

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1366/04

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to the Commission

Subject: Ebro transfer

The new Spanish Government has announced its intention of finding alternatives to the Ebro transfer. Although they are somewhat unclear, it seems the new Government's plans include building more desalination plants on the Spanish Mediterranean coast (it is still not clear how many or where their location will be). The governing party's election manifesto made no reference to the Water Framework Directive.

What is the Commission's view on desalination plants, particularly in terms of energy consumption, operating costs and water quality? Does the Commission agree with the financial analysis presented in Brussels indicating a cost of EUR 0.23 for every cubic metre transferred from the Ebro river?

According to the same financial analysis, the operating costs of the desalination plants would be EUR 0.3 per cubic metre. If the recouping of investments and the transport of water are also taken into account, the cost rises to EUR 0.6 per cubic metre. Does the Commission believe that it would be economically sensible to halt the transfer and replace it with desalination plants?