

WRITTEN QUESTION P-6034/07
by Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Special Protection Areas: legitimacy of including the territory of the communes of Tolfa and Allumiere

The Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Sites of Community Interest (SCI) designated and delimited in accordance with Directive 79/409/EEC¹ and notified to the Commission by the Lazio Region, following the infringement procedure (1993/2165) brought by the Commission on the grounds of Italy's failure to designate such areas, included all the territory of the communes of Tolfa (17 000 hectares) and Allumiere, in the province of Rome. The local authorities of the communes concerned were not consulted about their inclusion in the list of protected areas. Yet the inclusion of these territories, including towns, villages and built-up areas, greatly restricts the communes' prospects of urban or agricultural development by limiting and, in many cases, removing the possibility of developing the main sectors of the local economy. While it is important to protect the landscape and the environment, an objective which both towns have always regarded as crucial and sought to achieve through appropriate development policies (as in the case of SCI), it is surely also important to take account of the needs and traditions of the inhabitants of an area whose principal resources derive from the local environment and whose current good state of conservation is partly due to the care and attention of those who live and work there and comprise the local authorities. This being so:

1. Does the Commission consider that the applicable European legislation (the 'Birds' and 'Habitats' directives, etc.) has been implemented and interpreted correctly by the Lazio Region in its decision-making procedures and actions?
2. Is the Lazio Region's decision, in DGR (Regional Council Decree) 651, to include within the Special Protection Areas all the territory of the communes of Tolfa and Allumiere, including their urban, built-up and developed areas, consistent with the European Union's regional development and cohesion objectives and is it, as frequently asserted by the competent regional bodies, the result of impartially applying Community environmental protection legislation?
3. Does the Commission agree that it is essential to ensure that the local authorities concerned are actively involved in designating Special Protection Areas, and to assess the distinctive social-economic features of such areas in order to preserve, and avoid damaging, the local character of the various districts concerned?
4. Does the Commission agree, in the light of the foregoing, that it would be appropriate to urge the Lazio Region to redraw the boundaries of the area in question on a fairer basis?

¹ OJ L 103, 25.4.1979, p. 1.