

WRITTEN QUESTION E-5774/08  
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to the Commission

Subject: Different treatment as regards radiation protection monitoring at European nuclear facilities

In November 2007 there was an incident at the Ascó I nuclear power station (Tarragona) in which radioactive particles were released outside the power station buildings, within the confines of the site. This incident was initially classed at level 1 on the INES scale, but afterwards reclassified at level 2, taking into account the operator's imperfect safety culture. The end result was that Ascó I was inspected on 29 April 2008, under Article 35 of the Euratom Treaty, by a radiation protection monitoring mission staffed by three experts from the Commission's Energy and Transport DG.

Later, in July 2008, two incidents occurred at French nuclear facilities – both classed at INES level 1 – in which liquid radioactive waste was discharged outside the sites concerned. In the first incident, on 8 July at the Socatri facility (Vaucluse), an effluent containment tank overflowed; about 30 m<sup>3</sup> of uranium solution spilled out and, having seeped through the subsoil, contaminated the waters of the nearby rivers, thus endangering the inhabitants. The second incident, which took place on 17 July at the FBFC plant in Romans-sur-Isère (Drôme), involved the rupture of an underground pipe carrying uranium liquid discharges. The subsequent inspection by the regulatory authority revealed that the pipe must have ruptured years before.

In recent statements Members of the Commission have played down the importance of the incidents in France and ruled out the possibility of Commission monitoring under the Euratom Treaty.

Bearing the above facts in mind, why were equally serious incidents treated so differently that a monitoring mission was carried out in the Spanish case only? How can the Commission attach little importance to an incident such as the one at Socatri, which compelled the French authorities to impose restrictions on the use of water, with the corresponding public health risk, while at the same time thinking fit to organise a monitoring mission for Ascó I, a case involving what was considered a negligible risk to the public?