

**Question for written answer E-002590/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Creative Science Park strategic programme III

In December 2009, the Management Committee of the Central Portugal Regional Operational Programme (PORCentro) approved the strategic programme for a Creative Science Park (Parque de Ciência e Inovação – PCI), an infrastructure which it proposes to build in the municipal districts of Aveiro and Ílhavo, with an investment of over EUR 28 million, out of which EUR15 million is to be cofinanced by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The local population rejects the siting of the project and has formed a committee (CIDIHC). The polemic also involves an environmental association (Quercus) and the local and regional authorities. Construction of the project will destroy around 35 hectares of highly productive agricultural land and affect part of the Ria de Aveiro Special Protection Area (SPA), which forms part of the Natura 2000 network, as well as areas within the National Ecological Reserve (REN) and the National Agricultural Reserve (RAN). A number of complaints have been made to the Commission, particularly by the afore-mentioned environmental association.

The construction company, PCI-SA, and the Portuguese authorities argue that the project has to be located close to Aveiro University. Other sites, with existing infrastructure, are available in the vicinity of the university but were not considered.

In 2013, the Aveiro administrative and fiscal court agreed to impose an injunction preventing some of the land in question from being used for construction of the PCI. Other actions, in particular one seeking to revoke the declaration of public utility of the land where the project is to be built, are still awaiting a decision from the courts.

The project developers signed the funding contract with PORCentro this month and it has been announced that construction work will soon begin.

How does the Commission view this proposal to build a brand new infrastructure in a green zone of prime agricultural farmland, when other sites with already existing infrastructure and hundreds of hectares of land are available at a distance of less than 15 km from the proposed location and perfectly accessible by motorway?