

Return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State

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The rapporteur pointed out that cultural objects enjoyed special treatment when it came to the free movement provided for under the terms of the Treaty. For example, paintings valued above ECU 150 000 and drawings valued above ECU 15 000 required an official licence before they could be exported. Water-colour, gouache and pastel pictures posed a special problem in that they were considered as paintings in some countries and as drawings in others. The rapporteur took the view that classifying these works in the category of paintings would eventually mean too many of them requiring an official licence. It was for this reason that he proposed creating an intermediate category. Commissioner Bonino said that in her opinion the loopholes in European legislation as regards the export of cultural objects had been filled in as a result of the harmonisation of measures designed to protect water-colour, gouache and pastel pictures, which was the object of the proposal in question. She also pointed out that Parliament would have an opportunity, later that year, to hold a debate on cultural works when the Commission would be presenting the first three-yearly report on the application of the Regulations in this sector.