



Network of European
Restitution Committees
on Nazi-Looted Art



Newsletter

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INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the five European restitution committees on Nazi-looted art met for the first time as a network. This meeting marked the beginning of an enriching cycle of cooperation for the members of the committees themselves, as well as for the claimants or heirs whose applications for compensation they handle. This dynamic has continued over the years, with new meetings taking place in London, Berlin and Amsterdam.

Five years later, on 1 October 2024, the network met again in Paris. This convivial day gave us the opportunity to look back on the network's five years of existence, but also to talk about our prospects for the future. The expansion of the network, the deepening of our

relations, workshops to compare our methods of handling cases and much more are still to come.

Over the past five years, the network has established itself as a source of hope and progress for claimants, heirs, and provenance researchers. By promoting unprecedented transparency, we have ensured that families navigating the intricate paths of restitution have access to clearer, more accessible processes. The Network's work has allowed these voices to be heard and their stories to be acknowledged, affirming our commitment to remembrance.

The Network has also become a model of cross-border cooperation. Through the seamless exchange of information between European Committees, we have been able to address cases that cross borders, providing a more effective response to the inherently international nature of spoliation. This cooperation has strengthened the bonds between Member States and reinforced the importance of working together to solve challenges.

As the French committee assumes the Presidency of the network this year, we are proud to celebrate these achievements and look forward to a new chapter. Let us continue to work together to confront the injustices of the past, to honor the memory of those who suffered, and to create a legacy of justice and humanity. The CIVS hopes you enjoy your reading.

FRANCE | Commission for the Restitution of Property and Compensation for Victims of Anti-Semitic Spoliations (CIVS)



Germany, Berlin, July 2022

On 1 July 2022, an official and unprecedented working meeting took place between the



France, Paris, June 2023

A two-day seminar was held in Paris in June 2023 between the Austrian Advisory Board linked to the Kommission für



France, Paris, October 2024

For its presidency from September 2024 to summer 2025, the CIVS presented to its European

members of the CIVS advisory panel and their counterparts from the German Beratende Kommission to cross views and reflections in a French-German perspective, to combine legal and historical approaches to enrich the reflection of the two panels, also to create a kind of coordination between the visions developed by the French and German authorities on the issue of restitutions.

Provenienzforschung and the CIVS, with the participation of the M2RS (Ministry of Culture).

Through practical comparisons that emphasized both similarities and differences, the shared objective was to learn from one another. A genuine, sincere, and trusting exchange occurred. The consensus was that the meeting was a great success, leading to significant learning for both sides. While these exchanges of views may not fundamentally alter the practices of either commission, they will undoubtedly inspire and encourage reflection in the development of recommendations.

counterparts the 1st of October in Paris its plan and agenda. We want to go even further in our knowledge of the other commissions, as the only bilateral meetings with our Austrian and German counterparts have been terribly enriching but insufficient. We want every committee to have the same knowledge and the same understanding of its partners. For these reasons, we have proposed organising a multilateral meeting in Berlin in March 2025.

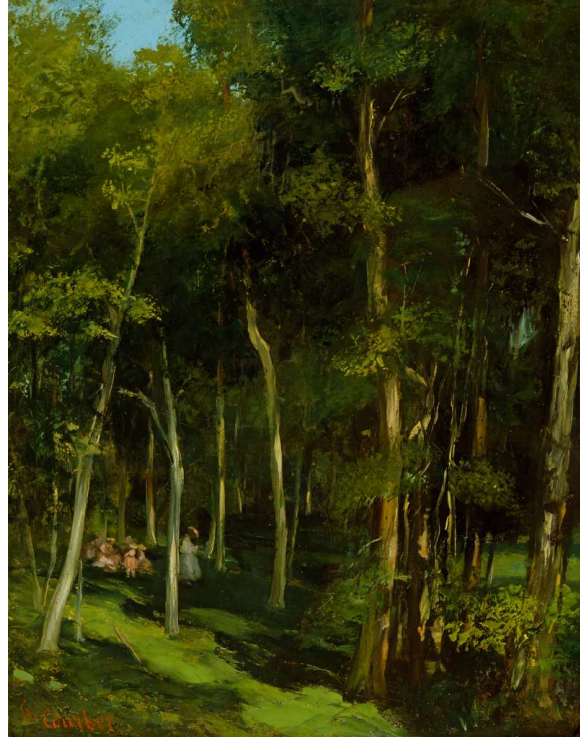
In June 2025, an international and public conference will be held at the CIVS in Paris. Under the title “Recovered Memories”, the aim would be to focus on the families and the looted and subsequently restituted objects.

As we move into the second round of presidencies for the Network, it is worth reflecting on the strong ties that formed between the five nations and how, through our newsletters and regular public events, we have ensured that this important area of work continues to receive the high level of attention it deserves.

Here in the UK, we look forward to celebrating in April next year, the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Spoliation Advisory Panel, with many of the original members continuing to serve in the role. The Panel is widely respected for the way it conducts its work and in ensuring that its findings and recommendations are publicly available. Back in 2000, there was little information on the number of claims that might be expected to come to the Panel and by 2009 the Panel had considered nine cases, so one a year on average. In 2009 when UK legislation was introduced to allow UK national museums to return Nazi-looted art, it was accompanied by a 10-year sunset clause so that the need for the Panel could be reviewed again in 2019.

The Government at the time considered that having a time-limit of 10 years from the coming into force of the 2009 legislation would be a reasonable time for people to come forward with claims and for museums to have made significant progress in carrying out provenance research on works with gaps in their history during the Nazi era.

In 2019, it was widely recognised that setting to rights the crimes committed during the Nazi-era was not something that should be



Given the small number of cases considered by the Panel, the scope for collaborative working may appear small. There is, however, one case from 2023 where the Panel was ably assisted in its work by the CIVS. The Panel had been asked to consider a claim for the restitution of the painting *La Ronde Enfantine* by Gustave Courbet which was in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. The Panel recommended the restitution of the work to the organisation representing the heirs of Robert Bing from whose flat in Paris the painting was seized in 1941. The Panel arrived at its recommendation but some difficult considerations remained relating to the ownership of the work at the time of seizure and in determining solutions under French inheritance law. Following a series of enquiries, the CIVS provided some important historical documents on ownership and was

affected by the passage of time and the legislation was amended to remove any kind of time limit so that it will always be there for those who need it.

Despite some lean years between 2016 and 2023, the Panel continues to be active with one case currently under consideration and a number of others on the horizon. There can be no dispute therefore that the mission is as important now as it was back in 2000 and the creation and ensuing success of our Network has provided a strong demonstration of that.



able to direct the Panel on where to go for advice on French inheritance law.

Our Network is an invaluable asset therefore which allows us to share information, respond to information requests and ensure that the mission to identify and, where appropriate, return Nazi-looted art, remains firmly at the forefront of those who manage our public collections and indeed in the minds of others whose work interacts with this in some way. This is particularly important at a time when attention is being given to wider areas of restitution. The refresh of the guidance on the work of the committees combined with the public events such as the one held at the V&A Museum in London earlier this year will also assist claimants and others in understanding the differences between the committees and what that means for them in their work. Finally, a major strength of the Network is that it is able to offer advice and support to other countries seeking to develop restitution mechanisms and I hope that this is an area which will continue to grow.

The Spoliation Advisory Panel looks forward to working with its Network partners on all these issues in the coming year.

*Mark Caldon MBE
Secretary to the Spoliation Advisory Panel*

Working across borders

For more than a quarter of a century, the [Austrian Commission for Provenance Research](#), established at the [Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport](#), has been working on research into the numerous collections owned by the Republic of Austria. Its research provides the basis for the Art Restitution Advisory Board, which advises the competent federal minister on the restitution of Nazi-confiscated art and cultural objects on the basis of the [Art Restitution Act](#), enacted in December 1998 and last amended in December 2023. As this work is carried out *ex officio*, i.e. proactively, the Commission is responsible for provenance research not only in the narrower sense, but also – in the event of a decision for return – for the search for the legal successors of the formerly aggrieved art collectors. All of this research – based on the diaspora of private collections, home furnishings and libraries, as well as the diaspora of the people and their families who once owned them – ultimately takes researchers across the globe, starting from the respective Austrian museum. The Bureau of [the Commission for Provenance Research](#), located at Michaelerplatz in Vienna, plays a key role in this process. It not only houses some of the most important files and archive holdings on the topics of art expropriation during national socialism and restitution in Austria after 1945, but its experts also form a unique competence pool in the fields of provenance and heir research, and transfer knowledge and experience to national and international cooperation partners and

The *Music Working Group*, which was set up at the initiative of the French organisation [Musique et Spoliations](#), has been part of the *Provenance Research Working Group* since autumn 2023. Its aim is to raise awareness of looted instruments, sheet music and autographs in museums. At a conference initiated by the Musikinstrumentenmuseum Basel in October 2020, Monika Löscher, the Commission's provenance researcher at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, reported on the 17 musical instruments identified as having been confiscated and recommended for restitution from the museum's holdings.

In addition, the professional exchange of information makes it possible to link information in research cases on an ongoing basis. For example, German colleagues provided information to the [Museum of Applied Arts \(MAK\)](#) about objects expropriated from the journalist Eduard Fuchs, who was persecuted as a communist and a Jew; the Commission for Provenance Research is currently preparing a report based on the colleagues' extensive findings.

Despite all the synergies and cooperation, there is still a lot of catching up to be done, especially with regard to the basis of provenance research: Namely, in the procurement of historical documents. Due to the fact that refugees found their new homes in other countries or that German authorities, as representatives of the former perpetrator country, acted as contact persons after 1945, documents in such archives are of great relevance or sometimes even serve as the only complementary source for documents

researchers as well as those affected in this area.

Due to the Shoah and the expulsion of the Austrian Jewish population, the identification of persons entitled to the restitution of art from Austrian collections is almost exclusively possible through international research. The constant improvement in the accessibility of information, and, above all, the know-how acquired over decades and the special knowledge often backed up by detective skills, mean that the vast majority of inheritance cases can be solved. The Commission's experts are also available to provide tips and guidelines on the search for heirs and share their experience with colleagues in foreign museums and collections.

The Lexikon der Österreichischen Provenienzforschung ([Lexicon of Austrian Provenance Research](#)), which is constantly being expanded and currently contains more than 420 articles, enjoys great international attention. Around 50 authors from Austria and Germany publish their research results in a compact form, covering individuals and institutions relevant to provenance research. All articles are available in English translation and thus offer not only an international specialist audience, but also the members of families formerly persecuted, important starting points for their research questions and family research. We have received numerous letters as a result of these articles, which in turn also helps the Commission to expand its knowledge and international network.

Worth mentioning is also a specific cooperation with the [Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project \(JDCRP\) foundation](#), for whom the Commission is currently researching approximately 260 short

provided by the aggrieved parties (e.g. freight documents for stolen removal goods). The files of the German compensation and restitution offices (*Wiedergutmachungsämter*), for example, which the members of the Commission have to spend a lot of time and money to view, should be mentioned first. Simplified access, ideally by means of digitised copies, would be highly desirable for Austrian provenance research.

In September 2024, the Art Restitution Advisory Board met for its 105th meeting. 3 drawings from the Albertina formerly owned by the banker Wilhelm König, 42 objects from the Museum of Military History, once belonging to the art historian and author Stephan Poglayan-Neuwall, as well as music manuscripts by the cello virtuoso Josefina Donat, which were seized by the Vugesta from her nephew Erwin Rosenthal in 1941 and passed to the National Library, were recommended for restitution.

Numerous cases of provenance research and potential restitution cases as well as inheritance research are currently being processed; the Commission for Provenance Research will continue to utilise both the possibility and the necessity of international cooperation – we are pleased to be able to continue and deepen the exchange and, above all, the mutual learning with the Network of European Restitution Committees on Nazi-Looted Art and to do this now under French chairmanship.

Moritz von Neuwall, Gruppenportrait dreier Zöglinge in Uniform, (oil, 1827), recommended for restitution to the heirs of the artist's great-nephew Stephan Poglayan-Neuwall

biographies as part of the recently developed central database of persecuted European Jewish art collectors.

The example of the collaboration between Julia EBl, the provenance researcher on behalf of the Commission at the Albertina, and colleagues in the field shows that every exchange of content is accompanied by a constant broadening of one's own perspective and knowledge: The aim is to decipher encrypted consignor lists in historical auction catalogues. This research is being advanced by networking with other graphic arts collections abroad, and since 2020, the findings obtained from it have been digitally deposited in [German Sales](#). Furthermore, to provide another example, there is a lively exchange in the international provenance research community about cataloguing and recording provenance markings on art objects, in which the Commission is significantly involved with its [database of provenance markings](#).



Pia Schölnberger, Director of the Commission for Provenance Research

Sabine Loitfellner, Bureau of the Commission for Provenance Research

Recent Recommendations

The Restitutions Committee has assessed two restitution applications that arose from the in 2022 implemented Programme to Accelerate WWII Restitution Policy, under the auspices of which the provenance of the entire NK Collection is being reinvestigated. The recommendations concern Mozes Mogrobi (III) and Hiegentlich (II). In both recommendations, the Committee has advised the Minister of Education, Culture and Science to reconstitute the artworks to the heirs.

Read more about the recommendation regarding [Mozes Mogrobi](#)

Read more about the recommendation regarding [Hiegentlich](#)



Binding Opinion regarding Liebermann / Rotterdam City Council (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen)

The Restitutions Committee has assessed the application for restitution of the chalk drawing by Max Liebermann, *Girl Writing at a Table*, which since 1959 has been in the possession of the Rotterdam



NIOD Expert Centre Restitution

Book publication 'The Girl in the Grass'

The Van den Berg couple went into hiding in 1942 and placed their two daughters in a children's home in Driebergen. To pay for all this their Camille Pissarro painting '*The Girl in the Grass*', among other things, had to be sold. After the liberation, Mr Van den Bergh submitted a report form. It was not until 2016 that the former Origins Unknown Agency, now part of the Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE), made a

City Council and is held at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.

The Committee has advised Rotterdam City Council to restitute the drawing to the rightful claimants of the Liebermann estate.

The Committee has come to the conclusion on the grounds of the investigation conducted by the Expert Centre Restitution (ECR) that it is highly likely that the drawing came from the estate of Max Liebermann, to which his wife Martha Liebermann was entitled. It has also become sufficiently plausible that Martha Liebermann lost possession of the drawing involuntarily as a result of circumstances directly connected with the Nazi regime.

[Read more](#)

connection between the form that was submitted and the painting, which has been in the collection of the Kunsthalle in Bremen since 1967.

Eelke Muller (Expert Centre Restitution at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocides Studies) and Annelies Kool (RCE) have written a book (available in Dutch and [in English](#)) about the family's tragic fate and the story of the painting. The painting is on temporary loan to the [Van Gogh Museum](#) for display from November 2024 to March 2025.

Learn more:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/13/arts/design/pissarro-heirs-germany-museum-holocaust.html>

GERMANY | Advisory Commission

For over 20 years, the Advisory Commission has been drawing up recommendations for Nazi-looted art cases that are in dispute between museums and heirs. A few months ago, the federal and state governments spoke out in favour of establishing arbitration proceedings for Nazi-looted art instead of the Advisory Commission. Whether this is a better solution for the victims is controversial.

The coalition agreement of the previous government called for the Advisory Commission to be 'strengthened'. In particular, the possibility of being able to call upon the Advisory Commission unilaterally, i.e. without the consent of the cultural institution, has been a demand of the victims of National Socialism since the Advisory Commission was established. However, it has not been 'strengthened'. Instead, the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) and the culture ministers of the federal states announced in March and confirmed in October 2024 that they want to replace the Advisory commission with an arbitration tribunal.

<https://www.kmk.org/presse/pressearchiv/mitteilung/beratende-kommission-entscheidende-weichen-fuer-reform-gestellt.html>,

<https://www.kmk.org/presse/pressearchiv/mitteilung/bund-laender-und-kommunale-spitzenverbaende-verbessern-restitutionspraxis-in-deutschland-und-staerken.html>

In November 2024, a public hearing of experts and representatives of interest groups on this topic was held in the Bundestag Committee on Culture and the Media. The experts expressed fears that the victims and their descendants could be worse off in the future and pointed out that the central issue of the possibility of unilateral access to arbitration proceedings had not been clarified. The BKM head of office, Dr. Görden, stated that the possibility of unilateral access to the planned arbitration tribunal would be achieved by the federal government, federal states and municipalities submitting so-called 'standing offers' and thus agreeing in advance to the lodging of an appeal. However, it was also pointed out that the vast majority of cultural institutions - around 10,700 - are owned by local authorities and it was not clear whether all of them would agree.

https://www.bundestag.de/ausschuesse/a22_kultur/oeffentliche_sitzungen/1026144-1026144

At the beginning of January this year, around 60 lawyers, historians, researchers and heirs of Jewish collectors published an open letter in which they called on Chancellor Olaf Scholz not to approve the planned arbitration procedure in the cabinet.

<https://www.beratende-kommission.de/de/aktuelles#s-offener-brief>

They criticise the proposed rules for the arbitration procedure, in particular because they were unfavourable for the victims: persecuted art dealers, will no longer be able to get back the artworks they sold under the pressure of persecution during the Nazi era under the new restitution rules. Also persecuted persons who had to sell cultural property in connection with their flight from Nazi Germany or from a country occupied by the Nazis will in future only have a very limited right to restitution, according to the signatories of the open letter. However, the federal cabinet approved the new procedure, as did the majority of the federal states.

Due to the premature end of the German federal government and the new elections in February 2025, it is unclear when and how the arbitration procedure will actually be implemented.

Exciting exchange between Germany and Switzerland

At the invitation of the Swiss Ambassador, Her Excellency Livia Leu, a business meeting of a rather unusual nature took place on 27 November at the Swiss Embassy in Berlin: the aim was to engage in a dialogue on the handling of cultural property of dubious provenance. The Director of the Swiss Federal Office of Culture (BAK) arrived from Switzerland with a high-ranking delegation, while on the German side, experts from various fields dealing with either Nazi-looted art or colonialism were invited.

The meeting, which took place over lunch in the splendid rooms of the embassy, was highly concentrated. While Switzerland has yet to set up a commission to advise on issues relating to Nazi-looted art and colonial spoliations, Germany is planning to abolish its advisory commission. A particularly important issue was the possibility of unilateral access by victims and their descendants to mediation procedures - an issue that is central to the debate in both Switzerland and Germany. The advantages and disadvantages of arbitration, as currently planned in Germany, were also discussed.





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on Nazi-Looted Art

 Bundesministerium
Kunst, Kultur,
öffentlicher Dienst und Sport
Kommission für Provenienzforschung

CIVS



Beratende Kommission
im Zusammenhang mit der Rückgabe
NS-verfolgungsbedingt entzogenen Kulturguts,
insbesondere aus jüdischem Besitz

**Spoliation
Advisory
Panel**

Restitutions Committee

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