

## CLAIMED LINKS BETWEEN THE ART MARKET AND TERRORISM FINANCING

Over the past 20 years and more, governments, law enforcement, NGOs and others<sup>[1]</sup> have spent vast sums of money and countless hours investigating the art market. **Their ultimate objective? To prove that it is responsible for terrorism financing. The result? Nothing.** Yet, even when their own studies can find no evidence to support their claims (*See section on Deloitte<sup>[2]</sup> & Ecorys<sup>[3]</sup> reports below*) still they persist in stating otherwise, pushing for more and more restrictions on legitimate trade while arguing that it remains a high-risk target for looters.

### **Why does this matter? Because it is against the public interest:**

- It creates unnecessary bureaucracy, thereby stifling legitimate business interests across the art and antiques market without due cause and does so in breach of the European Commission President’s guiding principles<sup>[4]</sup>.
- It leads to the persecution of legitimate business and private individuals in breach of fundamental human rights, including property rights and privacy rights.
- These measures frequently involve official support from Western governments and law enforcement for undemocratic regimes as they pursue unjustified claims prompted by propaganda and other agendas.
- The long-term consequence will be a great fall-off in the number of people collecting, who are vital to the conservation and preservation of minor objects that underpin the whole field of cultural heritage. And it means valuable resources are directed away from where they are most needed: in protecting vulnerable heritage sites around the world and targeting the real criminals.

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### **Footnotes**

[1] These include: The US Government, the European Commission and Member States’ national governments, UNESCO, Interpol, Europol, the World Customs Organization, Homeland Security, US Customs, the New York District Attorney’s specialist Antiquities Investigations Unit, numerous academic institutions, campaign groups and NGOs.

[2] Deloitte for the European Commission, June 2017: DG TAXUD *Fighting illicit trafficking in cultural goods: analysis of customs issues in the EU* <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fadd3791-aa40-11e7-837e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> See page 120: “As shown from the surveys to the Member States’ administrations, hard evidence on the existence of these effects is currently often lacking”. This statement annotates a bar chart showing zero evidence available of terrorism financing.

[3] Ecorys for the European Commission July 2019 *Illicit trade in cultural goods in Europe – Characteristics, criminal justice responses and an analysis of the applicability of technologies in the*

*combat against the trade: final report*

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d79a105a-a6aa-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1>

See page 15: “Measuring or estimating the size of the illicit trade in cultural goods proves to be a challenging task as no reliable statistics exist that can be used to provide a comprehensive picture... It was impossible to distinguish licit from illicit transactions in this exercise as there was no access to the sold objects and no way of establishing their authenticity or trading histories.”

See page 16-17: “The scale of looting, trafficking, and the amount of money generated from these activities as well as exact nature of involvement of terrorist groups in the illicit trade in cultural goods remain unclear.”

See page 16 (regarding trafficking routes: “It is difficult to draw conclusions on specific routes because, overall, the data is scarce, seizure samples are small and observed routes vary according to local/national perspectives.” AND “Trafficking routes involved are largely unknown to anyone except for the traffickers themselves”.

See page 63: “As a result of the lack of statistics, the conclusions of this study are predominantly supported by qualitative data.”

See page 81-82 regarding looted items “being put on ice” for future trafficking: “There is no evidence to support this opinion, however, and it should be treated with caution.”

[4] Ursula von der Leyen, President-Elect of the European Commission, *Mission letter*, 10th September 2019: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/mission-letter-mariya-gabriel-2019\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/mission-letter-mariya-gabriel-2019_en.pdf)