

**Question for written answer E-005459/2020  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Manuela Ripa** (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Groundwater contamination with perfluorinated and polyfluorinated chemicals

Foams containing perfluorinated and polyfluorinated chemicals (PFCs) have in the past been used by firefighters during drills and to combat actual fires. In many cases, the foams contained Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), both highly dangerous substances.

Certain toxic PFCs are very long-lived and can accumulate in a wide variety of organisms, including humans and animals. The environmental impact of PFOA, PFOS and other PFCs is particularly harmful in the vicinity of airports equipped with large fire extinguishing systems.

The use of PFOS and PFOA in extinguishing foams is now banned and PFC-based substitutes are now in use. Programmes to clean up contaminated sites have now been launched, the damage to groundwater in Europe being estimated at well over EUR 100 billion.

1. Is any general information available regarding PFOS, PFOA and PFC groundwater contamination around military and civil airports and in the vicinity of major fires in Europe, and the extent of the resulting damage?
2. Which fluorine-based substitutes are still being used in extinguishing foams and what steps will be taken to reduce further PFC environmental contamination?
3. What are the findings of environmental impact assessments for PFC-based substitutes and which of them present particular problems?