

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3396/09  
by Roberto Musacchio (GUE/NGL)  
to the Commission

Subject: ENEL's unlawful start-up of the Torre Valdaliga Nord power station in Civitavecchia and breach of environmental and health and safety at work legislation

The Torre Valdaliga Nord power station is currently being converted from oil to coal firing, but in effect has been operating illegally since 24 December 2008, as it does not have the requisite 'integrated environmental authorisation' (AIA). The previous operating permit has expired and has not been renewed in line with Council Directive 96/61/EC on integrated pollution prevention and control <sup>1</sup>. The Ministry of the Environment has not imposed any of the prescribed penalties, and it is only in the last few days that the 'conferenza dei servizi' (conference of administrative departments involved in the project approval procedure) at the Ministry of the Environment has been reconsidering the AIA in the light of complaints of non-compliance filed by the Regional Environmental Protection Agency and the Ministry of Health. Despite the fact that procedures have not been completed and the obvious omissions and irregularities that have occurred, it appears that for the last 40 days ENEL has been operating the coal-fired part of the plant after having secretly stockpiled an initial 150,000 tonnes of coal. This was unloaded from three coal freighters using a dock which had not been approved for that purpose and an unfinished wharf designed for plaster and manufacturing waste. It appears that the coal-fired plant operates only at night, without using the filters and the other equipment due to be installed to reduce emissions of oxides and dust. Coal was transferred from the ship to the storage area and to the burners without any regard for the rules protecting the health and safety of workers and without any fire-prevention equipment or equipment to monitor emissions of carbon monoxide and fire damp (methane, the flammable gas released by coal). The fuel is reportedly transferred between 4 pm and 8 pm in readiness for use at night, with the result that, although the effects are not visible, dust and toxic substances are deposited on agricultural land and residential areas. These substances are not only detrimental to public health but also to the quality of agricultural products in an area noted for its high-quality food products.

In the light of the foregoing,

Would the Commission state whether it believes it should intervene to ensure that the competent Italian authorities take immediate steps to protect the health of local residents and employees by insisting that integrated environmental authorisation be obtained, analyses of the new coal-fired power plant's emissions be completed and the legislation on safety at work be applied?

---

<sup>1</sup> OJ L 257, 10.10.1996, p. 26.