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Turkey to receive Hittite sphinx

At the meeting of German and Turkish experts to discuss the future of the Hittite sphinx, it was today agreed in Berlin that the statue, which is currently part of the collection of the city's Pergamon Museum, is to be handed over to Turkey as a voluntary gesture of friendship.

The transfer is to be completed by 28 November 2011, the 25th anniversary of the inclusion of Hattusha, the former Hittite capital in central Anatolia, in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The transfer of the sphinx is to mark the start of a number of measures designed to step up German-Turkish cooperation in the museum sector and on archaeological projects.

The two sides agreed that the case of the sphinx is unique and cannot be compared with other cases.

The sphinx, which is now on display in the Pergamon Museum, was brought to Berlin along with a second sphinx, which was later returned to Turkey, as an incomplete fragment between 1915 and 1917. It was restored in Berlin and then incorporated in the collection of the Pergamon Museum and included in its inventory between 1930 and 1934. Turkey has long demanded the second sphinx. The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media Bernd Neumann and the Turkish Culture Minister Ertugrul Günay held talks on 8 March 2011 at which they agreed to find a solution acceptable to both sides to the problem of the sphinx. Bernd Neumann announced, "This solution has now been found, and represents a sound foundation for greater German-Turkish cooperation in the cultural sector".