

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-004179/25
to the Commission
Eleonora Meleti (PPE)
(23 October 2025)**

Subject: Protection of the Parthenon Marbles

On 18 October 2025, the British Museum organised a charity dinner in the hall where the Parthenon Marbles are exhibited. The use of the Marbles as a backdrop for a social event provoked a strong reaction from the Greek Ministry of Culture, which described the action as offensive to a world heritage site.

In accordance with Article 6 and Article 167(3) and (4) TFEU, the European Union shall encourage cooperation between Member States and contribute to the promotion of international cultural relations. The Council of the EU, in its conclusions of April 2019, highlighted the need to strengthen cultural cooperation with partner countries. At the same time, the dialogue between Greece and the United Kingdom on the return of the Parthenon Marbles has been rekindled within the framework of the relevant Unesco procedures.

In view of the above:

1. Does the Commission intend to put pressure on the United Kingdom and/or the British Museum to prevent similar actions in the future?
2. What initiatives is the Commission considering to strengthen the EU's role in the management, protection and possible return of cultural goods to the Member States from which they originate?
3. How does the Commission intend to use the 'Cultural Compass' to promote respect for and good management of European cultural heritage in relations with non-EU countries?

Submitted: 23.10.2025

**Answer given by Mr Micallef on behalf of the European Commission
(12 December 2025)**

Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) stipulates that EU action is focused on encouraging cooperation between Member States and supporting and supplementing their actions, with a view to conserving and safeguarding cultural heritage of European significance. Hence, the protection and promotion of cultural heritage remains the responsibility of EU Member States.

The return of the Parthenon sculptures is a bilateral issue between Greece and the United Kingdom. Directive 2014/60/EU ⁽¹⁾ on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State only applies to Member States and to cultural goods unlawfully removed after 1 January 1993.

The Commission presented the EU action plan against trafficking in cultural goods on 13 December 2022 ⁽²⁾. The action plan builds on existing EU activity and addresses ongoing challenges through improving prevention and detection of crimes by market participants and cultural heritage institutions; strengthening law enforcement and judicial capabilities; and boosting international cooperation, including with source and transit countries of cultural goods in conflicts and crises.

The Culture Compass for Europe, which was adopted on 12 November 2025 ⁽³⁾, will reinforce the EU's value-driven approach in its cultural relations with non-EU countries. Protecting heritage from natural and human-induced disasters, including through digitisation, is also a relevant axis of the strategy.

1 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2014/60/oj/eng>.

2 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2014/60/oj/eng>.

3 <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-adopts-new-culture-compass-for-europe>.