

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0910/00  
by Margot Keßler (PSE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Aachen-Heerlen cross-border industrial estate

The Avantis cross-border industrial estate between the cities of Aachen and Heerlen on the German-Dutch border has been recognised and supported by the EU as a European model project. Work on its construction began in September 1998, and EUR 30 m has been spent on it. In the meanwhile, various legal proceedings against the industrial estate are pending, both in the Netherlands and in the Federal Republic of Germany. Moreover, a petition on this subject has been lodged with the European Parliament (no 685/96).

The party which has brought the legal proceedings, as well as taking the initiative politically and lodging the petition, against the Avantis cross-border industrial estate is the Nature Conservation Association of Germany – NABU, Stadtverband Aachen.

1. Is it true that, in accordance with German law on nature conservation, NABU was involved in the planning procedure as a recognised nature conservation association and should therefore be regarded as a party to the procedure?
2. Is it true that the official responsible for administration of the Avantis project at DG XI D 02, Oliver Schall, is also a member of NABU, and does not the Commission regard this as:
  - (a) a case of bias,
  - (b) incompatible with the guidelines on transparency adopted by the Commission?
3. Is it true that DG XI D 02 has commissioned an expert opinion on environmental issues relating to the Avantis industrial estate, and that :
  - (a) the expert who is to deliver it was given the assignment at the proposal of the above official,
  - (b) the expert, who is regarded as objective, Professor Stubbe of Halle, is himself a member of NABU, and has he made this clear?
4. Does the Commission agree that for an objection by NABU to be dealt with by a member of NABU and assessed in the light of an expert opinion delivered by a member of NABU, who has been given the assignment at the proposal of a member of NABU, does not constitute an impartial and transparent procedure?