

(1999/C 207/034)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3090/98**by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission**

(16 October 1998)

Subject: Planned N-Viro Sewage Works — Stambridge

Can the Commission investigate the N-Viro fertiliser process in respect of dangers to public health, and state whether this product has been tested and proved safe for agricultural land use? Anglian Water is proposing to build a new sewage works in my constituency which will use this process, and there are naturally concerns regarding a product about which little is known and which could prove dangerous to public health. Could the Commission also state whether this N-Viro process is used in other countries in Europe?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(21 January 1999)

The treatment of urban waste water, imposed under Council Directive 91/271/EEC ⁽¹⁾ of 21 May 1991, as amended by Commission Directive 98/15/EC ⁽²⁾ of 27 February 1998, produces sewage sludge. Article 14 of Directive 91/271/EEC stipulates that such sludge should be re-used whenever appropriate.

In this connection, Article 6 of Council Directive 86/278/CEE ⁽³⁾ of 12 June 1986 on the protection of the environment, and in particular of the soil, when sewage sludge is used in agriculture, stipulates that the sludge must be treated before being used in agriculture. The aim of this treatment is to reduce the fermentable properties of the sludge as well as the risks to human health and the environment. In particular, it consists in eliminating the pathogenic micro-organisms that may be contained in the sewage sludge. It should be noted that, under this same Article 6, the use of untreated sludge may be authorised if the sludge is injected or worked into the soil. To the extent that it guarantees an adequate level of non-toxicity vis-à-vis pathogens and micro-contaminants (notably heavy metals) and given its organic improvement potential and beneficial fertilising properties, sewage sludge may be genuinely advantageous for certain types of agricultural soil.

The N-Viro process referred to by the Honourable Member appears to be a sludge-treatment process. The Commission is currently gathering information on this process, notably with a view to checking whether it is conducive to the attainment of the objectives indicated above.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 135, 30.5.1991.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 67, 7.3.1998.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 181, 4.7.1986.

(1999/C 207/035)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3091/98**by Joan Vallvé (ELDR) to the Commission**

(16 October 1998)

Subject: Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights

On 6 June 1996 the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights was adopted in Barcelona during the World Conference on Linguistic Rights, on the initiative of International PEN's Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee and Ciemen (Escarré International Centre for the Ethnic Minorities and Nations) and with moral and technical support from Unesco.

The prime objective of that declaration, which was produced thanks to the work of various NGOs and experts on linguistic issues and has received the support of many international figures in a range of fields, is to promote respect for and the full development of all languages and to preserve world linguistic diversity. In this light, will the Commission support the declaration with the aim of guaranteeing the right of each community to conserve and promote its language?