Question for written answer E-002361/2018
to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: Presence of rare-earth elements in wind turbine and solar panel components

According to the United States Geological Survey, the worldwide production of rare-earth oxides in 2017 was 120 million tonnes – even through the extraction and refining of rare-earth elements (REEs) is known to throw up toxic elements and also radioactive elements such as uranium.

REEs are known for their electromagnetic properties; they can be found in cathode ray tubes, electrical components and batteries, and they are used in high-tech products and the components of first-generation wind and solar renewable energy technologies.

China is the leading industrial producer of REEs but is not subject to the same environmental rules as the Member States, which are prioritising renewable energy sources to achieve their shared environmental objectives.

1. Will the Commission promote truly clean second-generation renewable energy sources and take into account their entire lifecycles and components?

2. Will it stop expanding first-generation wind and solar farms?

3. Will it encourage a reduction in the emission of toxic and radioactive elements by minimising the entry into the EU market of products containing REEs?