

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2277/10
by Norbert Glante (S&D)
to the Commission

Subject: Contradiction between the water framework directive and the directive on energy from renewable sources

I have noticed an apparent contradiction between the EU's energy objectives (Directive 2009/28/EC on energy from renewable sources)¹ and its environmental provisions (as set out in the water framework directive 2000/60/EC)².

According to these texts, water power is the European Union's main renewable energy source. Maintaining, modernising and, possibly, developing it is of the greatest importance not only for meeting climate targets, but also for security of supply and energy autonomy for the regions. However, the strict provisions of the water framework directive (WFD) run counter to the energy targets. In its present form the WFD means a high investment requirement coupled with a significant loss of energy production for hydro-electric plants. Smaller power stations face the danger of having to close down completely, while the possibilities for new installations are severely limited.

Under the WFD, economic use of water is possible if the area of water is certified as an HMBW (heavily modified water body). However, such certification is now awarded only rarely by the Commission.

1. How does the Commission envisage resolving this contradiction in Member States that are using more water power in order to achieve climate targets and are finding their possibilities limited by the WFD?
2. Is it possible for retroactive HMBW certification to be awarded by the Commission in accordance with the WFD in order to prevent a reduction of existing water power capacity?

¹ OJ L 140, 5.6.2009, p. 16.

² OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1.