

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0927/03

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to the Commission

Subject: Proposed transfer of water from the River Ebro to Barcelona

According to a press release published by Europa Press on 6 March 2003, the European Commission is soon to approve cofinancing for the 'Catalonia mini-transfer' (diversion of water from the River Ebro to metropolitan Barcelona).

The Catalonia mini-transfer, which is also known as the 'Interconexión de Redes CAT-ATLI' (interconnection of the water supply systems for Tarragona and Ter Llobregat) is the first step in the process of water transferral from the Ebro to Catalonia's internal river basins, and will constitute the first section of all the Ebro transfers envisaged under the Spanish National Hydrological Plan. Presenting it as an interconnection of the water supply systems for Tarragona and Ter Llobregat is unjustified from a technical standpoint, given its hydrological and geometric characteristics, and circumvents the environmental and economic checks on all transfers from the Ebro.

This plan for the interconnection of water supply systems, which the Government of the Autonomous Region of Catalonia made available to the public in August 2002, is not yet a consolidated plan since the 40 000 complaints submitted by various organisations still have to be resolved. Once this has been done, a definitive plan would have to be drawn up, with this being the plan that could in principle receive Community funding.

1. Can the Commission indicate whether the press release published by Europa Press is accurate?
2. If it is accurate, how is it that the Commission can authorise the cofinancing of a project for which the administrative approval process has not yet been completed?
3. Is the Commission aware that neither a section-by-section environmental impact study nor a global study have been carried out for this interconnection plan?
4. Does the Commission not feel that it should have at its disposal a joint global assessment that takes into account the impact of the various projects to transfer water north and south from the lower reaches of the River Ebro before authorising cofinancing for them?