

ORAL QUESTION H-0469/05  
for Question Time at the part-session in July 2005  
pursuant to Rule 109 of the Rules of Procedure  
by Luis Herrero-Tejedor  
to the Commission

Subject: Criteria for assessing the environmental impact and viability of projects for desalination plants submitted by the Spanish government under the 'Water Plan'

Spain has put forward a series of projects covered by the 'Water Plan', including a number of desalination plants on the Mediterranean coast, the environmental impact of which may extend beyond Spain's borders, because of effluent discharged into the sea. There are no precedents in Europe for desalination plants on such a large scale, nor any comprehensive research regarding the environmental impact or the secondary impact of the consumption of fossil fuels and the generation of greenhouse gases and there are already concerns about the emission of large quantities of chemical substances<sup>1</sup> of undeclared composition, many of which are known to be harmful to the environment<sup>2</sup>.

What criteria and indicators will be applied in the impact studies? What studies will be carried out to discover the effects of the chemical substances used in the treatment, those added to the desalinated water and those discharged together with the brine effluent? Will energy consumption, the impact on soil if the water is used for irrigation, the impact on marina flora and fauna, the possible toxicity of the water and its possible uses all be taken into account? Will the cost of desalinated water, its distribution and the replacement of membranes and other components be taken into account, in view of the short life of desalination plants?

Tabled: 06.06.2005  
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<sup>1</sup> antifouling agents, biocides, detergents, chemical cleaning agents, pH correctors, etc.

<sup>2</sup> endocrine disruptors, carcinogenic, bioaccumulative and persistent substances, etc.