

**Question for written answer P-013682/2013  
to the Commission  
Rule 117  
Catherine Grèze (Verts/ALE)**

**Subject:** Land take in connection with the Val Tolosa plan

Val Tolosa is a plan to build a massive shopping centre in Plaisance du Touch (Haute-Garonne), in the inner suburbs of Toulouse. It will stretch over an area of almost 115 000 m<sup>2</sup>; new road infrastructure will need to be built and over 44 hectares of natural land destroyed. The local population has fought strongly against the plan for over eight years. The argument that its construction is of overriding public interest is disputed on the grounds that the interest is purely financial and speculative.

According to the CNCC, France's National Council for shopping centres, more than 50 shopping centres are under construction at present in France, which already has more than 740 across the country. For 10 years now, retail outlets have been springing up at an ever increasing rate. The 'Assemblée des communautés de France', an inter-municipal association of elected municipal councillors, says that the amount of land occupied by shopping centres rises every year by more than 3 % but consumption rises by less than 1 %. These shopping centres, all sited on the edge of towns and cities or in rural areas, are responsible for a large share of land take.

At European level, this is equivalent to seeing a whole French 'département' of agricultural land disappear every year. This is why the Commission has made combating this phenomenon one of its priorities: on 12 April 2012 it published new guidelines to limit soil sealing.

The guidelines contain the following assertions and commitments – 'soil sealing can be limited through smart spatial planning and limiting urban sprawl' and 'limiting soil sealing always has priority over mitigation or compensation measures, since soil sealing is an almost irreversible process' – as well as declaring that the Commission is determined to work towards a more sustainable use of land and soil.

1. Does the Commission know about the Val Tolosa plan and the land take this will entail?
2. Will it take action to stop this plan?
3. How will the Commission ensure Member States apply its guidelines to limit soil sealing?
4. Could the Commission ask the Member State to furnish it with the detailed arguments that led it to consider this project to be of overriding public interest?