

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0178/04
by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Funding from the Culture 2000 programme for the conservation of valuable cultural works stored in Aghia Sofia

In its answer to my question No. E-2962/03, the Commission states that 'The Community's financial assistance programme for Turkey does not allow to provide support for conserving and restoring religious or cultural works, such as those stored in the Aghia Sofia.'

These valuable cultural works, principally in the Byzantine tradition, are being ruined, forgotten in the vaults of the church, a fact which has aroused strong feelings among Turkish public opinion. The Culture 2000 programme has been extended by two years from 5 May 2003 and provides for cultural cooperation with third countries not taking part in the programme, such as Turkey, by allowing funding for projects taking place in a third country which focus on the common cultural heritage of the countries participating in the project.

In the light of these considerations, can the Commission confirm that if a Member State submits such a project it will be eligible for funding? What is the deadline for submitting such proposals? Will the Commission inform and encourage the Turkish authorities to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Culture 2000 programme to conserve and restore these valuable cultural works?