

**Question for written answer E-005190/2014/rev.1
to the Commission**

Rule 117

**Alda Sousa (GUE/NGL), Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL) and Iñaki Irazabalbeitia Fernández
(Verts/ALE)**

Subject: Construction of a high-voltage line between Portugal and Galicia

There are plans for the construction of a high-voltage line between Portugal and Galicia, which is currently at the design stage. The consequences and dangers of creating such electromagnetic fields are well known and have already been duly identified by the WHO, as well as by the EU, particularly as regards workers' health and safety (Directive 2004/40/EC, amended by Directive 2012/11/EU, or the Council Recommendation of 12 July 1999, which states that, 'It is imperative to protect members of the general public within the Community against established adverse health effects that may result as a consequence of exposure to electromagnetic fields.'). But even if this were not the case, the precautionary principle should be followed because we are talking about public health issues. The study estimates that the geographical area involved amounts to 109 355 hectares, in an area whose very high population density would justify burial of the cables so as not to endanger people's quality of life.

However, this project is a threat not only to health but also to the environment and regional heritage. The region of Alto Minho has a natural, architectural and cultural heritage of enormous importance, which is vital to several economic activities with a major impact in the region, including rural tourism, ecotourism and agriculture. Yet the local population has yet to be heard. The municipal and local authorities involved have already expressed their opposition. Also, the environmental impact assessment (which has yet to be published) provides no guarantees, since it was paid for by the body wanting to construct the line – the national energy company, REN. It is also important to point out that this project affects a stretch of the Minho river that is part of the Natura network and a DOC (Controlled Denomination of Origin) wine-growing region in Galicia, as well as an area of historic and archaeological interest in which there is a Roman mine. The extent of the impact of this project is very clear, since it would not only put people's health at risk but would also be a huge economic setback for them, affecting the value of their land, affecting denominated production areas and, obviously, having a significant environmental and cultural impact.

1. Is this project to receive any form of direct or indirect funding from the European Union?
2. Does the Commission think that the rights of the people involved, who have not been heard so far, have been respected?
3. Does the Commission think that public health is being safeguarded and, if so, how can it be guaranteed?
4. Does the Commission think that the public interest of constructing this high-voltage line is more important than the potential risks and damage to the environment, regional heritage and culture, and people's livelihoods?
5. What measures does the Commission plan to take as regards this case?