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Parliamentary questions

19 September 2005

P-3330/05

WRITTEN QUESTION by Renate Sommer (PPE-DE) to the Commission

► Subject: Destruction of the Munzur and Pülümür valleys in Turkey

Answer(s)

Is the Commission aware that a total of eight dams are to be built in Tunceli (Dersim)? According to information provided by various NGOs, these projects will offer no significant economic benefits for the Turkish economy and are essentially politically motivated. The Munzur and Pülümür valleys are noted for their unique fauna and flora. The region also has a rich architectural heritage.

Given that Turkey signed:

- the European Cultural Convention (Paris Convention) in 1957;
- the Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution (Barcelona Convention) in 1981;
- the Convention for the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage (Granada Convention) in 1983;
- the Convention on the conservation of wildlife and natural habitats (Bern Convention) in 1984;
- the Convention on the protection of the archaeological heritage (Malta/Valetta Convention) in 1999;
- the agreement on the European Environment Agency in 2000;

and given that environmental protection figures among the horizontal tasks of the Union, the Treaty on European Union made the environment a policy area of the Community and the Treaty of Amsterdam enshrined sustainable development as a task of the European Community and a high level of environmental protection as an absolute priority, can the Commission comment on the above allegations?

In the context of the planned accession negotiations with the Republic of Turkey, can the Commission say what steps it will take to guarantee the adoption of the *acquis* with regard to European environmental legislation in this specific instance?

Original language of question: DE

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Legal notice



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Parliamentary questions

12 October 2006

P-4356/06

WRITTEN QUESTION by Renate Sommer (PPE-DE) to the Commission

Subject: Ilisu reservoir on the Tigris

Answer(s)

Turkey began construction of the Ilisu reservoir on 5 August 2006. The proposed hydro-electric power station on the River Tigris is part of the Turkish South Anatolia Project, in which 22 reservoirs are planned for the region. After an initial launch failed in 2002 following international protests, the project was relaunched in 2005.

Over an area of more than 200 km², about 200 settlements are to be flooded in what is a politically highly sensitive region. Between 60000 and 80000 people would as a result lose some or all of their present livelihoods. In this connection the planned inundation of the historic city of Hasankeyf is also regrettable as it is of high symbolic value to the local population. Can the Commission say whether it regards the rights of the Kurdish minorities as being threatened by this reservoir project?

Apart from the social, ecological and cultural problems, the reservoir project also raises geopolitical questions: all such projects in south-eastern Turkey have a direct impact on the water supply of the neighbouring countries of Iraq and Syria. Use has already repeatedly been made of the opportunity to reduce the water supply of the neighbouring countries (in the Gulf War). Can the Commission say what steps it is taking to induce Turkey to sign international legal conventions for projects on transboundary watercourses?

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Answer given by Mr Rehn
on behalf of the Commission
(9.11.2006)

The Commission understands that the Ilisu hydroelectric power plant Project forms part of Turkey's plan to make better use of its water resources, especially to generate electricity and for irrigation purposes.

As a candidate country, Turkey is not bound by the *acquis communautaire* of the European Union. However, Turkey is expected to gradually align its legislation, and to become party to relevant international conventions by Accession at the latest. Progressive alignment with Nature Protection Directives and the Water Legislation are short-term priorities of the Accession Partnership with Turkey. Furthermore, the pursuit of the development of transboundary water cooperation, in line with the Water Framework Directive (WFD)¹ and international conventions to which the EU is a party, as well as the implementation and enforcement of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive², are also short-term priorities of the Accession Partnership. The implementation of the Accession Partnership is closely monitored by the Commission.

Construction of large infrastructural projects within the EU is closely regulated. Most importantly, the EIA Directive ensures that public consultation takes place, as well as that environmental implications are taken into account before final decisions are made, but does not prejudge any decision.

In the case of dams, the WFD would also apply. This Directive takes as a basis a single system of water management by river basin (the natural geographical and hydrological unit) instead of administrative or political boundaries. Where a river basin district extends beyond the territory of a Member State, there is an obligation to ensure coordination with relevant Member States. Should a river basin district extend beyond the boundaries of the Community, the Member State concerned shall endeavour to establish appropriate coordination with the relevant non-Member States.

The Commission is encouraging Turkey to adopt the necessary legislation and to adhere to the relevant Conventions in good time. Early transposition and implementation will help Turkey to prepare effectively. More specifically, the Commission has raised dam projects on a number of occasions in its bilateral relations with Turkey to underline that respect of EU Environmental Legislation is important to fully assess the impact of such projects. In this context, Turkey was encouraged to also consult with interested non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Turkey was requested to provide further information on its water management, including on the development of hydroelectric power plants. The Commission will continue to raise this issue with the Turkish authorities.

¹ Directive 2000/60/EC of the Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000.

² Directive 2001/42/EC of the Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, OJ L 197, 21.7.2001.