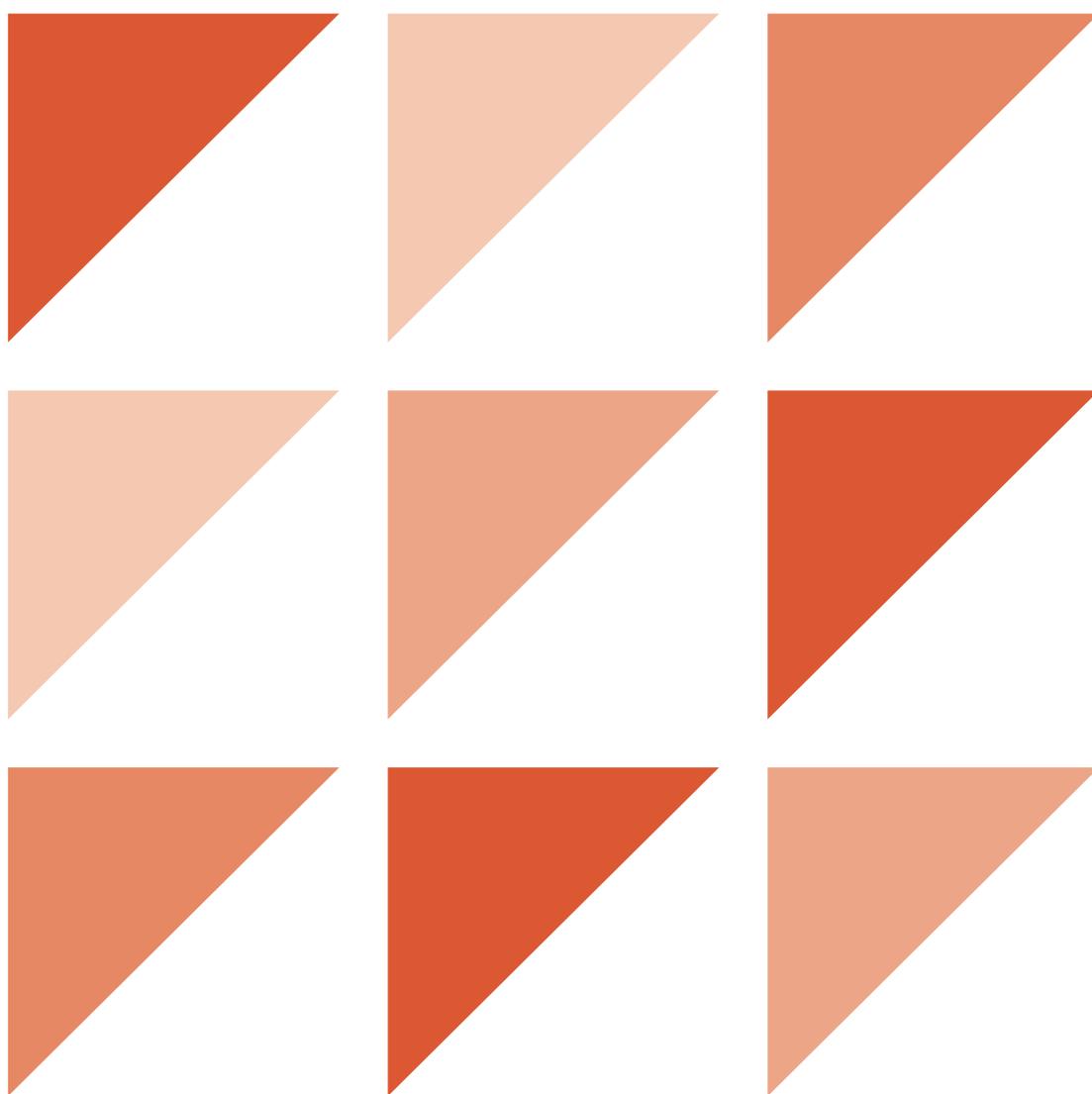


Good collections management

# Guidance for managing the return of cultural objects



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# Introduction

This document has been produced to assist Swedish museums with issues relating to the return of objects. Other organisations with museum collections may also find this information useful.

This document has been produced by the Swedish National Heritage Board on commission by the Government. The spending authorisation for the 2018 budget year tasked the Swedish National Heritage Board with preparing a guide, in accordance with the Government Bill *Cultural Heritage Policy* (Government Bill 2016/17:116), for identification and repatriation or restitution of objects in museum collections where there may be specific ethical reasons for returning such objects. This assignment is restricted to objects added to collections in recent times; that is to say, mostly from the latter part of the 19th century onwards.

The assignment has been implemented in consultation with the central museums and the Sami Parliament. Other museums, institutions and experts have also contributed valuable opinions.

At the same time, the Swedish National Heritage Board has also produced the supporting document *Good collections management. Guidance for handling human remains in museum collections*. The starting point formulated in the Government Bill is that Swedish museum practice must be exemplary from an international perspective when returning and handling human remains.

In compliance with the Museums Act (2017:563), which emphasises the mandate of museums to operate as independent institutions and maintain a controlling influence over the content of what they do, this document has been produced in order to help museums to draw up their own policies on how to deal with issues relating to returning objects. Thus, this document does not answer the question of whether specific objects ought to be returned; nor does it include recommendations for the application of statutes.

## The return of cultural objects

There are many dimensions to cases relating to the returning of objects from museum collections. On one level, this relates to opinions on ownership in respect of cultural heritage, and there are a number of approaches in this regard. On the one hand, we have the universalistic or globalistic view of cultural heritage as something belonging to all of humanity, something that an individual country or group of people cannot lay claim to. And on the other, cultural heritage is important for the identities of individuals, groups and nations and their sense of continuity. Any nation or people with strong links to a specific cultural object may consider themselves entitled to own and manage the object with reference to the object's significance to their own country or people.

A universalistic view of cultural heritage often results in the standpoint that cultural heritage ought to be accessible to as many people as possible; for example, by being exhibited at large museums welcoming visitors from all over the world.

The debate concerning repatriation also emphasises the importance of not undermining the concept of the encyclopaedic museum: if all the objects held in the world's museums have to be repatriated to their locations of origin, museums will lose the opportunity they have to provide a broad picture of the world, of the mobility of people and of the exchange between different cultures.

A post-colonial discussion is also ongoing which maintains the attitude that museums in the western world need to review their collections self-critically and be prepared to repatriate cultural objects that have been added to their collections as a consequence of a colonial power structure. Many of the former colonies that gained independence in

the second half of the 20th century are demanding the return of cultural objects that were removed from their countries by the colonial powers at the time; but also indigenous peoples and countries that were never colonised have initiated discussions on objects and human remains. In some cases these are objects that were stolen or confiscated, while in other cases demands for returns are being made on account of unequal power relationships at the time when the objects were obtained.

In parallel with decolonisation, international conventions have been produced in order to protect cultural heritage and prevent theft and illegal exportation of cultural objects. However, these cannot be applied retroactively and Sweden did not ratify the 1970 Unesco Convention until 2003. As a result, the conventions cannot be applied purely in legal terms in order to dispense justice for wrongdoings committed in the past with regard to cultural objects. That said, the legal documents can be used as a basis for a discussion on ethical reasons to return objects if they were obtained outside the time frame stipulated in the convention.

Many international initiatives have been implemented since the 1990s in order to call attention to issues relating to returning objects and decolonisation of museums. The guidelines devised by the German Museums Association concerning the handling of collections from a colonial context, entitled *Guidelines for German Museums – Care of Collections from Colonial Contexts* (2019), are one of a number of examples.

Some countries such as the US, Australia and New Zealand have laid down legislation concerning opportunities for the return of cultural objects and human remains to indigenous peoples, along with repatriation processes in general. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Nagpra, became law in the US in 1990 and is frequently used as a reference for indigenous peoples all over the world. Other countries such as Canada have instead devised recommendations on what museums and other institutions should do with regard to indigenous peoples' claims to objects and human remains in museum collections.

Countries have also chosen to adopt different approaches with regard to the Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art. Some countries have special commissions that deal with cases where objects in museum collections are suspected of having been confiscated from their former owners during the Nazi era, 1933–1945. These commissions operate in relatively different ways. Other countries have chosen to abide by the Washington Principles without appointing a special commission.

Returning objects is often a complex process and each case should be examined on the basis of the unique circumstances of the case. Establishing who can claim ownership of a specific cultural object may be a delicate task: geographical mobility and the changing nature of national borders can sometimes make it difficult to link ancient objects with specific nations, for example. It is conceivable that a number of different countries and ethnic groups may justifiably claim the same objects. These issues are primarily legal in some cases; with regard to objects that have been exported illegally or stolen more recently, for instance. However, most returns of objects have no legal foundation: they are determined on the basis of ethical considerations. In this case, the museum has to find a solution in consultation with the potential recipients. Returning an object or human remains can sometimes form part of a wider process of reconciliation where the matter should be handled with caution and respect. A final ceremony may be significant to both the museum and the recipient.

The return of an object may be initiated by both the museum and external stakeholders. The museum can adopt a proactive approach and identify objects or human remains that could be returned for ethical reasons, or where the museum is of the opinion that these would be of greater value to the potential recipient than they are to the museum.

Every return should be handled as a separate initiative, and the museum should communicate the fact that the decision made in one case cannot be translated to apply to all cases.

# Glossary

Different terms are used for returning objects in various contexts, and their meanings vary slightly. These terms sometimes overlap one another, or may even be interchangeable.

## REPATRIATION

The term *repatriation* is frequently used to describe the process where cultural objects are returned to a nation, central government, indigenous people or other groups.

## RESTITUTION

The term *restitution* is used in law to refer to recovery, and it may involve returning a stolen object or providing financial compensation. When it comes to cultural objects, restitution is primarily used to refer to objects that have been stolen or otherwise removed from their owners in an improper manner. Art confiscated by the Nazis and restituted to its original owners or their heirs is one example of this.

## RETURN

The term *return* can be regarded as more generic and can be used to refer to both repatriation and restitution. This term is used throughout this document.

## PROVENANCE

*Provenance* means the history of an object from the time at which it was discovered or came into

being and throughout its entire chain of ownership up to the present day. This can be used to verify authenticity and ownership. The term *provenance* is sometimes used, particularly with regard to archaeological objects, to identify the location and context in which the object was found.

## DUE DILIGENCE

The term *due diligence* is used in many respects. In a museum context, it refers to the following of good practice in the industry and taking action to ensure that any object that may be bought, loaned, exchanged or given as a gift has not been obtained by illegal means or exported illegally, and that the current owner is in legal possession of it. Due diligence is also observed when returning or deaccessioning objects.

## OBJECT

Museum collections often include a number of object types; cultural objects, natural history objects, works of art, books, archives material and even human remains. In this context, *object* refers to all objects in a museum collection.

# Examples of object categories

Many different kinds of objects may be considered for return, and for a wide variety of reasons. Examples of a number of categories, and of the laws, conventions and agreements applicable in each of these categories, are provided below.

Many museums in Sweden are affiliated to Icom, the International Council of Museums, an international organisation for museums and professionals working with museums. Icom has ethical rules that address various aspects of museum work and provide general ethical guidance on the return of objects and other matters.

Another relevant document is Unesco's *Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society*.

The following categorisation is an attempt to highlight a number of recurring object types that may be considered for return. These categories overlap one another in that one object may belong to a number of categories. Objects that fall outside

these categories may also be considered for return, such as works of art and utility items that are of particular significance to the recipient without having a ceremonial function.

## Objects obtained in a colonial context

Many museums have objects or entire collections that could arguably have been obtained in a colonial context on the basis of perspectives or using methods that are now considered to be ethically dubious. Colonial context refers to direct links with colonialism, but also colonial structures in a wider sense.

Colonialism involves a state occupying, controlling and exploiting an area outside the primary territory of the coloniser, generally with violence or threats of violence. As colonisers around the turn of the 20th century considered colonies to be part of their own nations, cultural objects could be removed from the colonised territories without being deemed as exports, legal or illegal.

The inequality in respect of power relationships between – and also within – countries that prevailed at that time meant that stronger countries were able to exploit weaker countries even without colonising them. Cultural objects were generally subject to weak protection, which meant that they could be exported legally from countries. Researchers, explorers and other private individuals collected cultural objects, natural objects and human remains, which were later incorporated in museum collections in Sweden. Although the objects were collected in accordance with the law applicable at the time, and with the correct permits, there may nevertheless be ethical reasons to consider returning objects in certain cases.

### Unesco's recommendation with respect to museums

*Unesco's Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society* is aimed at Unesco member states.

This document was adopted in 2015 and, among other things, it addresses principles with regard to how museum collections that include the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples should be managed.

It states that member states should take appropriate measures to encourage and facilitate dialogue and the building of constructive relationships between the museums and the indigenous peoples affected.

In many parts of the world, colonisation also took place within the boundaries of nation states, in that indigenous peoples and the territories in which they lived were brought under the control of the states. The US and Australia are countries that are working actively to facilitate repatriation of human remains and ceremonial objects taken from their indigenous populations. Swedish museum collections include both objects and human remains linked with indigenous peoples in various parts of the world.

In Sápmi, various states have gradually seized power over several centuries in respect of issues that were previously handled by the Sami people themselves. Sápmi is now divided into four parts by political frontiers: Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Russian Sápmi.

Museum collections include lots of different Sami objects such as utility items, works of art and religious and ceremonial objects. These objects have been collected by researchers and museums, as well as private individuals, for several hundred years. Some objects were purchased, while others were confiscated or collected by improper means. Museum collections also include Sami human remains.

The Sami people are an indigenous population, and as such the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that they are entitled to access to or repatriation of their ceremonial objects and human remains. Museums wishing to discuss issues relating to the return of Sami remains and objects can consult the Sami Parliament, which is an expert authority on Sami issues.

### Human remains

Most of the human remains in museum collections originate from archaeological excavations carried out in connection with property development, but some remains have been added to collections in a variety of other ways such as legal and illegal trade, confiscation, exploration and donations. Medical and anatomical collections originating from research and teaching environments are another category.

Demands for the return of human remains may be made by nations, minorities, groups or individuals, for example. In some cases, the person submitting the demand may be a descendant of

the individual whose remains form part of the museum's collection. Particular consideration and respect for the perspective of the person making the demand should be shown whenever a demand is made for the return of human remains.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides a great deal of support in respect of repatriation of remains from indigenous peoples.

The National Minorities and Minority Languages Act (the Minorities Act, 2009:724) should be taken into account with regard to remains from other minorities. The Minorities Act states that national minorities must be given the opportunity for influence and consultation on issues that affect them. Jews, Roma, Sami (the indigenous Swedish population), Sweden Finns and Tornedalians are Sweden's official national minorities.

Icom code of ethics for museums state that any request for the return of human remains or objects of religious significance must be handled promptly, and with sensitivity and respect. It is also stated here that museum policies should indicate how the process for responding to such requests should be structured. The code of ethics requires

#### Icom code of ethics for museums

Icom code of ethics for museums states that museums should be prepared to embark upon discussions concerning the return of cultural objects to a country of origin or an indigenous people. The code of ethics also states the following:

Efforts to return cultural objects "should be undertaken in an impartial manner, based on scientific, professional and humanitarian principles as well as applicable local, national and international legislation".

Any request for the return of human remains or objects of religious significance must be handled promptly, and with sensitivity and respect.

Museum policies should indicate how the process for compliance with such a request should be structured.

## United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

**The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2007. Sweden was one of the 143 countries that voted in favour. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples aims to protect the special rights of indigenous populations; and the right to self-determination is key as many of the rights of indigenous peoples have been removed in the past.

Articles 11 and 12 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples deals with the right of indigenous peoples to practise and revitalise their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to manifestations of their cultures such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts and

other methods of expression. Article 11 stipulates that states must provide indigenous peoples with redress, and that this may include restitution with respect to their cultural property taken without their consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

Article 12 stipulates that indigenous peoples have the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains. Article 12 also stipulates that states must seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with the indigenous peoples affected.

museums to be prepared to embark upon discussions concerning the return of cultural objects to a country of origin or an indigenous people. Efforts to return cultural objects “should be undertaken in an impartial manner, based on scientific, professional and humanitarian principles as well as applicable local, national and international legislation”.

### Ceremonial and religious objects

When it comes to repatriation, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples refers in particular to ceremonial objects. However, the Declaration does not define what constitutes a ceremonial object. Therefore, whether the term refers to objects of religious significance or also includes objects used for ceremonial purposes but without being regarded as sacred or as bearers of religious symbolism is all a matter of interpretation.

Icom’s code of ethics does not refer to ceremonial objects. Instead, the code refers to objects of religious significance as a category in which demands for repatriation should be handled with particular sensitivity and respect.

An object that previously had religious meaning and a ceremonial function does not necessarily

have the same function today. Other objects are still linked with living religion and tradition. The significance of the object to contemporary practitioners of the religion to which the object is linked is a crucial element in the American law Nagpra, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. In this, sacred objects are defined as “specific ceremonial objects which are needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions by their present-day adherents”. This approach must not be perceived as indicative of how Swedish museums should behave on issues relating to the return of religious and ceremonial objects, but familiarity with the Nagpra definition is a valuable asset as Swedish museums may be involved in matters relating to objects from Native American groups.

Just as with human remains, the Minorities Act should be followed as it relates to ceremonial objects or other objects that may be assumed to be of corresponding significance.

### Nazi-confiscated art

Between 1933 and 1945, a huge number of items – art, antiques, books and other objects – were seized, confiscated, destroyed and subject to forced

## The Washington Principles and the Terezin Declaration

At a conference held in Washington in 1998 (*the Washington Conference on Holocaust Era Assets*), 44 states – including Sweden – concluded an agreement to work together to identify art confiscated by Nazi Germany before and during the Second World War and to return these items to their rightful owners. Attempts must be made to achieve fair and just solutions. The states are encouraged to devise systems or processes for alternative dispute resolution on the basis of these principles.

The Terezin Declaration was adopted by 47 states – including Sweden – at *the Prague Holo-*

*caust Era Assets Conference* held in Prague and Terezin in 2009. This declaration includes a number of different issues linked with the Holocaust, such as the welfare of survivors, property, memorials and education on the Holocaust. The importance of making even greater efforts to comply with the Washington Principles is emphasised with regard to art confiscated by the Nazis. All stakeholders, public and private alike, are encouraged to apply them.

The Washington Principles and the Terezin Declaration are not legally binding, but they constitute a moral obligation for these states.

sale by the Nazis in Germany and the occupied territories. Most of the people affected were Jews, but objects were also stolen from museums, libraries and churches. The confiscation of art was organised and systematic, and it took place on a huge scale.

The trade in stolen art and cultural objects continued after the war, and many objects and works of art have not yet been found or returned to their rightful owners.

According to the Washington Principles, which were adopted in 1998, art confiscated by the Nazis must be identified and records relating to it must be open and accessible so that the original owners or their heirs can submit claims. Resources must be provided for this work, and relevant archives and documents made available. If the descendants of the owners whose objects were confiscated can be found, prompt action must be taken to arrive at a just and fair solution, given the circumstances in each individual case. Some kind of just and fair solution must nevertheless be devised even if it is not possible to identify descendants.

The Terezin Declaration of 2009 emphasises the importance of making even greater efforts to comply with the Washington Principles. Particular emphasis is placed on the importance of

continued provenance research so as to be able to identify art confiscated by the Nazis, as well as reporting openly on the results of this research. States are encouraged to set up functioning systems to make it easier for owners or their heirs to have their claims dealt with within a reasonable time, given all relevant documentation and facts in the case.

### Objects suspected of having been stolen, confiscated or exported illegally from their country of origin

International conventions have been prepared from the mid-20th century onwards with a view to protecting cultural objects from confiscation, theft, destruction and illegal export. These conventions regulate agreements between the states ratifying each convention. In some states, the conventions become directly applicable as national law when they are ratified. In other countries, such as Sweden, the convention has to be implemented in Swedish law in order to become part of the national legislation.

Objects suspected of having been stolen, confiscated or exported illegally from their country of origin in any part of the ownership chain can be claimed back by another state or, in certain cases,

## Conventions and directives

*The Unesco Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (1970) has been signed by 140 states and has been distributed widely. The 1970 Unesco Convention was ratified by Sweden on 13 January 2003. So in other words, for any claims for returns to be made against Sweden on the basis of the Unesco Convention, it is necessary to be able to prove that the object in question was brought into Sweden after 13 January 2003.

*The Unidroit Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects* was adopted in 1995. This builds on and complements the 1970 Unesco Convention. Sweden joined the Unidroit Convention in 2011, and its provisions were introduced to the Historic Environment Act by means of two new chapters, 7 and 8. As a result, other state parties may institute proceedings relating to the return of stolen or illegally exported cultural

objects in a Swedish court. However, this requires the object to have been imported to Sweden after 1 December 2011.

Besides the conventions referred to above, the EU has introduced Directive 2014/60/EU, which relates to the return of cultural objects. This directive states that cultural objects exported illegally from a state within the European Economic Area (EEA) and found in any other member state must be returned. For Sweden, the directive was incorporated in Swedish law by means of new provisions in chapter 6 of the Historic Environment Act. The central cultural heritage authority in the state making the claim initiates proceedings in a Swedish court when the case for return relates to an object in Sweden. The Return Directive must be applied between EEA states, even if these states are also signatories to the Unidroit or Unesco Convention.

by an individual pursuant to chapters 6 and 7 of the Historic Environment Act (1988:950).

However, most objects in Swedish museum collections were included in these collections before chapters 6 and 7 of the Historic Environment Act came into force (on 1 January 1995 and 1 December 2011, respectively). This means that it is up to the person making the decision to determine whether or not the object is to be returned. The person making the decision may be guided by applicable

conventions, but there are no mandatory rules regarding the return of the object.

Submitters of claims (legal entities or natural persons) also have the option of suing a museum and arguing that they have more of a right to the object (legal ownership) than the museum. In this case, private international law is applicable and regulates which court is competent to hear the matter and which country's law is applicable.

# Perspectives and approaches to consider in cases of return

When examining a case relating to return of an object, the museum needs to make decisions on arguments for and against returning the object, as well as other ways of meeting the needs of the parties by sharing information and other exchanges. Examples of what may need to be taken into account in the investigation are provided below.

## Possible recipients

The museum needs to investigate whether there are one or more entitled recipients who have an interest in the object and have the opportunity to receive and manage it. The continuous link to the object should be investigated in this regard.

In general, objects should not be returned if there are several potential recipients who are deemed to be equally legitimate and who have different ideas on what should happen to the object.

## Significance of the object to the recipient

The significance of the object to the recipient is generally a compelling reason that is taken into account in the decision-making process. Its significance may be based on historical, religious or identity-related values. Strong emotional ties and aspects of reconciliation may also need to be taken into account. The museum needs to be aware of what the object means to the recipient and what it would mean to the recipient if it were returned.

## Significance of the object in the museum's collection

The museum needs to formulate the role of the object in the museum's collection. Is it for display to the general public, and is it an essential element of a display? Is it a unique item in the collection, or are there several similar objects? How does the object in question relate to the museum's policy on collections? Does the museum know enough about the object, and does it have the capacity to manage it adequately?

A list of ways in which the museum uses and handles the object at present can be used when making a decision.

## How the object was collected

The way in which the object was collected and became part of the museum's collection is of significance to the assessment of whether the object should be returned. If the object was confiscated or otherwise taken without the consent of the previous owner, this may be a strong argument in favour of returning it. If it can be confirmed that the object was collected in an ethically acceptable manner, this is an argument in favour of the museum retaining the object. In most cases, the history behind the collection of the object should be weighed up against other aspects and arguments.

## Whether the object is part of a specific context

Is the object in question part of a specific material context in the museum collection, or does the object belong more to a context relating to the recipient? For instance, if a single sculpture is part of an architectural context of other sculptures, the location of these other sculptures should be taken into account. Dividing material contexts is generally unfortunate, although there are instances in which exceptions need to be made.

## The research value of the object

The museum should note how the object has been used for research purposes, and assess its future value to research as far as possible. In this regard,

the museum may need to collate information from a number of different scientific disciplines so as to allow research value to be taken into account in the decision-making process. This includes assessing how availability for research will be affected if the object is returned.

#### The future of the object if it is returned

How the recipient plans to use the object may influence any decision to return it. If the recipient is planning to make the object available to the general public and for research purposes, this may be considered a positive aspect; particularly if the object in question is of particular historical or scientific value. If the recipient knows more about the object than the museum does, this can also be taken into account when making the decision.

In some cases, future accessibility should not be taken into account when making a decision. This may be the case in the return of stolen objects, or ceremonial objects, where the recipient does not want them to be displayed, for example.

#### *Basic approaches in cases of return*

The following fundamental approaches should be applied when dealing with returns of objects.

#### Respectful communication

Objects may be of differing significance to different individuals, groups, communities and institutions depending on their world view, religion or context. It is important to show respect for the perspectives of other individuals and groups, and to strive to achieve a mutual understanding of one another's opinions. Respectful dialogue is required in order to build trust between the parties.

#### Openness and transparency

To provide an open account on what collections contain and the origins of these collections is an important element in good collections management. If provenance research takes place, the museum should report to researchers and the general public on the results of this.

Openness and transparency also pave the way for good dialogue between the parties involved in the return of the object in question. The museum should be accommodating when dealing with questions about objects and associated documentation and provide regular information to interested parties about progress in the case.

#### Good case management

Prompt action when dealing with cases is a fundamental element in good case management. That said, returning objects frequently requires extensive investigations and may therefore take a long time, but such cases must be dealt with as efficiently as possible.

There should be clear documentation to make the process and decision transparent to the party making the claim. The museum authorities are governed by the Administrative Procedure Act (2017:900) and are therefore obliged to deal with cases objectively and impartially; desirable qualities in case management by all museums.

Museums should make it easier for individuals to safeguard their interests by making it clear how to submit a return request, for example, and indicating what information is required to allow the case to be dealt with.

The officer who is responsible for the case must have no personal links with the case that would disqualify them from participating.

# Knowledge of the history of the collections

Knowledge of the history of the collection is a fundamental element in good collections management. A collection does not generally mean just the objects, but also the information and knowledge linked with them.

Besides generally having a good knowledge of the history of the collection, it is important for museums to be aware of how the objects in their collection were obtained. Examining the provenance of objects allows museums to identify objects that were obtained illegally or improperly.

## Provenance

Provenance refers to the history of an object's chain of owners, from the time when it was created or discovered to the present day. Provenance research has traditionally been used in art history for the most part. Provenance research aims to ensure authenticity and ownership. In addition to this, museums need to try as far as possible to find out where an object comes from, and work out how it was exported from its country of origin and which countries it passed through before reaching the museum.

Provenance research aims to compile a complete chain of ownership. In practice, there are gaps in the chain of ownership in most cases and a variety of documentation will be missing. It may be particularly difficult to identify the chain of ownership for everyday objects and books, for example, as documenting the provenance of objects of this kind has not been common practice. Despite this, the aim should be to strive to produce as complete a chain of ownership as possible alongside documentation relating to the history of the object. Examples of relevant source material include import and export documentation, receipts, letters, donation documents and wills.

The museum may need assistance from external experts if more in-depth provenance research is needed. This is particularly true of research abroad, when international cooperation is also important.

## Due diligence

Due diligence means that a thorough review process takes place prior to making a decision to purchase an object, for example. This term is used in a number of areas, and in a museum context it refers to the following of good practice in the industry and taking action to ensure that any object that may be bought, loaned, exchanged or given as a gift has not been obtained by illegal means or exported illegally, and that the current owner is in legal possession of it. Due diligence is also observed when returning or deaccessioning objects.

## Investigation of provenance

Besides observing due diligence and checking provenance in connection with processes such as purchases, loans and returns, museums should adopt a proactive approach and devise a plan for compiling an overview of their existing collections. This will allow the museum to identify objects requiring more in-depth provenance research.

In respect of human remains, provenance research can be used to examine the circumstances relating to their collection and acquisition and, in certain cases, to be able to link the remains with a named individual. Provenance research can also be used for other objects to examine the circumstances relating to their collection and acquisition in order to find out whether there are specific reasons as to why they should be returned.

The following are examples of aspects checked when examining provenance:

- the owner of the object from the time the object was created or discovered until it was acquired by the museum
- where the object was located, and when
- the circumstances under which the object was acquired
- exhibition history, where applicable
- publication history, where applicable
- any research, sampling and analyses that can be linked to the object
- whether any claims have been put forward
- whether the object appears in any of the international stolen art databases.

Potential sources may include:

- archives such as the museum archives, art dealers' archives, the National Archives, photographic archives, regional and local archives and international archives
- exhibition catalogues
- auction catalogues
- newspaper articles
- other published sources (such as biographies)
- experts in the field
- previous owners
- family or other relatives linked with the donor/vendor.
- international stolen art databases

Besides the sources referred to above, it is of course important to examine the object itself. This may, for example, involve a stylistic analysis of the ob-

ject in order to assess its era and likely origin. The object may also bear traces of labels or other markings that provide information about its history. There may be labels and stamps from art dealers, exhibitions or galleries on the back of a painting, potentially providing important information. Supplementary scientific analyses may need to be performed in some cases such as X-rays, analysis of ink or paint or UV and IR photography.

Many collections were assembled around the same time, and objects in different museums may originate from the same collecting venture. Museums also have varying technical knowledge and expertise depending on their specialisations and geographical focus, for example. This is why museums may find it very helpful to work together and share information with one another.

### Openness on provenance

The results of provenance surveys are documented in accordance with the organisation's procedures in the collections management system or similar.

This information should be published on the museum website or equivalent. This will give both researchers and the general public access to information and the museum may possibly receive assistance to help it complete the data it has generated.

The results of provenance surveys help to add to what we know about the objects in the collections. To pass on information about the history of objects to a wider public, there are examples of museums that explain about the provenance of objects by means of signs, or by producing exhibitions that focus on research into the history of those objects.

# Handling cases of return

Object returns can be initiated by the museum itself, or by claims made externally. This process should be characterised by openness and mutual respect. Every museum should have a policy on returns. The following description of the various elements of the management process can be used if assistance is needed. See Appendix 1 for examples of what a policy may contain.

## Dialogue and negotiation when returning objects

Openness and transparency pave the way for good dialogue. The museum should be accommodating when dealing with questions about museum objects and associated documentation and provide regular information about progress in the case.

Both an initiative taken by the museum itself and an external claim will result in negotiation with the recipient. It is important to show respect for one another's perspectives, and to strive to achieve mutual understanding. It is easier to arrive at a solution if the museum has been given a clear view of what the party making the claim needs and if the museum has made its own position clear. The museum and the recipient should always strive to achieve consensus on a solution when negotiating.

Negotiations can lead to many different results. Be open to different ways of arriving at a solution. There are times when knowledge and information about the object are more important to the recipient than the object itself. Moreover, the recipient may not have the opportunity to preserve and manage the object, so in this case retaining the museum as the owner while giving the submitter of the claim digital access to all information and documentation relating to the object is one potential solution.

Possible solutions besides returning the object:

- *Loan*: lending the object to the recipient or the museum.
- *Copy*: a copy can be made for the recipient if the object is not returned, for example, or for the museum if the object is returned.

- *Insight and co-determination*: the museum allows the other party to influence how the object is used at the museum, as well as providing access to the object as per an agreement.

In some cases, negotiation may lead to repatriation of the object, with its replacement by a recently manufactured object produced in discussion between the museum and the party making the claim. The museum can also agree with the party making the claim on retention of a digital visualisation of the object and digitised documentation relating to it.

Information exchange is frequently an important element of object returns, and in many cases the recipient can contribute valuable information on the history and usage of an object. Moreover, long-term relationships can be built that enrich further museum activities.

## Advisory councils and reference groups

There are times when museums set up an advisory council to deal with return issues or other ethical matters. Museums may also turn to reference groups with expertise and experience in specific areas and ask them for assistance. The reference group may be established for a long-term cooperation, or as part of a temporary project.

Get help from external experts if necessary. See also the list of organisations on page 24 for information on organisations that can provide advice on object returns.

## Authorisation to make decisions on returning objects

Every museum needs to examine its own criteria for transferring objects from its collections to another party. These criteria may vary depending on whether the object has been donated, for example, or whether the museum has purchased it. Material subject to find distribution (transferring the States right to an ancient find to a museum) is handled in the same way as other material when decisions are made on deaccessioning.

Decisions on disposal must be made according to an established decision-making arrangement for the organisation in question.

Decision-making in municipalities is controlled by the Local Government Act (2017:725) and may be subject to assessment of legality, which is where an administrative court examines whether a decision has been made correctly.

Many museums are run in the form of foundations. In these cases, the memorandum of association can determine whether objects may be deaccessioned from the collection.

For national museums, the Government generally makes decisions on disposal as the transaction involves transferring state chattels. When a national museum deems that an object should be returned, the museum submits a request to the Government for disposal of the object by returning it. When the matter has been discussed at the Cabinet Office, the Government makes a decision on whether the museum may or may not dispose of the state property. If the object was purchased with state funding, the Government may need to let the Swedish Riksdag (Parliament) make a decision on its return (see chapter 8, article 6 of the Budget Act). The museum may return the object if the Government sanctions the request. If any legal dispute arises, the museum will represent the Government in court within its field of activity (article 27, first paragraph of the Government Agency Ordinance [2007:515]).

However, in accordance with the Museums Act (2017:563), national museums themselves may make decisions to transfer objects from the collections to other museums within the public museum system. This means that national museums are allowed to give away objects to other national museums, municipal or regional museums and museums where more than half of the members of the board or oth-

er management body are appointed by central government, a municipality or a county council.

With regard to objects that the museum considers to be of limited historical and scientific value, the museum may also offer these to stakeholders outside the public museum system, namely:

1. other public organisations
2. museums that are not part of the public museum system
3. non-profit cultural heritage organisations

The legal situation is unclear when it comes to recipients abroad in the categories set out above.

## The handling process

### Initiate a return

#### **When offering an object to an external recipient**

The museum can identify objects or human remains that could be returned for ethical reasons, or where the museum is of the opinion that these would be of greater value to someone else, such as a group or nation. In such instances, compile information and documentation about the object and give reasons as to why returning it may be justifiable.

The embassies of most countries can assist with finding the right points of contact with museums, institutions or groups.

#### **If a claim is made by an external party**

Information on what a claim is expected to include should be readily accessible on the website in both Swedish and English, and possibly also in Sami or other relevant languages. When a claim is received, respond promptly to the party submitting it to indicate that it has been received.

The claim should be made in writing and include the following:

- The name and contact details of the recipient. If a claim is submitted via a third party, documentation must be available confirming that this party is representing the submitter of the claim.
- A description of how the recipient is related to the object.
- Reasons and background.
- The designations and identification numbers of each object.

- A description of how the object was used previously, and by whom.

In some cases, it is necessary to clarify in the application how the object is to be used in future; whether it is to be reinterred, form part of a religious ceremony or be exhibited at a museum, for instance. If this is a crucial factor for a decision to be made, this should be included in the policy on returns.

Confirm that the museum has received the enquiry/claim. Provide information on how the matter will be investigated and who will be acting as the contact person for the case. Refer to the museum's policy on returns. Send a copy of the confirmed claim to the responsible authority; a ministry, board or committee.

### Create a case

Museums and organisations create cases according to different procedures. Cases are created in order to ensure that the information and documentation are retained and can be found. Document the process so that it can be understood in retrospect, and so that the entire case can be followed from start to finish. All material, such as letters and emails and notes from telephone calls and meetings, should be retained for the case. Some cases are resumed after a number of years, and in that case it is important to understand what was said and what decisions were made previously.

### Appoint a responsible administrator

Appoint a responsible administrator and contact person to ensure that the process is implemented in accordance with the museum's policy. It is also desirable for the recipient party to appoint a contact person who is responsible for discussions with the museum.

The museum should have a contingency plan in place relating to how queries from the media and the general public should be dealt with, for example.

### Identify and investigate the object

Identify the object in question and its location. Check that the museum has ownership of it. If the object is on loan or has been deposited with the museum, the owner must be contacted. When a claim is made, the party submitting the claim

should be notified that the museum does not own the object and referred on to the legal owner of the object.

Compile all information available on the object and its provenance. Further investigations may need to take place, depending on what reasons are specified by the recipient. The section above entitled *Knowledge of the history of the collections* provides examples of relevant knowledge and documentation, and also of sources that may be useful when producing information on the history of the object. Thorough provenance research is necessary, particularly if it is suspected that the object may have been stolen, confiscated or exported illegally in any part of the ownership chain.

Besides the provenance survey, the museum should decide whether the object could constitute a risk to people or the environment due to the use of pesticides or other unhealthy substances, for example. If the object presents a risk to health or the environment, the recipient needs to be notified of this.

If the object is being exhibited or out on loan, the recipient should be told. There may also be a need to update signage or other public information about the object; on the website or in exhibitions, for example.

### Finances

Costs will be incurred when returning objects. Which costs are to be met by the museum and which are to be met by the recipient should be settled clearly early on in the process. It is customary for the museum to meet its own costs – for the working hours required for the case, for example – along with charges for any assistance from external experts. In the same way, the recipient usually meets its own direct costs for travel and time spent on the case, for example. Transport costs and charges incurred when moving the object to return it are other expenses that may need to be met. Costs for organising a ceremony may also need to be included in calculations. In cases relating to human remains, the distribution of costs for a potential burial should also be clarified.

### Communication

A communication plan should be compiled for every return case which states who is responsible for contact with the press and for dealing with

queries from the general public, and also when communication should take place. This communication plan should be compiled at an early stage and be updated regularly as the return case proceeds.

The communication plan may include:

- identification and descriptions of target groups (such as journalists, visitors, other museums and the museum's own personnel)
- the elements that it is important to communicate in the various phases of the return process
- which channels are to be used and how; such as the museum's notice board, website, social media, newsletters, press releases and media participation
- who is responsible for various communication efforts, and when these are to take place.

General advice when communicating on return cases:

- All personnel, including people who are not involved in the process, should be kept informed about ongoing return cases.
- Check the contents of external communications with relevant parties, including the party making the claim, before publishing this information.

### Investigate the recipient

A recipient may be a central government, and indigenous people, a family, a minority population or an individual.

Investigating a recipient's links to the object may be an extensive task. By all means get other museums to help you, both nationally and internationally, so that you can share experiences with one another.

Find out whether the potential receipt of the object is rooted in the group represented by the recipient. If the recipient claims to be linked to the object via family ties, these family ties need to be investigated. Find out whether others may have legitimate claims to the same object. If other potential recipients are identified, they should be notified of the case. If there are a number of legitimate recipients, the museum should examine whether they agree on who should receive the object. If they disagree, the museum should wait before handing over the object until it has been ensured that they agree, or until one of them is deemed to be more entitled to receive the object than the others.

If a claim is made, the recipient should give reasons for the claim and confirm their rights by means of appropriate documentation. The museum should provide information about what documentation is needed for the case to be dealt with.

### Compile a basis for decision

Compile the information produced during the case, and describe how the process has been implemented. The information on which the decision is based may include a description of how the object is currently used at the museum and future needs, the scientific, historical and artistic value of the object and how the general public has access to the object and information about it in the current situation. The information on which the decision is based should also include a proposal for a decision that describes the needs of both the recipient and the museum, as well as a plan for what should happen when a decision has been made.

### Decision

The decision should be presented in writing and include reasons to clarify why it has been made. This is a requirement for national and municipal museums. Relevant parties must be informed of the decision when it has been made. If an opportunity is given to appeal the decision, information on this must be included in the decision.

Notify the museum's personnel about the decision. If the museum makes the formal decision on the case, the responsible authority should also be notified.

### Deaccession the object

If a decision is made to return the object, it has to be deaccessioned; that is, officially removed from the permanent collection. For assistance with this, the museum can follow the advice given by the Swedish National Heritage Board in its document *God samlingsförvaltning – stöd för museer i gallringsprocessen* [*Good collections management – guidance for museums in the deaccessioning process*].

### Implement a return

Compile an agreement that regulates when and how the object is to be returned, and how costs for transportation, packaging and other charges are to be settled. Any decision to return an object should state what documentation is to be sent with it, and

whether these documents should be originals or copies.

An export permit and certificate of export may be required in certain instances if the object is to be exported from Sweden. Find out more on the Swedish National Heritage Board website: <https://www.raa.se/lagar-och-stod/kulturmiljola-gen-kml/utforsel-och-export-av-kulturforemal-5-8-kap/>.

A Cites permit is required to export endangered species: applications for these permits are submitted to the Swedish Board of Agriculture. Please consult the Swedish Board of Agriculture for more information on what items may be subject to Cites.

The supporting document *Good collections management. Guidance for handling human remains in museum collections* is recommended for the handling of human remains.

In some cases, there is a need to mark and celebrate the return with a ceremony. A ceremony can be an element in a reconciliation process and be of importance to both the recipient and the museum. Hold a discussion with the recipient on whether the museum or the recipient is to be responsible for the ceremony, or whether both parties are to plan and organise it jointly.

## Interment and reburial

In the event of reburial in Sweden, the museum should agree with the recipient on how this is to take place, what permits need to be applied for and who is responsible for doing this. Permits may be required for an archaeological survey, grave opening, sampling and restoration of ancient monuments. The Historic Environment Act has to be observed in these cases. It may be necessary to comply with chapter 5 article 4 of the Burial Act (1990:1144) and the Burial Ordinance (1990:1147) when interring human remains.

## Conclude the case

Log and archive all information, documentation, files, agreements and correspondence produced during the process. If the object is returned, this should be noted in all elements of the documentation system.

## Follow up the return

It is a good idea to implement a follow-up and evaluation of the return case so that lessons can be learned ahead of future return cases. What worked well/less well?

# References and further reading

## Laws

- Budget Act* (2011:203).  
*Burial Act* (1990:1144).  
*Burial Ordinance* (1990:1147).  
*Government Agency Ordinance* (2007:515).  
*Historic Environment Act* (1988:950).  
*Museums Act* (2017:563).  
*National Minorities and Minority Languages Act* (2009:724).  
*The return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State* (Directive 2014/60/EU), Return Directive (incorporated in the Historic environment act).

## Conventions and international agreements

- Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*. 1970. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/1970-convention/> (28 November 2019).  
*Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*. 1954. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/armed-conflict-and-heritage/convention-and-protocols/1954-hague-convention/> (28 November 2019).  
Icom Sweden. 2011. *Icoms etiska regler (Icom Code of Ethics for Museums)*. Second edition. Stockholm. [http://icomsweden.se/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/etiska-regler\\_webb-1.pdf](http://icomsweden.se/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/etiska-regler_webb-1.pdf) (28 November 2019).  
*Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society*. Adopted by the General Conference of Unesco on 17 November 2015. [http://www.unesco.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/unesco\\_rekommendation-f%C3%B6rmuseer.pdf](http://www.unesco.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/unesco_rekommendation-f%C3%B6rmuseer.pdf) (28 November 2019).  
*Terezin Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets and Related Issues*. 2009. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/eur/rls/or/126162.htm> (28 November 2019).

- Unidroit Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects*. 1995. <https://www.unidroit.org/instruments/cultural-property/1995-convention> (28 November 2019).  
*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. 2007. [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf) (28 November 2019).  
*Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art*. 1998. <https://www.state.gov/washington-conference-principles-on-nazi-confiscated-art/> (28 November 2019).

## Guidelines and advice

- Collections Trust. 2019. *Spectrum 5.0. The UK Museum Collections Management Standard, Collections Trust*, 2017. <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum> (2 December 2019).  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2005. *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums*. London. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/DCMS-Guide\\_o.pdf](https://www.britishmuseum.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/DCMS-Guide_o.pdf) (28 November 2019).  
Deutscher Museumsbund. 2019. *Guidelines for German Museums. Care of Collections from Colonial Contexts*. 2nd edition. <https://www.museumsbund.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/dmb-guidelines-colonial-context-2019.pdf> (28 November 2019).  
Swedish National Heritage Board. 2017. *God samlingsförvaltning – stöd för museer i gallringsprocessen*. [Good collections management – guidance for museums in the deaccessioning process] Visby. <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:raa:diva-3794> (28 November 2019).  
Swedish National Heritage Board. 2020. *Good collections management. Guidance for handling human remains in museum collections*. Visby.

## Search engines and databases for stolen objects

- The Art Loss Register. <http://www.artloss.com/> (28 November 2019).
- The Central Registry of Information on Looted Cultural Property 1933–1945. <https://www.lootedart.com/search2.php> (28 November 2019).
- European Commission. *Internal Market Information System (IMI)* [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/imi-net/index\\_sv.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/imi-net/index_sv.htm) (28 November 2019).
- German Lost Art Foundation. *The Lost Art Internet Database*. <http://www.lostart.de/Webs/EN/Datenbank/Index.html> (28 November 2019).
- Icom. *Red Lists Database*. Emergency Red Lists of Cultural Objects at Risk. <https://icom.museum/en/resources/red-lists/> (28 November 2019).
- Interpol. *Stolen Works of Art Database*. <https://www.interpol.int/How-we-work/Databases/Stolen-Works-of-Art-Database> (28 November 2019).
- Unesco. *Unesco Database of National Cultural Heritage Laws*. <https://en.unesco.org/cultnat-laws> (28 November 2019).
- United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC). *Sherloc*. Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime. <https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/v3/sherloc/> (28 November 2019).

## Miscellaneous

- Cultural Heritage Policy: Government Bill 2016/17:116*. 2017. Stockholm. Riksdagens tryckeriexpedition.

- Nagpra – The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act*. Federal law in the US. Relates to the indigenous people of the US and their rights in respect of the return of remains and grave goods. Not applicable outside the US. <https://www.nps.gov/archeology/tools/laws/nagpra.htm> (28 November 2019).

## Further reading

- Feigenbaum, Gail & Reist, Inge Jackson (eds.). 2013. *Provenance: an alternate history of art*. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute.
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- Unesco. 2009. *Witnesses to History. Documents and writings on the return of cultural objects*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000185386> (28 November 2019).
- Yeide, Nancy H., Walsh, Amy & Akinsha, Konstantin. 2001. *The AAM Guide to Provenance Research*. Washington DC, American Association of Museums.

# Organisations

The following organisations can be contacted for assistance on specific issues relating to the return of objects.

## Icom

Icom, the International Council of Museums, is an international organisation that counts museums and museum professionals among its members. Icom is a member association and a non-governmental organisation that establishes skills and ethical standards for museum activities.

## Icom-Wipo

Icom and Wipo (the World Intellectual Property Organization) have agreed to collaborate in the development and organization of a special mediation process for disputes involving Icom's areas of activity <https://www.wipo.int/amc/en/center/specific-sectors/art/icom/rules/> (28 November 2019).

## Icom Sweden

Icom Sweden is the Swedish National Icom Committee. Icom Sweden may be very helpful with regard to issues relating to assistance with ethical discussions. <http://icomsweden.se/>

## Unesco

Unesco is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture..

One of Unesco's methods involves member states working with what are known as normative instruments. These may be a statement from a conference (declaration), a recommendation or a convention.

## Intergovernmental Committee for

Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation (ICPRCP)

A separate intergovernmental committee was established under the leadership of Unesco in 1978 for cases and issues relating to the return of cultural property to its countries of origin. The purpose of this committee is to allow Unesco member states to discuss, reflect on and negotiate on cases where international conventions – primarily the 1970 Unesco Convention and the 1995 Unidroit Convention – are not applicable.

This committee is not authorised to resolve disputes through legally binding agreements.

Before a state can bring a case before the intergovernmental committee, the country has to have initiated bilateral negotiations with the state designated as its counterparty. The committee can only take up the case when these negotiations have failed or been discontinued.

## Swedish National Commission for Unesco

A national commission forms the link between Unesco and the authorities, institutions and civil society organisations in its member states.

## The Sami Parliament

The Sami Parliament in Sweden is both a state authority with officials and a parliament with members elected by the people. The Sami Parliament was formed with a view to improving opportunities for the Sami people of Sweden to preserve and develop their culture. Museums wishing to discuss issues relating to the return of Sami remains and objects can consult the Sami Parliament.

# Appendix 1: Policy for the return of objects

A policy for the return of objects may be a separate policy or form part of a general collections management policy. This policy is a document that indicates the fundamental principles of the organisation for long-term work on the return of objects. It can also include focus areas for future efforts relating to the return of objects, as well as roles and responsibilities in the decision-making process. The policy should provide assistance with decision-making in various situations. If necessary,

references can also be made to more detailed procedures for various fields.

The policy should form part of other policy documents available for other elements of the organisation's activities. It should be revised at regular intervals, or as necessary. The policy should be published in an appropriate manner – on the museum's website, for example – so that the applicable principles are clear to everyone.

## **A policy may contain a description of the following:**

- Definition of terms such as return, repatriation and restitution.
- The purpose of the policy.
- What objects form the museum's collections and why they are there, in relation to the purpose and mission of the museum.
- Which laws, conventions and international agreements are of relevance to the returning of objects.
- Roles and responsibilities at the museum with regard to the return of objects.
- Criteria for the return of objects that need to be met for the museum to embark upon a return case.
- Object groups that may be affected by the return, if it is possible to define these.
- What information is needed by the museum in order to investigate the legitimacy of the recipient.
- How the museum can use and display an object that is being investigated for potential return. If necessary, there may also be references to procedures for exhibition, displays, photography, publication and dialogue with the public.
- How research and sampling of objects being investigated for potential return are conducted. This may include a description of the museum's approach to research and sampling, as well as who may have access to these objects, who may handle and work with them, and how they do so. Where necessary, there may also be references to procedures for application processes, when and how samples can be taken and how research results can be incorporated in the collections.
- Which costs are generally met by the museum when it comes to returning objects, and whether there are any costs that are to be borne by the recipient.
- How the museum communicates on its return efforts, both internally and externally, to the community. For example, it is possible to specify in the policy that all communication should take place in close cooperation with the recipient, where possible.
- How the museum works with deaccessioning and disposal of objects. This may include a description of when and why objects may be deaccessioned and disposed of. If necessary, there may also be reference to procedures for selection, with criteria, disposal methods and decision-making processes.
- Possible alternatives or complements to return, such as copies, documentation or loans.
- What a claim needs to include so that the museum can proceed with the case, and how the claim should be submitted.

### **Formalities**

- Who compiled the policy, and when.
- When the policy is to be revised.
- What other steering documents may be of relevance to the return.
- How other policies should relate to this policy, such as “Policy on acquisitions” or “Policy for

the handling of human remains in museum collections”.

- Documentation of the return of objects. This may include a description of the museum’s documentation and information system and how it is used, made available and developed in relation to the return of objects.

