



31.1.2014

## NOTICE TO MEMBERS

**Subject: Petition 0112/2013 by Marta Mariani (Italian), on Chartres Cathedral**

### 1. Summary of petition

The petitioner is a regular visitor to Chartres Cathedral and she protests against the way in which the Cathedral is being “restored”. The walls, the vaulted ceilings and other parts have been covered in plaster, other parts have been whitewashed. The so-called restoration work has according to her, destroyed the Cathedral’s integrity and character and seriously compromised the historic significance of its architecture, by radically altering its characteristic and unique Gothic style. The result is an abomination, she remarks, believing that it is the duty of every European citizen to preserve our cultural and artistic heritage.

The petitioner indicates that these restoration works are funded by the European Commission and she appeals to the Parliament to intervene to save this architectural and spiritual edifice.

### 2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 5 November 2013. Information requested from Commission under Rule 202(6).

### 3. Commission reply, received on 31 January 2014

The European Union’s competence in the field of cultural heritage is limited. Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states the following: "The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. Action by the Union shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action [...]".

Responsibility for the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage therefore lies fully with the Member States. This means that the Commission cannot interfere in the way national cultural heritage is protected.

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) can co-finance cultural investments, including the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, as established by Article. 4(7), of (EC) Regulation No 1080/2006 of 5 July 2006. As the petitioner is aware, the restoration works of the Chartres Cathedral have been co-funded by the EU, with a contribution of €1.5 million from the ERDF.

However, by virtue of the shared management principle, the Managing Authorities of the "Centre" Region are responsible for choosing, implementing and cofinancing the projects to be partly funded by the ERDF. In the case of the renovation at Chartres, the Managing Authorities are the French government, with the majority of the funding provided by the French State, Ministry for Culture and Media (€3.19 million) and the Region "Centre" (€2.2 million).

As concerns any alleged errors committed during these restoration works, the petitioner should contact the competent national authority - the Prefecture of the "Centre" Region in Orléans - as it is the Ministry for Culture and Media, Directorate for Cultural Affairs (DRAC) of the "Centre" Region, which proposes and carries out these works.