



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Petitions

24.6.2010

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition 1779/2009 by Carlo Sangalli (Italian), on behalf of the Altra Ponte Citizens' Action Committee, on protection of a wildlife area and the construction of a supermarket

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner is seeking the protection of a wildlife area classified under Habitat Code 6210 (semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates) in the municipality of Ponte San Pietro, together with measures to enhance the area. He also objects to the building of a supermarket above a car park near Ponte San Pietro station.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 19 March 2010. Information requested from Commission under Rule 202(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 24 June 2010.

The petitioner, on behalf of the Altra Ponte Citizens' Action Committee and more than 650 citizens, is calling for all possible action to be taken to protect an area known as Isolotto di Ponte San Pietro in the municipality of Ponte San Pietro, between the Brembo and Quisa rivers. The area contains semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates with large numbers of orchids, classified under Habitat Code 6210 as a priority habitat type of Community interest under the Habitats Directive¹. The petitioner asserts that the exceptional nature of this environment – in one of the most built-up lowland areas of Europe – is highlighted in reports by authorities and associations such as the Lorenzo Rota

¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992

Botanic Gardens in Bergamo, the Bergamo branch of the Italia Nostra association, the Bergamo branch of the WWF and the Flora Alpina Bergamasca (FAB) group. The Citizens' Committee suggests the creation of a public park and a clay cycle path/footpath along the bank of the River Quisa in this area.

The Commission's comments on the petition

The habitat type 6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (* important orchid sites) is a priority habitat type included in annex I of the Habitats Directive. Its conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) by the Member States according to Articles 4.1 and 4.4 of the directive.

So far, Italy has not proposed the area described in the petition as a potential Site of Community Importance and SAC. On the other hand, Italy has designated a sufficient number of sites for the Habitat type 6210 in the Continental Biogeographical Region, where the Lombardia Region is located. There is, therefore, no legal obligation for Italy to propose additional sites of Community importance for this habitat type. It is for the Italian authorities to assess whether the designation of the Isolotto di Ponte San Pietro as an additional Natura 2000 site would be necessary to the achievement of a favourable conservation status for the habitat type in question.

Conclusions

With regard to the possible proposal of the Isolotto di Ponte San Pietro as a site of Community importance according to the Habitats Directive, the petitioner should be invited to refer the matter to the competent local (Department of Environment of the Province of Bergamo and Region of Lombardia) or national authorities (Ministry of Environment, Direzione generale per la protezione della natura e del mare).

Under Article 4 of the Habitats Directive, the responsibility for proposing sites lies with the Member States. The choice of sites is a purely scientific process, based on standard selection criteria specified in the Annex III. Site specific data are communicated to the Commission by using Standard Data Forms.

On the basis of proposed national lists of sites, the Commission, in agreement with the Member States, has adopted lists of sites of Community importance for nine so-called biogeographical regions. As certain Member States have not proposed sufficient sites to meet the requirements of the directive for certain habitat types and species it cannot be concluded that the Natura 2000 network is complete. Furthermore, as the knowledge of the existence and distribution of the natural habitat types and species is constantly evolving as a result of monitoring, new and additional site proposals by Member States may need to be included in the lists. Therefore the lists of sites of Community importance are being updated on a regular basis.