

**Question for written answer E-005647/2012  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

**Nikos Chrysogelos (Verts/ALE)**

Subject: Plans to construct large hydro-electric dams threaten the Balkan rivers

Two recent studies carried out by the EuroNatur organisation and the Austrian Conservation Association ECA Watch have provided evidence of the ecological significance of the Balkan rivers' ecosystems, particularly those in the western Balkans and the triangle between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. Nearly one third of these rivers remains almost untouched by human activities. This is a biodiversity hotspot, particularly for aquatic organisms<sup>1</sup>. A total of 573 hydro-electric dams with a generating capacity of more than 1 MW, including 73 dams with a generating capacity of more than 50 MW have been planned in this area<sup>2</sup>. Even some of the most highly ranked protected areas will be affected, such as the Mavrovo National Park in FYROM or the renowned river Sava<sup>3</sup>.

In view of this:

1. Has the Commission been informed by the Member States or the accession countries in this area about the plans to construct hydro-electric dams on river systems?
2. How much of the energy produced by them is considered renewable? What criteria does the Commission have to determine whether the hydro-electric energy produced is renewable or not?
3. Does the Commission agree that the River Basin Management Plans, in the context of the application of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EU, should view the large dams as unsustainable<sup>4</sup> as they irreparably damage natural resources and can seriously alter natural river systems?
4. Does the Commission intend to carry out a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment for the whole area?
5. Does the Commission agree that the lack of protection of these areas, with regard to the Member States, is in breach of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and contrary to the guidelines of the recently adopted EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020?
6. What will it do to support the Member States and the accession countries in this area in order to protect their river systems from the construction of large hydro-electric dams?

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<sup>1</sup> Threatened freshwater molluscs of the Balkan – Potential impacts of hydropower projects

<sup>2</sup> Balkan Rivers – The Blue Heart of Europe. Hydromorphological Status and Dam Projects/ Long version

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.euronatur.org/EuroNatur-News.english+M5af78696ddf.0.html?&cHash=13f04cc8a895b092feb2a6c560363e74>

<sup>4</sup> World Water Forum MARSEILLE, France, 19 March 2012, <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=107128>