

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0538/09

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to the Commission

Subject: Violations of European Community environmental legislation in Ponteareas (Galicia, Spain)

Many studies by environmental groups in Galicia have drawn attention to the violations of environmental law that have occurred there, pointing out that recent years have been marked by the number of negative environmental statements drawn up by the Galician administration and the lack of transparency as regards the use of European environmental funds. The autonomous body responsible for environmental protection and conservation, the Environment Department of the Galician Government, does not appear to have been capable of carrying out the necessary work to protect and conserve the most notable natural resources, including certain sites listed in the Natura 2000 Network. One of these is the area surrounding the River Tea in Ponteareas (Pontevedra, Galicia), along the banks of which urban wastewater is discharged both continuously and occasionally, even though those banks are included in the Natura 2000 Network. One outlet discharges water without any controls at all, with serious consequences for the river's ecosystem. This fact has been the subject of repeated complaints by associations such as the environmental group Adenco and political groups such as the Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG), but no action has been taken to adjust population growth in Ponteareas to the inadequate service provided by the present treatment plant, which is far too small since it was designed to serve up to 14 000 inhabitants in a municipality that now has more than 23 000 residents.

On 30 September 2008 the Commission announced, in reply to written question E-3606/08 by Willy Meyer Pleite, that infringement proceedings had been opened against Spain on the grounds that it had not met the deadline set by Directive 91/271/EEC¹ concerning urban wastewater treatment, given that Ponteareas falls within the scope of that Directive, according to which the capacity of wastewater treatment facilities have to keep pace with the mass of urban wastewater to be treated. Can the Commission say whether the Spanish authorities have forwarded the required information on the construction of a new wastewater treatment plant for Ponteareas? Has the Commission requested information from the Spanish Government on the possible effects on bathing water in the River Tea, on the basis of Directive 76/160/EEC² concerning the quality of bathing water?

¹ OJ L 135, 30.5.1991, p. 40.

² OJ L 31, 5.2.1976, p. 1.