

**Question for written answer E-005428/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Rachida Dati (PPE)

Subject: Urgency of protection of historic monuments by the European Union

The European Union's cultural heritage is one of the richest in the world. The historic monuments which exist all over Europe bear witness to this, symbolising European history, which they communicate from age to age. These monuments are partly responsible for European people's appreciation of their countries and their cultural roots, but they also help to maintain a major tourism industry, which plays a large part in maintaining the European Union's international prestige.

We should therefore give our full attention to efforts to protect and restore historic monuments. However, on 19 March 2014, the Sacré-Cœur Basilica in Montmartre, Paris, was desecrated in a cowardly manner. The defacement of the church reminded us just how feeble the arrangements for protecting historic monuments in the EU are. It seems that, in numerous cases, it is possible quite easily and with impunity to deface monuments which are hundreds or even thousands of years old. This is unacceptable.

The European Union must act quickly. At present, the conservation of the cultural heritage and therefore of historic monuments is governed by national policies and a range of international provisions, with UNESCO playing a lead role. Within the European Union, maintaining, protecting, conserving and restoring the heritage are primarily matters for the Member States. European action is purely complementary, therefore. But the fact is that European action in this field is a failure and that the EU stands to gain by becoming more involved in the protection and restoration of Europe's historic monuments. What is at stake is the preservation of its heritage.

Will the Commission take fresh action to improve protection of historic monuments in the Union? Can it, in particular, indicate the additional measures which it could take in this field in cooperation with the Member States and international stakeholders, without prejudice to each party's own prerogatives?