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Protection of modernism heritage in Europe

Written question No. 588 to the Committee of Ministers

by Mr Jordi XUCLÀ, Spain, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

In the town of Sitges (Spain) a restoration project is under way – the remodelling and refurbishment of the buildings in which the town museums are located – specifically the Maricel de Mar, Can Rocamora and Cau Ferrat buildings. This is a necessary project, mainly at a structural level, in order to guarantee the safety and accessibility of the museum.

The Heritage Consortium of Sitges (formed by the Barcelona provincial government and the Sitges town council) is the body promoting the renovation, and the Barcelona provincial government awarded the work after having received the authority to do so. The project is funded by the *Ministerio de Fomento*, the *Generalitat* of Catalonia and the Barcelona provincial government. Work began last June.

Although all the administrative procedures have been undertaken correctly, it appears that there may be an alleged illegality in this project, since the renovation is very intrusive and the three affected buildings are protected by law. Each is of cultural interest, all three are artistic and historic monuments and all have the highest level of protection in the Special Plan and Architectural Heritage Protection Catalogue of Sitges. This means “strict maintenance of interior and exterior” in the case of the Maricel de Mar and Can Rocamora buildings and “strict maintenance of facades and volumes” in the case of the Cau Ferrat buildings. Under the project the biggest affects are the internal changes that the Cau Ferrat will suffer, the demolition of the inside of Can Rocamora and the planned new waterfront of the three buildings, which will bear an enormous glass cage with walkways suspended over the sea.

The Municipal CIU political Group of the Sitges town council has called for the project to be halted and to revert to the Protection Regulations, addressing its urgent request to the city of Sitges, the Sitges Heritage consortium, the Barcelona provincial government, the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia and the honourable Minister of Culture of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia.

We have made appeals to the town council of Sitges, the Barcelona provincial government and through the members of CiU in the Parliament of Catalonia and the Congress Chamber in Madrid. Amongst all these administrative bodies the response has been negative. And yet there are alternative solutions far less aggressive for this heritage, since local architects have presented them and defended them publicly.

As we believe the law is being broken, we turn to the Council of Europe to try to prevent this attack on the collective historical and architectural heritage of Sitges and of the country. These three buildings are a historic, artistic and architectural group and the Cau Ferrat in particular is a building of reference of the modern style movement.

Mr Xuclà i Costa,

To ask the Committee of Ministers,

Firstly, is the Council of Europe aware of the impact of this project on the three buildings, together a historical site of Sitges which is an assault on the historical, artistic and architectural heritage of Sitges and the country?

Secondly, does the Council of Europe know that forward-thinking protective limitations and guarantees of valid legislation are being broken?



Thirdly, what measures will the Council of Europe take to prevent the radical alteration of the current seafront façade of the three buildings, to prevent the destruction of the Can Rocamora building and to prevent the changes that the Cau Ferrat will suffer?