

Question for written answer E-002310/2024
to the Commission
Rule 144
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)

Subject: Request for clarification on the building of an astronomical observatory in the Madonie Natural Park

The project to build an astronomical observatory on Mount Mufara, part of Madonie Natural Park, has raised a number of concerns as to its impact on the environment and compliance with land protection rules¹.

Both the size of the planned building, of a surface area of 800 m² and an overall volume of 3 540 m³, together with the construction of a new road, would appear to breach the strict new building ban imposed by the Palermo Department of Cultural and Environmental Heritage.

Given the importance of this project both for scientific progress and for potential local economic development, it is essential to ensure that all the stages of its construction comply with current environmental legislation.

In the light of the above:

1. Can the Commission provide details of how environmental requirements will be addressed during the construction of the observatory, with a view to safeguarding the unique biodiversity and the geological features of Mount Mufara and the Madonie Natural Park?
2. Is the Commission aware of any procedural irregularities or shortcomings concerning the necessary authorisations, and how does it intend to ensure that the project is implemented in full compliance with EU law²?
3. What action is planned to facilitate a constructive dialogue between the relevant authorities and environmental associations with a view to finding a solution that strikes the right balance between scientific innovation and environmental conservation?

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¹ An appeal lodged with the Regional Administrative Court of Sicily by associations such as the Italian Alpine Club, Legambiente Sicily, Lipu and WWF cites procedural irregularities and the absence of crucial authorisations, including the lack of a favourable opinion from the Regional Council for the Protection of Natural Heritage. The constitutional legitimacy of Article 9 of Decree-Law 104/2023, granting exemptions enabling such facilities to be built in protected areas, has also been called into question.

² The Administrative Court of Sicily has ordered a suspension to the project following an appeal by a number of environmental associations: the Italian Alpine Club, Legambiente Sicily, Lipu and WWF Sicily.