

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000440/25
to the Commission
Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR)
(2 February 2025)**

Subject: Return of Greek antiquities to Greek museums — The case of ‘Las Incantadas’

The time has come for ‘The Enchanted Ones’ (Las Incantadas) — an ancient sculptural fragment from Thessaloniki, currently in the Louvre — to be returned to Greece, as part of the broader effort to return our cultural heritage. These sculptures, which adorned a Roman portico in the centre of Thessaloniki, were removed during the Ottoman period in the 19th century by the French diplomat/archaeologist Emmanuel Miller, raising ethical questions regarding their legal ownership.

The sculptures are an integral part of the cultural and historical identity of Thessaloniki. Their return will allow Greeks and visitors to admire them in their geographical and historical context. Many museums internationally are increasingly recognising the importance of exhibiting antiquities in their place of origin.

Furthermore, Greece has proven its ability to preserve and exhibit its historical treasures, unlike third countries. The return of ‘Las Incantadas’ will contribute to the restoration of historical justice.

Finally, their return will reinforce France's commitment to cultural cooperation and historical responsibility, strengthening Greek-French ties, in a spirit of sincere mutual respect.

In view of the above, can the Commission say:

1. Are there any developments towards or plans for the revision of Directive 2014/60/EU, so that Greece's treasures can be returned to Greek museums?
2. Does the Commission plan to adopt tools to support goodwill movements, so that the cultural heritage of one Member State stolen in an earlier period can be returned by another?

Submitted: 2.2.2025

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Séjourné on behalf of the European Commission
(22 April 2025)**

The Commission attributes great importance to the preservation of cultural heritage in the EU.

In accordance with Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Commission encourages and promotes cooperation among Member States with a view to conserving and safeguarding cultural heritage.

The returns mechanisms under the directive 2014/60/EU ⁽¹⁾ are not applicable for cultural objects unlawfully removed before 1 January 1993, namely those removed during the 19th century, as in the situation described by the Honourable Member.

While this directive has no retroactive effect, Member States may apply on a voluntary basis its Article 15(2) arrangements to requests for the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed prior to 1 January 1993.

The Commission has no current plans to revise the directive 2014/60/EU or to adopt specific tools to support goodwill movements, while it remains committed to supporting cultural heritage initiatives.

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2014/60/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 (Recast), OJEU L159/1 of 28 May 2014.