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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Good practice on the protection of cultural heritage – Return of archaeological objects to Bulgaria <i>- Information of the Bulgarian delegation</i>

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Bulgarian delegation on the above subject, which has been put on the agenda under ‘Any other business’ for the next Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 21-22 November 2019.

Good practice on the protection of cultural heritage – Return of archaeological objects to Bulgaria

In September 2019 during an official ceremony in Berlin more than 200 archaeological objects from Antiquity and Middle Ages were returned by the German authorities to Bulgaria – their country of provenance. The successful return resulted from the efficient cooperation among various institutions – the German Federal Ministry of Finance, the Customs Office in Berlin, the Bavarian State Bureau of Investigation Forensic Science Institute, the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, the Bulgarian Embassy in Berlin, the Bulgarian National Archaeological Institute and the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture.

Bulgaria would like to express its high appreciation for the professional work and cooperation of the German authorities for the protection of the Bulgarian cultural heritage.

This particular case is a good example in light of the importance of the protection of the European cultural heritage. Engagement and bilateral dialogue between the EU Member States' governments and institutions are important for combating the illicit trafficking and illicit trade of cultural objects, but they also contribute to combating other forms of criminal activities related to them such as money laundering, tax evasion, organised crime and financing of terrorism, including in the context of the recently entered into force Regulation on the introduction and the import of cultural goods.

EU Member states and other European countries should work closely together to tackle the illicit traffic and trade of cultural objects that have been unlawfully removed from their countries of provenance as well as to prevent actions that could endanger the cultural heritage.

Such cooperation is of real added value for the European project and should continue to be guided by a spirit of goodwill and solidarity in order to preserve our common cultural heritage for the future European generations.