

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0766/04
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to the Commission

Subject: Financing of the Llubí-Crestaxt-Pollença watercourse (Balearic Islands)

In the early months of 2003 the European Commission took the decision to finance, via the Cohesion Fund, the Llubí-Crestaxt-Pollença watercourse on the island of Majorca, Spain. The Government of the Balearic Islands opened the project to public tender and awarded a contract for the work, which is 40% complete. This project represents a decisive step towards achieving maximum efficiency in Majorca's water management and distribution system. The idea is to complete the transversal artery that runs across Majorca for 90 kilometres along the base of the Tramuntana Sierra collecting water from various sources and regulating the levels of several aquifers, and thereby to satisfy various demands. Majorca's Mediterranean climate and its dependency on the tourist industry mean that the island experiences high levels of demand in the summer with irregular rainfall, alongside periods of water shortage lasting several years followed by a few years with abundant rainfall. The aim of the project is precisely to incorporate in a single system the majority of surface water resources and a portion of the groundwater resources so that the surface water surpluses generated in rainy periods can infiltrate into strategic high-capacity karstic aquifers, thereby returning them to their highest piezometric levels and acting as a reserve for the driest periods. The project is designed to meet the demand for water by reducing the over-exploitation of water resources through the infiltration of water into the aquifers exploited.

After a change in the regional government following the elections of June 2003, work on the construction of the northern stretch of the transversal artery was halted and a modification proposed that fundamentally alters the aims of the original project: the watercourse would no longer be interconnected with the Crestaxt aquifer but would be connected up with a new desalination plant to be established at Alcudia, leaving Pollença with no guarantee of water supply. This modification is designed to route water to Palma from the future desalination plant at Alcudia in the low season, when its production is not absorbed by the north of the island. The modification did not form the subject of a new public procurement procedure, and neither was it supported by any technical justification.

Is the Commission prepared to finance the work in question despite the substantial change in the project and its objectives? Will it investigate whether the fact that the work in question is totally different from that approved in 2002 constitutes an violation of Community law?