

**Question for written answer E-001217/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Nikos Chrysogelos (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Greek Gene Bank at risk

The Greek Gene Bank was founded in 1981, with the support of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), and is the national organisation responsible for crop conservation in Greece and saving the biological diversity of food sources.¹ Although a new building designed to ensure seed sustainability was built to house the Bank in 2008,² it is unable to relocate, as the building has not been signed off by the competent departments of the ministries to which the Bank reports with respect to obligations towards the EU.³ Thus, sensitive genetic material is being preserved under totally unsuitable conditions. Aside from the matter of the building, arrangements to place the Bank under the administration of one agency and recruit specialist staff are still pending. Despite the fact that the National Agricultural Research Foundation has been appointed as the 'operating agency' for this project,⁴ the department of the Ministry of Rural Development and Food with material competence (Directorate of Physical Planning and Environmental Protection) is delaying approval. As such, an alternative solution has been proposed, whereby the Bank would come back under the Ministry of Rural Development and Food and would operate in conjunction with the Variety Research Institute of Cultivated Plants. According to a letter sent to the Minister, Mr Tsaftaris, by the President of the Natura 2000 Committee on 16 July 2012, 'any further delay may prove to be fatal'. In view of the above, will the Commission say:

1. Has the Member State fulfilled its obligations in respect of the new building project for the Greek Gene Bank?
2. Are there any outstanding matters with respect to the FAO International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Law 3165/2003, Government Gazette I/177) and the ECPGR and what measures does it intend to take?

¹ <http://envicom.wordpress.com/about-genebanks/the-greek-genebank/>.

² Integrated into Measure 4.4 of the Rural Development/Rural Reconstruction Operational Programme 2000-2006 [Creation of a Gene Bank based in Thermi (Thessaloniki) and cofinanced by the EU].

³ <http://goo.gl/ehzdfq>.

⁴ Article 2 of Decision no 131396/03.10.2003 by the Minister for Agriculture (Government Gazette II/1610/31.10.2003).