

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1420/06
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to the Commission

Subject: Impact of the Ilisu and Yusufeli hydroelectric power plant projects in Turkey on four areas requiring protection under the Birds Directive

Several large-scale dams are currently planned in Turkey to generate hydroelectric power, to irrigate agricultural areas and meet domestic water needs. Twenty-two dams alone are planned in the framework of the south-eastern Anatolia Project (Güneydogu Anadolu Projesi), of which the controversial Ilisu dam is part. Another large project is located at the Coruh river, in the north-east of which the Yusufeli dam is the most important.

These projects will have irreversible and severe impacts on species and natural habitat types of European Community importance. For example, the Ilisu project will affect four 'important bird areas' (IBAs), and the Yusufeli dam another two. IBAs, identified by the nature protection organisation BirdLife International, are an accepted reference list for future Natura 2000 sites when Turkey joins the EU. In view of Turkey's candidate status and possible export credit guarantees for the companies constructing the dams from EU members Germany and Austria (as well as Switzerland), the respect of EU nature conservation legislation must be ensured.

As currently proposed, the dam projects clearly conflict with the objectives and requirements of Council Directive 79/409/EEC¹ on the Conservation of Wild Birds and Council Directive 92/43/EEC² on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. This is of particular concern given that the recent Progress Report on Turkey (SEC(2005)1426) explicitly noted that the level of legal harmonisation and implementation of nature protection law remains very low, that a framework law on nature protection and implementing legislation on birds and habitats need to be adopted, and that the continuing rapid loss of habitats is a cause of concern.

What measures has the Commission taken or does it intend to take to ensure that important natural areas in Turkey, including potential Natura 2000 sites, are not damaged while the country is negotiating its accession to the EU? Furthermore, what measures has the Commission taken or does it intend to take to ensure that EU Member States are not providing funding for projects which will damage important natural areas in Turkey?

¹ OJ L 103, 25.4.1979, p. 1.

² OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.