

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-004773/25
to the Commission
Arkadiusz Mularczyk (ECR)
(2 December 2025)**

Subject: Reparative justice for former colonies in Africa and the return of African cultural artefacts to their countries of origin

Similarly to several joint declarations by the African Union (AU) and the European Union, including from the 2025 AU-EU Summit, the 2007 joint Africa-EU strategy calls for ‘the exchange of information between EU and African countries on existing African cultural goods in the EU and Africa’. It further states: ‘Africa and the EU will continue to cooperate in the fight against the illicit trade in cultural goods, and facilitate and support the return of illegally acquired cultural goods to their countries of origin’.

Parliament’s resolution of 26 March 2019 on fundamental rights of people of African descent in Europe clearly highlights the need for reparative justice and the restitution of African artefacts.

The resolution recalls that ‘some Member States have taken steps toward meaningful and effective redress for past injustices and crimes against humanity — bearing in mind their lasting impacts in the present’. It also calls for ‘the EU institutions and the remainder of the Member States to follow this example, which may include some form of reparations such as offering public apologies and the restitution of stolen artefacts to their countries of origin’.

1. What is the Commission’s position on the above?
2. Has the Commission taken any steps to support the above?

Submitted: 2.12.2025

**Answer given by Mr Sikela on behalf of the European Commission
(6 March 2026)**

The restitution of cultural property remains primarily a competence of Member States, as culture falls under national sovereignty. As laid out in Articles 6 and 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the EU has competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or complement Member State action excluding any harmonisation of national cultural laws.

On 13 December 2022, the Commission presented the EU action plan against trafficking in cultural goods ⁽¹⁾. This action plan aims to deter criminals effectively, to address evolving security threats and to protect cultural heritage within and beyond the EU.

It is a key part of the EU Security Union Strategy 2020-2025 ⁽²⁾ and the EU Strategy to Tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025 ⁽³⁾, aiming to deter criminals, protect heritage and enhance cooperation by boosting prevention, detection, law enforcement and international collaboration, targeting illicit trade, and addressing evolving threats to cultural heritage.

The joint declaration of the African Union — EU Summit ⁽⁴⁾, which took place on 24-25 November 2025 in Luanda, Angola, reaffirms the importance of sustainable circulation of cultural goods.

To strengthen cultural and socioeconomic relations, the Commission has adopted the ‘Strengthening African-European Museum Partnerships’ ⁽⁵⁾ initiative.

It is a multilateral partnership programme among museums in Africa and Europe, co-funded and implemented by several Member States, including Belgium, Germany, France and the Netherlands.

The programme lays the foundation for a framework of exchange and mutual support, while forging lasting connections among museums.

It aims to enhance cooperation and exchange between Africa and Europe to protect, promote and provide access to cultural heritage.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0800>.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0605>.

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0170>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/vtejl1kjs/joint-declaration-of-the-7th-african-union-european-union-summit-2025-24-25-november-2025.pdf>.

⁽⁵⁾ Annex 9 (3433303): https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6c6268e2-7084-467d-a6d3-b65f3438de3c_en?filename=aap-2024-2025-c2024-3825-sub-saharan-africa_en.zip.