



Network of European  
Restitution Committees  
on Nazi-Looted Art



# Newsletter

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## INTRODUCTION

**On 20-21st. March 2025, the French restitution committee (CIVS) hosted in Berlin a multilateral workshop of the Network of European Restitution Committees on Nazi-looted Art, for two intensive days of practice-based exchange.**

Held at the French Embassy, this seminar gathered 30 high-level representatives from six countries (Germany, Austria, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Switzerland) including the chairwoman and men from The Netherlands Prof. Toon van Mierlo, The United-Kingdom Sir Donnel Deeny and France Ms Frédérique Dreifuss-Netter and numerous members of the different advisory panels. This strong institutional presence ensured valuable input about Europe's restitution practices.

The goal of this workshop was to deepen understanding, compare methodologies, and identify shared bottlenecks in current practices. Participants responded with enthusiasm, highlighting the value of the workshop format in providing space not only for intellectual reflection but also for practical, collaborative problem-solving. In doing so, the Network is advancing a European-wide culture of restitution, rooted in shared principles but sensitive to national contexts.

*"This multilateral adaptation of our bilateral model was an ambitious move – and one that paid off thanks to the deep engagement of all participants."*

Prof. Dr. Frédérique Dreifuss-Netter, Chair of the CIVS

## FICTITIOUS, CONTEXTUALIZED CASES: A STRUCTURED FORMAT TO SPONTANEOUS DISCUSSION

**Although grounded in a common storyline, each fictional case was tailored to reflect the historical and procedural realities of each country.** The discussion helped clarify the boundaries of each commission's jurisdiction. Participants were encouraged to consider

multiple outcomes, suggest conditional solutions, and engage with other commissions to enhance the quality and depth of the decision-making process. Two fictitious cases served as thematic entry points:

### 1. Flight goods

Discussions centered on determining whether the sale in question could be classified as forced, based on criteria such as the temporal and geographical sphere of influence of the National Socialist regime, but also the questions of (reasonable) purchase prices, motivations, and contextual pressures.

### 2. Previously compensated property

This case explored the complex issue of restitution claims for assets that had already been the subject of compensation, highlighting the importance of cooperation between national commissions.

Case details were intentionally withheld until the session to promote spontaneous dialogue, encourage open-minded reflection, and spark dynamic group exchanges. Each case was first analysed by the national committees, followed by joint deliberation simulations. These exercises revealed areas of consensus, highlighted national specificities, and invited participants to critically reassess their assumptions. But above all, the focus was on learning from each other about the challenges specific to each country and the tools and methods developed to address them.



## OBJECTIVES, SHARED CHALLENGES AND FORWARD THINKING

**A key aim was to compare legal, structural, and procedural frameworks across different national contexts, helping to identify both common grounds and divergent approaches.** Through the use of fictional case simulations, participants were able to test and refine their methods in a constructive environment. Finally, the process sought to uncover obstacles and gaps in existing procedures, with the ultimate goal of improving practice and informing future policy developments. Despite different national systems, several common themes emerged:

- The tension between legal certainty and historical justice,
- The persistent challenge of identifying heirs decades after the events,
- Differing views on how to treat previously compensated claims,
- Jurisdictional limitations in handling private collections,
- The importance of transparency in decision-making.

Discussions also touched on the moral duty of institutions holding looted artworks, and the use of new technologies in provenance research. These discussions emphasized the need for regular workshops and the gradual development of shared tools, ethical guidelines, and interoperable databases.

## WORKSHOPS HIGHLIGHTS AND PARTICIPANT VOICES

Participants praised the format of the workshop, with several noting that it enabled deeper engagement than traditional conferences. Breakout sessions and simulated case deliberations proved especially effective in highlighting procedural nuances and doctrinal differences.

To conclude the first day of the workshop, we attended a concert by the **Semer Ensemble** celebrating the richness and diversity of Jewish culture. It was a moment of discovery, conviviality, and networking, shared with special guests from the field of restitution who joined us for the occasion.

The workshop marked **Switzerland's** first observer-level participation. It was represented by Nikola Doll, its new head of the Swiss commission, who was widely welcomed as a sign of broader European alignment. Its upcoming restitution commission promises to fill a key gap in the European framework. While a national commission is under development,

several Swiss institutions already adopt proactive restitution approaches.



## LOOKING AHEAD : WHAT'S NEXT?

By privileging practical engagement over abstract debate, and by fostering mutual understanding among diverse national bodies, the Berlin workshop reinforces the conditions for long-term collaboration. The CIVS extends its sincere thanks to all participants and looks forward to continued shared progress.

The success of this first workshop paves the way for a public conference in Paris on 26 June 2025 on the theme of 'Recovered Memories', [Register here](#) to attend !



Please find below the programme for the conference on 26. June 2025 in Paris:

■ **The Robert Bing case before the *Spoliation Advisory Panel (United Kingdom)*:** Courbet painting looted in Paris during the Occupation, returned to family after 70 years in a Cambridge museum. *La Ronde Enfantine* by Gustave Courbet was seized by the Nazis from the flat of Robert Bing in Paris in 1941. After being stolen, the painting was placed in Paris at the Jeu de Paume, for the benefit of Hermann Goering. It resurfaced in 1951, when a London art dealer bought it. The same year, it donated it to the Fitzwilliam Museum. The painting has remained in the museum ever since, but following the Panel's recommendation, the Fitzwilliam Museum is working with the family's representatives to enable the return.

■ **The case of Abraham Nijstad before the *Restituecommissie (Netherlands)*:** an art dealer forced to sell his collection to save his family from anti-Semitic persecution. Two grandchildren of the Jewish art dealer Abraham Nijstad will share the history of their grandfather and his art dealership during the Nazi regime. The choices their grandfather was forced to make to save the lives of his direct family had a strong and remaining impact on their (grand)parents and the rest of the family. The Restituecommissie advised to return three paintings from the Netherlands Art Property (NK) Collection to the heirs of Abraham Nijstad.

■ **The case of Saul Juer before the *Art Restitution Advisory Board (Austria)*:** In 2021, the provenance researcher at the Museum of Military History in Vienna discovered sales under duress by Saul Juer in the museum's inventories. Juer was forced to close his meat trade in 1938 due to persecution by the Nazis for being Jewish. He sold over 570 works of art to the Army Museum before he was deported and murdered in the Auschwitz extermination camp in 1944. In 2022, the Art Restitution Advisory Board recommended that the Federal Minister of Defense return the artworks to Saul Juer's legal successor, his grandson Steve Glauber. Steve Glauber is a former journalist and lives in New York City.

■ **Based on cases of restitution completed by the *Beratende Kommission (Germany)* in recent years**, the Advisory Commission on the return of cultural property seized as a result of Nazi persecution, especially Jewish property and the European representative of the Jewish Claims Conference will discuss the challenges and importance of restitution of Nazi-spoliated property for families and heirs, as well as the responsibility of the German state.

■ **The case of Henry Torrès before the *Commission for the Restitution of Property and the Compensation of Victims of Anti-Semitic Spoliation (France)*:** more than two hundred books scattered across Germany have finally found their owners. Henry Torrès, born in 1891, was a French politician lawyer and journalist, forced to flee to the United States to escape antisemitic persecution. During his exile, his entire collection of books was confiscated by the nazis and never given back. Many of these works have now been identified in more than five libraries in Germany. The time has come to return them to Henry Torrès heirs.

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

 CIVS

  
République Française  
  
Ministère  
Culture



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

 Spoliation  
Advisory  
Panel

 Restitutions Committee

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