

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3679/09
by Luca Romagnoli (NI)
to the Council

Subject: Radioactive waste and soil decontamination in the EU

According to Greenpeace, an area of seabed close to the marine outfall for the La Hague nuclear facility is so contaminated that it should be classified as containing radioactive waste. Tests conducted in 1998 by the French Commission for independent research and information on radioactivity (CRIIRAD) as part of an expert legal report showed that samples of tartars and gravels taken near the reprocessing plant's outlet pipe had a mass activity of 2.8 to 4.1 million Bq/kg. Tests conducted by CRIIRAD in 2002 on samples of marine sediments taken by Greenpeace in the Blanchard Race to the east of the outfall showed mass activities of 17 200 Bq/kg fresh weight for gamma emitters and 1 775 Bq/kg dry weight for plutonium 238 and plutonium 239 and 240.

Likewise, CRIIRAD maintains that as a result of the Chernobyl accident there are still 'accumulation points' above 1 500 metres altitude across the entire alpine arc where the soil presents such high levels of radioactivity that it must be considered low- to medium-level radioactive waste¹. In some places in France, CRIIRAD has taken caesium 137 soil contamination readings of over 500 000 Becquerels per kilo.

1. Do the above constitute cases of radioactive waste within the meaning of the laws in force?
2. If so, what means does the Council have to prosecute States that fail to decontaminate the areas in question, on the grounds of their dumping radioactive waste?
3. What means will the Council employ to ensure that those areas are decontaminated?

¹ 'Contaminations radioactives: Atlas France et Europe' CRIIRAD and André Paris – Ed. Yves Michel, 2002 – ISBN 2913492150