

Last year the universities of Almería and Alicante both carried out research into the environmental effects of the project and came to the following conclusions (which contradict the claims made by the project's supporters):

- since the 1950s the beaches adjacent to the harbour at Altea have shrunk in size by over 2,5 hectares (on account of erosion, torrential rainfall, the effects of sedimentation caused by construction work on the River Algar dam, the consequences of the original 1986 extension, and so on); any additional extension to the harbour could lead to further erosion and the loss of even more of the beach;
- the stretch of beach which would be left between the harbour and the Albir headland would suffer from reduced wave penetration, with the effect that the sand would not be sufficiently stirred up and aired; sediment would therefore be deposited which would affect the substratum (accumulation of organic matter) and cause odours, thus detracting from the beach's attractiveness as a recreational area;
- extending the harbour would obviously lead to an increase in maritime activity, with a consequent increase in the volume of oily pollutants in the waters in and near the harbour;
- an extension to the harbour and the consequent increase in pollution would seriously affect the already damaged seaweed beds and two marine species: bottle-nose dolphin and loggerhead turtle (see also complaint 2001/2210 submitted to the Commission by the WWF);
- the extension work would cause cloudiness in the waters adjacent to the harbour; this would reduce the amount of light reaching the seabed, thus affecting the seaweed.

In view of the facts described and the points made in the reports produced by the two universities, does the Commission consider the Altea harbour extension plan to have been drawn up in accordance with Directive 85/337/EEC ⁽¹⁾? It is, after all, a project of a type which comes under Annex I and which is therefore subject to the provisions of Article 4(1) of that directive.

What action is the Commission intending to take vis-à-vis the Spanish authorities in order to ensure that the already serious damage which has been done to the coastline in the Alicante region (in particular to the area's seaweed beds) is not compounded by yet more environmental devastation caused by any future extension of the harbour at Altea?

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 175, 5.7.1985, p. 40.

(2003/C 268 E/131)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0775/03

by María Sornosa Martínez (PSE) to the Commission

(12 March 2003)

Subject: Negative impact of the extension of the Port of Altea (Alicante, Spain) on posidonia beds

My Written Questions E-1486/02 ⁽¹⁾ and E-1487/02 ⁽²⁾, voiced my concern at the rapid deterioration of posidonia beds on the south east Spanish coast, and the inadequate protection being given, particularly in the Serra Gelada region, to this species protected by Directive 92/43/EEC ⁽³⁾.

A further problem has now been added to those highlighted in my previous questions, namely the planned building work to extend the Port of Altea, whose negative impact on the area's environment and above all its posidonia beds, have been described at length in reports drawn up by the Universities of Alicante and Almería respectively, and in the WWF's complaint 2001/2210 (all of which documents are currently before the Commission).

Given that in its reply of 12 July 2002, the Commission undertook to approach the Spanish authorities with a view to ensuring that the posidonia beds were adequately protected, has the Commission received any reply from the authorities with regard to such protection on the south east Spanish coast?

What steps does the Commission intend to take in order to guarantee that Directive 92/43/EEC is complied with as regards both the extension of the Port of Altea and the problems at Serra Gelada?

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 301 E, 5.12.2002, p. 158.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 301 E, 5.12.2002, p. 159.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

**Joint answer
to Written Questions P-0769/03 and E-0775/03
given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission**

(3 April 2003)

The matters described by the Honourable Member in Written Question E-0769/03 are the subject of a complaint being investigated by the Commission. The Spanish authorities have been asked for their comments on the application of Community legislation in this particular case, but no response has yet been received.

Once it receives the response, the Commission will take any necessary action to ensure that the Spanish authorities observe Community law in the case in hand and in particular Directive 85/337/EEC ⁽¹⁾, as amended by Directive 97/11/EC ⁽²⁾, and Directive 92/43/EEC ⁽³⁾.

Regarding the follow-up to Written Questions E-1486/02 and E-1487/02 mentioned by the Honourable Member in Written Question E-0775/03, the Commission would point out that, having examined the Spanish authorities' comments on the sand extraction and beach regeneration projects along the Mediterranean coast, it decided that they had applied the abovementioned Directives incorrectly and therefore took appropriate action. In another context, the bio-geographical seminar for the Mediterranean region held in Brussels in January 2003 recorded a general reservation in respect of all marine habitat types. Accordingly, the appropriateness of the Member States' proposal in relation to habitat type 1120 'Posidonia beds' will need to be examined in the light of the findings of an ad hoc working group of national experts, Commission representatives and other partners, set up recently to look in detail at subjects connected with the application of the Habitats and Birds Directives to the marine environment.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, OJ L 175, 5.7.1985.

⁽²⁾ Council Directive 97/11/EC of 3 March 1997 amending Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, OJ L 73, 14.3.1997.

⁽³⁾ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992.

(2003/C 268 E/132)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0774/03

by Charles Tannock (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(12 March 2003)

Subject: Destruction of the Schinias Marshes

With regard to the construction of a rowing centre on the Schinias Marsh on the Attica peninsula, the Commission confirmed in answer to Written Questions E-0769/01 ⁽¹⁾ and E-1073/01 ⁽²⁾ that it had written to the Greek government 'drawing attention to the value of the site for nature conservation and requesting information concerning any intended proposal of the site for the Natura 2000 network by virtue of Council Directive 92/43/EEC ⁽³⁾ of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna