



FAQ – Frequently asked questions concerning the Federal Commission for the Protection of Cultural Property (FCPCP)

What is the FCPCP?

The Federal Commission for the Protection of Cultural Property (FCPCP) is an extra-parliamentary commission with an advisory function. It is responsible for all matters relating to the protection of historical monuments and works of art, archaeological sites and collections in museums, archives and libraries in the event of armed conflicts, disasters or emergencies. The FCPCP is independent of the Federal Administration and the political establishment. It provides critical advice and issues statements and recommendations.

Who are the members of the FCPCP?

The FCPCP is a specialist body made up of 15 experts from various fields. The experts are appointed by the Federal Council and represent the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA), the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (CME), the Swiss Conference of Directors of Public Works, Planning and Environmental Protection (DDPE), the Conference of the Heads of the Cantonal Departments Responsible for Civil Protection, the Federal Commission for Monument Preservation (FCMP) and the expert bodies for the preservation of historical monuments, art history, archaeology, museums, libraries and archives.

The Federal Council appoints the 15 FCPCP members for a term of four years. The overall term of office is limited to 12 years. The members of the full extra-parliamentary committees for the 2024-2027 period were appointed by the Federal Council at its meeting on 22 November 2023.

What are the FCPCP's tasks?

The FCPCP advises the federal departments on fundamental issues relating to the protection of historical and art monuments, archaeological sites and collections in museums, archives and libraries. It also assists in implementing the provisions of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the Federal Act on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, Disasters and Emergencies and its ordinance. In addition, it assists in updating the Swiss Inventory of Cultural Property of National and Regional Importance (PCP Inventory), promotes research work and monitors the latest developments in the field of cultural property protection. To this end, the Commission cooperates with all the relevant parties and fosters scientific exchange.

How does the FCPCP work?

The Commission usually meets twice a year in a plenary session. Between these sessions it carries out its work in expert groups. To fulfil the Commission's tasks, the FCPCP Chair can appoint specialist groups consisting of FCPCP members and external experts as well as nominate the head of the respective working group from among the Commission members and the staff of the Cultural Property Protection Division at the Federal Office for Civil Protection (FOCP). The Commission reports on its activities annually to the Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). Its objectives are defined each year in November by the FCPCP Chair in consultation with the FOCP management and then submitted to the DDPS. The Commission is supported by a secretariat, which is administratively part of the Cultural Property Protection Division.

What is the legal base of the FCPCP?

Extra-parliamentary commissions, and thus the FCPCP, are regulated in Articles 57a ff. of the Government and Administration Organisation Act of 21 March 1997 (GAOA, SR 172.010) and in Articles 8a ff. and 8k ff. of the Government and Administration Organisation Ordinance of 25 November 1998 (GAOO, SR 172.010.1). In addition, the FCPCP has an appointment order and a set of procedural rules that define its structure and business procedures.

What is the purpose of the FCPCP?

Extra-parliamentary commissions such as the FCPCP fulfil two main functions. Firstly, as consultative bodies they complement the work of the Federal Administration in areas where it lacks expertise. As a result, the Federal Administration gains specialised knowledge that it would otherwise have to acquire either by enlarging its administrative structures or by awarding costly consultancy mandates. Expert knowledge therefore flows from these commissions to civil society. Secondly, extra-parliamentary commissions are an effective instrument for political, business and civil society organisations to promote their interests by exerting influence on the Federal Administration. This allows both sides to reach compromises that go beyond their own interests. Seen in this light, extra-parliamentary commissions are an instrument of participatory democracy in a country whose political system has a long tradition of stability and consensus.

A national advisory commission to oversee the protection of cultural property under international law, as recommended by Resolution II of the 1954 Hague Convention, was enshrined in Swiss law and created as early as the 1960s. Known as the Swiss Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property, it acted as an advisory body to the Federal Council. Today, the protection of cultural property in accordance with the 1954 Hague Convention and the Second Protocol of 1999 covers various areas and involves cross-sectional tasks that require expertise in the fields of civil protection (fire services, civil defence), the Armed Forces, the police, monument preservation, archaeology, museums, libraries, archives, collection institutions and in other fields. As this expertise is only partly available in the Federal Administration, it must be acquired through the independent FCPCP.