

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1763/09
by Carlos Carnero González (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Environmental impact assessment for the development plan for the River Manzanares Corniche (Madrid)

On 28 February 2009, despite opposition from local residents and in the council itself, Madrid City Council approved the plan sponsored by the city's Archbishop to develop the cornice overlooking the River Manzanares.

Embarking on this plan will mean erecting more than 28 000 square metres of new buildings on the Manzanares Corniche, destroying in the process trees, meadows and 15 000 square metres of green-belt area. In addition to this substantial loss to the environment in a city suffering from a pollution level that is one of the highest of all the EU capitals, under the plan a great many very valuable aspects of the city's historical, archaeological and cultural heritage, things that define the city of Madrid, will disappear for ever.

Despite this, and despite repeated petitions calling for one, neither the Madrid Autonomous Community nor the City Council carried out any environmental impact studies or assessments of the plan prior to its approval.

For my part, however, I do not see how an environmental impact assessment can be avoided in view of stipulations in the European Union's legislation in force in the field. Furthermore, in my opinion, the infringement proceedings initiated in recent years against the Madrid Autonomous Community and the Madrid City Council by the Commission on the same grounds (M-30, M-501) form a clear precedent for this, as do the statements made by the Commission concerning plans such as the remodelling of the Paseo del Prado. What is more, I feel that the preliminary rulings made by the Court of Justice of the European Communities in respect of the aforesaid cases do not leave any room for doubt as to the need to carry out an environmental impact assessment.

What steps does the Commission intend taking to obtain from the Madrid Autonomous Community and the Madrid City Council all the official information needed on the River Manzanares Corniche development plan? How will it ensure that the environmental impact assessment for this plan is duly carried out as required by the legislation in force? And is the Commission aware that it needs to act immediately to prevent this work starting without any assessment being carried out, otherwise irreparable harm will be done to the environment and to Madrid's heritage?