

**Question for written answer P-011001/2013
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Erik Bánki (PPE)

Subject: Obligations arising from the Water Framework Directive concerning authorisation for cyanide mining

Water is one of the earth's most precious natural resources. 2% of the earth's water is comprised of fresh water. This scarce natural resource is, however, of crucial importance in all areas of biological, social and economic life. People's increasing demands together with climate change will result in a 40% shortfall in water provision by 2030. This process will also have an impact on Europe: access to water will increasingly become a basic question of prosperity and peace at individual and national level.

The Commission is no doubt aware that the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation, which is listed in Canada, is planning to open Europe's largest open-cast gold mine in Verespatak and extract 330 tonnes of gold and 1 600 tonnes of silver using cyanide technology. There are plans to store the resultant sludge in a reservoir with a capacity of 250 million tonnes and a 180-metre-high coffer dam constructed across the valley. According to experts, in the event of an accident, fresh water in river systems for hundreds of kilometres in parts of Romania and Hungary, including the Maros and Tisza rivers, would suffer cyanide pollution, which would cause irreparable damage to the environment and to public health in the drainage area concerned.

A number of provisions in the EU's water legislation prohibit the polluting of waters by hazardous substances. The basis for this is laid down in the Water Framework Directive. Point 6 of Annex VIII of the Framework Directive classifies cyanides as a main pollutant. The Directive also lays down an obligation of cooperation for Member States sharing drainage basins in order to reach and preserve the 'good status' of waters.

1. Given the enormous potential for cross-border pollution of the Verespatak project, what specific obligations of cooperation do the provisions of the Water Framework Directive impose on Romania in terms of its neighbouring countries during the authorisation procedure?
2. What rights are laid down in the Directive for a Member State to ensure that the good status of its waters is not put at risk by industrial activities undertaken in a neighbouring Member State?