

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report summarizes and analyzes the extent to which each of 47 countries has followed the **Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art** developed in connection with the 1998 Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets. Consisting of 11 non-binding principles intended to assist countries with differing legal systems in resolving issues relating to Nazi-confiscated art within the context of their own laws, the Principles encourage nations to identify and research Nazi-looted cultural property and ultimately to return what was looted and confiscated during the Nazi era. The 47 countries are those that endorsed the 2009 Terezin Declaration which incorporated the Principles.<sup>1</sup>

**In summary, there has been significant progress, but much remains to be done.**

Our review shows a number of important developments over the past 25 years:

- Most countries have done at least some historical research, so that we know better how the looting of cultural property was carried out. In some instances, the initiation of historical research has been helped by projects sponsored by the Claims Conference-WJRO.
- Provenance research has grown greatly and has become much more advanced, partly as the result of greater access to archives and the effect of digitization. However, museums in many countries continue to ignore the need for provenance research, and in most countries, it is not seen as an essential part of museum practice.
- Claims processes are now in place in many countries, but the resulting numbers of cases handled and resulting restitutions often remain low. Five of the 47 countries have established restitution commissions to facilitate claims, but the overwhelming majority of countries still do not have one.
- Although the Washington Conference Principles were intended to cover more than just public collections, there has been far less progress with regard to items formerly owned by individuals that are currently in private hands. There remains much to do with regard to provenance research, transparency of records and facilitation of claims of items that are today held privately.
- There is now greater awareness of the special status of cultural property that belonged to Jewish communities, but in many cases, property still remains with private individuals rather than being part of the heritage of the Jewish people.

The report presents ratings based on whether or not a given country:

- a) has done historical research on the subject, whether through an historical commission or otherwise;
- b) does provenance research on its collections;
- c) has a claims process, whether through a restitution commission or otherwise;
- d) has made a substantial number of restitutions.

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<sup>1</sup> The report partially relies on information provided by the *JUST Act Report* published by the U.S. Department of State in 2020 (<https://www.state.gov/justice-for-uncompensated-survivors-today-just-act-report>). The current report focuses on developments since the *JUST Act Report*'s release in 2020. Previous Claims Conference-WJRO reports on the topic were also used, including *Looted Art: A World-Wide Preliminary Overview* (2009) (<https://www.claimscon.org/forms/prague/looted-art.pdf>) and *Holocaust-Era Looted Art: An Overview of Worldwide Progress* (2014) (<https://art.claimscon.org/advocacy/looted-art-report/>), as well as current relevant publications and consultations with experts.

Based on the above factors:

Seven (7) countries have made major progress in implementing the Washington Conference Principles:

Austria, Czechia, France, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States

Three (3) countries have made substantial progress in implementing the Washington Conference Principles:

Canada, Israel, Switzerland

Thirteen (13) countries have made some progress in implementing the Washington Conference Principles:

Argentina, Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden

Twenty-four (24) countries have made little or no progress yet in implementing the Washington Conference Principles:

Albania, Australia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Türkiye, Ukraine, Uruguay