

**Question for written answer E-000665/2024  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Idoia Villanueva Ruiz** (The Left)

Subject: New rare earth mining project in Castile-La Mancha

The Regional Government of Castile-La Mancha has launched a prior consultation period for a rare earths research permit application entitled 'Neodimio' (Neodymium) in an area bordering the Special Protection Area of Áreas Esteparias del Campo de Montiel (ES0000158).

It should be noted that, on 7 January 2021, the High Court of Justice of Castile-La Mancha rejected a previous similar project for the exploitation of rare earths by the same developer and in an area very close to that of the current project and, as such, also adjacent to the Natura 2000 site in question. This judgment is significant as it established that mining activity could also have negative repercussions when carried out in areas close to Natura 2000 sites, on the basis that it would seriously impact the connectivity between protected and affected areas.

In view of this:

1. Does the Commission consider that the Spanish authorities have failed to comply with the Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) by declaring this new project admissible, given that a similar project from the same developer was rejected by means of the aforementioned national judgment?
2. In view of the above information, what action will the Commission take?

Submitted: 29.2.2024