

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2237/10  
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to the Commission

Subject: European energy independence (the issue of Neodymium)

The People's Republic of China is about to launch a multi-annual plan (2010-2015) to significantly limit the export quotas for 'rare metals', which can be found in low energy light bulbs, hybrid car engines and wind turbines.

However, nearly 60% of rare metal reserves are found in China, a country which thus accounts for more than 90% of neodymium production, which is essential for the operation of wind turbines. The European wind power industry is therefore totally dependent on a non-EU country for this type of production. As the current economic crisis has led to a decline in global demand, China has decided to reduce its exports in order to raise prices (the price of neodymium fell from USD 60 per kilogram in 2007 to USD 20 in September 2009).

How then does the EU intend to remedy its increasing dependence on this type of production? Is its energy independence not in danger, bearing in mind that a number of wind turbine construction projects are currently under consideration in EU countries?