

Central Office for the Fight against illegal Trafficking in Cultural Goods (OCBC)



The OCBC was created in 1975 as an investigative service of the French Central Directorate of the Judicial Police (DCPJ) that has national jurisdiction and is staffed by police officers and gendarmes.

Trafficking in cultural goods remains one of the biggest forms of illegal trade in the world as judged by the profits made out of it.

The OCBC is fully committed to combatting organised crime and deals with complex investigations of theft and receiving stolen property as well as forgery cases, fraud committed by organised groups and money laundering at both national and international levels.

Among other things, the OCBC is involved in the fight against looting and illicit trafficking of archaeological artefacts from war-torn countries, which are commonly referred to as “Blood Antiquities”.

The fight against illicit trafficking in cultural goods is characterised by its multifaceted approach that covers a wide range of criminal activities and targets organised crime networks making substantial profits.

Consequently, investigators continue to mainly focus their strategies on the seizure of criminal assets.

Five priority areas of action:

Investigation – Own-initiative investigations or investigations carried out by several operational groups at the request of a judicial authority, with the assistance of a group dedicated to the processing of operational and strategic intelligence.

The OCBC can conduct investigations jointly with all other investigators, making use of a network of contact persons working in police and gendarmerie services at local level.

Criminal intelligence – SIRASCO (Organised Crime Information, Intelligence and Strategic Analysis Unit) cross-checks intelligence received from local services, international partners and Customs services using all judicial databases available as well as the TREIMA database (electronic search and fine-art images thesaurus). SIRASCO adds the information to the Interpol PSYCHE database and maintains a constant surveillance of Internet traffic.

International cooperation – As a national access point for Interpol and through its participation in EU police operations as part of the EMPACT project. It exchanges operational data with EUROPOL and foreign investigative services. It also works closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Training – Through training courses organised for French or foreign investigators and through its participation in the training programs for judges and university-based events.

Prevention – Working with institutional partners, such as the Ministry of Culture or art market professionals (associations of antique dealers, experts, insurers...)

In furtherance of its prevention objective, the OCBC has contributed to the drafting of a handbook on the security of cultural property published by the Ministry of Culture and Communication. This handbook is for all owners and those who are responsible for works of art, whether they are private individuals or professionals. It provides advices and simple and practical tools for those who want to protect themselves from the theft of their own property and at the same time, of our common artistic and cultural heritage.

This handbook can be viewed and downloaded on the website of the [French Ministry of Culture and Communication](#) . You will also find a presentation of the OCBC and of its role, see in particular pages 32, 33 and 38.



* *

OCBC's activity was recently strengthened in relation to the fight against damage to items belonging to the national archaeological heritage and against the international trafficking of antiquities from the Middle East and South America.

As is the case in many trafficking situations, the Internet remains a major facilitator of the smuggling of objects that were fraudulently obtained.

The OCBC is continuously developing its knowledge on how the art market works at a national and international level by dint of the investigations that have been carried out. This expertise can and should be shared with all the judges, investigators, institutional or private actors that are involved in the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property.