

**Question for written answer E-005980/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Impact of development projects on a French Natura 2000 site which is also covered by the Water Framework Directive

The Lower Var Valley has been a Natura 2000 site since 2006 and is of major environmental importance by virtue of the diversity of its flora and fauna, its huge heritage value and its role as a key component of France's 'Green and Blue Framework'. The River Var is covered by the Flood Risk Prevention Plan (PPRI) for the Lower Var Valley and by Flood Prevention Action Programmes (PAPI) I and II, which must be consistent with the French laws transposing the EU Water Framework Directives of 2000 and 2008. This unspoilt area is included in several development plans that come under the umbrella of an Operation of National Interest (OIN) covering an area of 10 000 hectares. These include local development plans (PLUs) for the municipalities of Saint Laurent du Var, La Gaude, Carros and Levens, and the relocation of a Market of National Interest (MIN) from Nice to La Baronne (La Gaude municipality). These projects fall within the remit of the Public Development Establishment (EPA) for the Var Plain, which is tasked with turning the area into a model of sustainable development and with creating an authentic 'eco-valley'.

According to the environmental authority consulted on these projects, however, the EPA has been proceeding on a project-by-project basis. This approach makes it impossible to develop an overview of the cumulative impact on the environment, including on the River Var Natura 2000 site and on the site's environmental and geological features. The anticipated consequences include an increased risk of flooding caused by the diking of the river, possible groundwater pollution, the utilisation of 25 hectares of feeding grounds, and significant habitat destruction and disruption and higher animal death rates. The failure to draft a local water management plan (SAGE) for the 2010-2015 period means that PAPI II is not consistent with the law transposing the most recent EU Water Framework Directive into French law. For these reasons and others, the environmental authority has recommended that some of the provisions of the PLU for La Gaude be revised to incorporate more detailed preventive and impact-mitigation measures for the Natura 2000 sites.

1. Does the Commission know what preventive and impact-mitigation measures are being taken at the Natura 2000 site?
2. Does it know whether the EU Water Framework Directives are being complied with?
3. What steps does it plan to take in order to ensure that the development projects are consistent with EU law?