

WRITTEN QUESTION P-5609/08  
by Péter Olajos (PPE-DE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Waste incinerator at Heiligenkreuz

The Austrian BEGAS corporation is planning to construct, just a few hundred metres from the border with Hungary, a waste incinerator to process 325 thousand tonnes of municipal waste and sewage-sludge annually.

The facility would be located barely 1 km from both the Hungarian town of Szentgotthárd, with some 10 thousand inhabitants, and the Őrség National Park which, extending along the national border, contains the 'Őrség' – recently a winner of the European Commission's EDEN prize – and is an area of outstanding natural value which is protected under Natura 2000.

The project flies completely in the face of the fact that the livelihood of Szentgotthárd, and indeed of the whole region, is based on its natural assets, its national park and ecotourism.

The planned incinerator's 100-metre-tall chimney would totally ruin the landscape, and – as a result of the dominant wind direction – the full brunt of the smoke which it produced would be borne on the Hungarian side of the border, by the National Park, the town and its inhabitants.

Execution of the project, which has little public support on either the Austrian or the Hungarian sides, would have unforeseen consequences for the lives of local people and the protected natural assets. The Hungarian Government has, by means of a government resolution and official contacts between the relevant environment ministers, protested against the incinerator.

On the basis of the foregoing, my question to the Commission is this:

What does it intend to do in order to protect the inhabitants affected and the Őrség National Park, an area of outstanding natural value, should Austria disregard the protests of the Hungarian Government, the local authorities and civilians?