or several authors (<https://www.europae-archaeologiae-consilium.org/guidance>), this project employed a broader, more inclusive approach. The result is a 175-page edited volume covering several key topics: “ALS technology and data acquisition”, “Data processing and interpretation”, “Reporting and archiving”, and “Applications and management considerations”. The document is fully searchable, with key terms highlighted, and aiming to provide accessible guidance based on the practical experiences of the contributors. While translations to other languages are only recommended for the summary and table of contents², promotion and dissemination of the publication are forthcoming.

The EAC Board³ meeting followed the working group sessions at the Archaeological Museum in Gdańsk (fig. 2). The agenda was extensive, with discussions summarised and voted on during the General Assembly on 27th of March. The most significant topics included:

- The election of a new President (Marjolein Verschuur, the Netherlands, replacing Ann De-

² The author of the article took the liberty to engage with the forthcoming translation in Bulgarian.

³ Lyudmil Vagalinski (NAIM–BAS) was a board member until 2023. The author of the article was elected as such in 2024.



Fig. 2. EAC Board meeting in Gdańsk, Poland (photo A. Makowska)



Fig. 3. The participants in the Meeting in front of Artus Court, Gdańsk, Poland (photo T. Bułynko, National Institute of Cultural Heritage, Poland)



Fig. 4. Inside Artus Court and participants in the Meeting (photo T. Bułynko)

- graeve, Belgium) and a new Vice-President (Agnes Stefansdottir, Iceland).
- Reports on working group activities presented by their chairs.
- Financial matters.
- New EAC guidelines (<https://www.europae-archaeologiae-consilium.org/guidance>).
- The publication of EAC Proceedings of the 2024 Heritage Management Symposium (EAC Occasional Paper 20), launched in March 2025 (<https://www.europae-archaeologiae-consilium.org/symposiumproceedings>).

Workshops on 27th of March emerged from the most frequent responses to a survey conducted in 2024 marking the 25th anniversary of EAC: “What are the priorities for heritage management that EAC can help address in the next five years?” The highest-ranking topics were transformed into four workshop themes: “Heritage crime”, “Climate change and sustainability”, “Landscape management and spatial planning”, and “Citizen Science and public benefit”. The results of these brainstorming sessions were presented to the audience by the workshop chairs, outlining potential future directions for EAC’s work.

The programme continued on 27th and 28th of March with the official opening of the 26th Annual Meeting and Heritage Management Symposium of the EAC on “Life after life of archaeological archives – accessibility and re-use of archaeological collections in heritage management”. Held at the beautiful Artus Court, the event attracted over a hundred attendees (<https://www.europae-archaeologiae-consilium.org/annual-meeting-2025>) (fig. 3).

The presentations were divided into three sessions. The first one, “What is FAIR archaeological heritage data and are we there yet?”, was chaired by David Novák (Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague). This sessions’ presentations were focused on digital ar-

chiving and FAIR (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse – <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>) research data. Consortia like NFDI4Objects – <https://www.nfdi4objects.net/en/> and case studies from Germany and UK were presented, as well as the importance and practical application of persistent identifiers (PIDs) (Germany and DataCite – <https://datacite.org/>). All above-mentioned presentations were aimed at showing how they support and follow the FAIR principles. A more practical and realistic situation was shown by the Hungarian report – the issues they had with their information systems, current state situation leading to uncertainties and complications, and even a recent cyber-attack on their systems. They showed how they dealt with these real-life likely situations. Part of the fruitful discussion at the end of the session was focused on the usefulness of including FAIR principles and international standards in the archaeological and cultural heritage educational programmes in the universities.

Different physical national and local archaeological archives were the focus of the second session “Unlocking the potential of physical archaeological archives and the (changing?) role of modern archaeological repositories” chaired by Kaat De Langhe (Flanders Heritage Agency) on 28th of March (fig. 4). Case studies from Scotland (maritime), Iceland, Netherlands, and Belgium were presented. Despite some reported issues and local variations, the examples explicitly showed the results of a purposeful state/project financing that ensure enough physical space for artefacts, and an adoption of standards for both digital and physical storage (for example – three of the EAC guidelines (nos 1, 3 and 6 – <https://www.europae-archaeologiae-consilium.org/guidance>).

The third and last session of the Symposium “Beyond archaeology – the value of archaeological archives” was chaired by Adrian Olivier (Historic Environment Forum, UK). Presentations of different examples from Poland, UK, Ireland, and Czech Republic were shown. The first presentations included: case studies engaging local communities with different activities on an archaeological site and a retrospect of the Polish archaeology in the end of 19th–20th c. (Poland), a combination of archaeology and science from a broader point of view (Historic England, UK), and a specific digital archive project in Ireland. The session concluded with two presentations focused on 3D modelling: first, the 5DCulture project (<https://5dculture.eu/>) presented by researchers of The Discovery Programme – Ireland, and second, the educational benefits of digital reconstructions, demonstrating how reimaged archives data can bridge gaps between academic experts and the public (Czech Republic). The latter one was quite impressive showing the fully excavated archaeological site in Roztoky (6th–7th c. AD) as a digital reconstruction of the whole village and the surrounding area with more than 300 sunken houses.

The 26th Annual Meeting and Heritage Management Symposium of the European Archaeological Council in 2025 (Gdańsk, Poland), including various working groups, board meetings, and both formal and informal discussions between researchers and specialists from different European countries, fostered a valuable exchange of experience and know-how. The symposium’s theme, “Life after life of archaeological archives – accessibility and re-use of archaeological collections in heritage management”, addresses a critical yet sometimes overlooked issue. This topic remains somewhat neglected within archaeological report archives in Bulgaria, which are still predominantly physical rather than digital (<https://doi.org/10.11141/ia.58.24>). Where does Bulgarian archaeology fit within the broader context of digital archiving and the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) principles of research data? The absence of presentations on Bulgarian archaeological report archiving at the symposium is indicative of its current stage. While small steps forward are being made – <https://doi.org/10.11141/ia.67.5> – the lack of purposeful focus and sustainable state or project funding, such as a dedicated research infrastructure, remains one of the main reasons for still lagging behind in digital archiving.