

**Question for written answer E-012399/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Catherine Grèze (Verts/ALE)

Subject: European otter under threat in Lot-et-Garonne

Located in Samazan in the Lot-et-Garonne department, the LGE coating plant is classified as an 'Installation Classée pour la Protection de l'Environnement' (ICPE) and has been operating since 2008. The French environmental code defines ICPEs as follows: 'factories, workshops, depots, work sites and, in general, all facilities operated or owned by any public or private person or entity, which might present hazards or drawbacks for the convenience of the neighbourhood, or for public health and safety, or for agriculture, or for the protection of nature and the environment, or for the rational use of energy, or for the conservation of sites and monuments or elements of the archaeological heritage'. Specifically, the bitumen fumes given off by the factory may present a toxicity risk. Furthermore, an assessment published on 11 September 2013 by the **French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety** (ANSES) acknowledges that workers exposed to bitumen may be subject to health risks.

The Society for the Study, Protection and Development of Nature in Lot-et-Garonne (SEPANLOG), an environmental association approved by the French State under Article 40 of the law of 10 July 1976, has recorded the presence of European otters in the area surrounding the factory. This was confirmed in a statement issued by the association on 24 June 2013, which asserts that 'this species is definitely present, as demonstrated by the discovery of the body of a female adult on the secondary road that crosses the village of Pont des Sables'. Moreover, the plant is situated on a flood plain and the otter's habitat is put at risk every time the river floods. When the water returns to the river bed, it brings with it potentially polluted water from the LGE site, where storm water tanks have been flooded. This species (*Lutra Lutra*) is protected at EU level because it is classified as an 'animal and plant species of Community interest in need of strict protection' under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). However, no impact assessment has been carried out.

How does the Commission plan to ensure that the European otter is not put at risk in the Lot-et-Garonne department as a result of this plant?