



12.7.2010

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition 0063/2010 by Gianni Darai (Italian), on an open letter to Parliament to save the population of Venice

1. Summary of petition

Due to the specific characteristics of Venice, life is more complicated and expensive for the citizens. More and more citizens are leaving, shops and trades are disappearing to be replaced by tourism, soon it will become an open-air museum. The petitioner explains that administratively, Venice is part of Mestre on the mainland, whereas its particularity makes it no way comparable to this industrial city and thus the authorities have little understanding for them. There was a proposal some time ago for some tax relief measure to take account of the 20% extra cost of living in the city, but they were dropped on the pretext that it would distort competition. He appeals to the Parliament to help reverse the situation by granting Venice a special status to help residents compensate for the extra cost of living and engage measures to promote traditional trades and handicraft.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 27 April 2010. Information requested from Commission under Rule 202(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 12 July 2010.

The Commission fully agrees with the petitioner that the preservation of cultural heritage, traditions and roots, and respect for cultural diversity is of high importance. The Commission actively promotes these principles, for example within the framework for cooperation on culture policy, the European Agenda for Culture, and the EU Culture Programme 2007-2013.

The Commission's scope of action in the field of culture is described in Article 167 of the

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which states that "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 in the field of protecting cultural heritage therefore lies with the Member States. This implies that the Commission cannot intervene to determine the ways in which national cultural heritage, including traditional trades and handicraft, is protected, conserved, restored or regenerated.

The 2007-2013 ERDF Programme for Veneto includes a specific priority aiming at increasing and promoting its cultural and natural heritage. In particular, it will cofinance actions to preserve traditional and artistic handicraft or to exploit the cultural heritage such as museums, libraries or other cultural areas.

However, the selection of single projects within the Operational Programme is the responsibility of the Managing Authority.

The competent Managing Authority to contact for any further details is:

Regione Veneto
Direzione Programmi Comunitari
(c.a. Dott. Fabio Zuliani)
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With regard to tax incentives which may be used to boost the local economy, at this stage of development of the EU law, Member States in exercising their tax competences must respect EU law, and in particular the principle of non discrimination and the provisions on State aid.