The Commission is aware of the efforts of the Central Bank Counterfeit Deterrence Group (CBCDG) to develop counterfeit deterrence technology aimed at preventing the digital reproduction of banknote images.

The Commission considers it important that the counterfeit deterrence technology be applied.

The Commission has been in contact with the European Central Bank (ECB) on the issue of initiating legislation making mandatory the use of the counterfeit deterrence technology in products capable of handling digital images.

In agreement with the Commission, the ECB is currently preparing a preliminary assessment directly with the industry.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-0666/04
by Mihail Papayannakis (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(9 March 2004)

Subject: Breach of environmental legislation

By Decision 1070 of 13 May 2002, the Directorate for Forests of the region of Thessaly approved the establishment of a quarry for the extraction and processing of inert materials at Xera in the district of Potamia, municipality of Agia, on an area of pastureland covering 30,615 hectares.

Given that:

- the area in question has been designated a protected area within the meaning of the Natura 2000 network,
- the Ministry of Development delivered an opinion (APD10/B/F6.12 Gen/6422 of 9 May 2000) to the Directorate for Industry in Larissa stating that Article 4 of Law 2115/93 prohibits the establishment of quarries within a two-kilometre radius of designated archaeological sites or protected areas and that, therefore, it is not possible to set up a quarry within an area forming part of the Natura 2000 network,
- the extractive industries produce an exceptional volume of waste which affects the environment in terms of the quality of surface and ground water, natural stability, dust and erosion, and the quality of terrestrial and aquatic habitats,
- the siting of the quarry at a short distance from communities will affect sheep-rearing and apple-growing in the region, thereby creating problems in relation to farmers’ incomes,
- traffic problems will be created on the main route linking the town of Larissa, Agia and the coastal area of the Prefecture of Larissa since this road network, which is already congested, particularly during the summer months, will carry the entire volume of HGV traffic transporting the inert material,

what measures will the Commission take to stop the development of an activity which is contrary to both Community and Greek environmental legislation?

Under Directive 85/337/EEC, projects likely to have significant effects on the environment must be made subject to an environmental impact assessment before development consent is granted. These projects are defined in Article 4, with reference to Annexes I and II to the Directive. Quarries where the surface of the site exceeds 25 hectares (Annex I, point 19) must be made subject to a development consent procedure and an environmental impact assessment. The Greek legislation which transposes the Directive also requires this procedure to be followed for smaller quarries (Annex II, point 2(a)).

The information available indicates that the disputed quarry is located at the edge of a Site of Community Importance named ‘Karla – Mavrovouni – Kefalovryso Velestinou – Neochori’ (code GR1420004) and proposed by the Greek authorities in accordance with Directive 92/43/EEC for inclusion in the Natura 2000 ecological network. The provisions of Directive 92/43/EEC, in particular Article 6(3), are therefore applicable.

With regard to the environmental impact assessment, the competent national authorities, i.e. the Ministry of the Environment and not the Region of Thessaly, must adopt a ‘decision approving the environmental terms’ of the project. This decision, taken on the basis of an environmental impact study and after consulting the public, is meant to define the dimensions of the project, assess the significant adverse effects it is likely to have on the environment and establish measures for preventing and reducing them. As the project appears likely to have significant effects on the proposed Site of Community Importance, the ‘decision approving the environmental terms’ must also involve an appropriate assessment of the project’s effects on the site with regard to the site’s conservation objectives.

On the basis of the reported facts, the Commission does not discern any breach of the abovementioned Directives. If the Honourable Member has any other information which could show that project in question is incompatible with Community environmental legislation, the Commission would ask him to transmit it.