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Federal Department of Home Affairs

Switzerland and Turkey sign bilateral agreement on cultural property

Bern, 15.11.2022 - Federal Councillor Alain Berset and the Turkish Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, signed a bilateral agreement in Ankara today on the international transfer of cultural property. The agreement is intended to preserve both countries' cultural heritage.

The agreement covers archaeological objects dating from the prehistoric period to 1500 AD, which are particularly affected by unlawful excavations and illegal trade. The agreement regulates the legal requirements for importing cultural property into one of the two countries that are party to the treaty. Furthermore, it sets out the modalities of repatriating unlawfully imported cultural property. Finally, the agreement regulates mutual reporting and promotes cooperation on fighting the illegal transfer of cultural property.

The global trade in cultural property has grown significantly in recent decades. The legal art trade has increased, but so has the illegal transfer of cultural property, which causes serious and often irreversible damage to cultural heritage. The Federal Council may conclude international treaties (bilateral agreements) on the import and repatriation of cultural property with countries that have ratified the 1970 UNESCO Convention. These agreements protect cultural and foreign affairs interests and secure cultural heritage. Switzerland has already concluded such agreements with Italy, Greece, Colombia, China, Egypt, Cyprus, Peru and Mexico.

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