

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000477/25
to the Commission
Gaetano Pedulla' (The Left)
(4 February 2025)**

Subject: Environmental catastrophe along the Gorzente stream

The ongoing unplanned maintenance work to the dam in the Lavagnina reservoir in the municipality of Casaleggio Boiro (Alessandria) caused in June 2024 a large volume of mud to spill from the base of the dam into the water courses downstream, something not foreseen in the initial project.

Both the dam and the Gorzente, an intermittent stream downstream of it, form part of site of community importance (SCI)/special protection area (SPA) IT1180026 'Capanne di Marcarolo', which is part of the Natura 2000 network, protected by the Habitats and Birds Directives, and declared a special area of conservation (SAC) by the ministerial decree of 21 November 2017.

Given that this sludge spillage, caused by work subsidised from the EU's development and cohesion funds, has seriously damaged the environment — causing significant harm to river fauna, as documented by complaints from two citizens' committees and two local 'Legambiente' pro-environment associations — while the local authorities have stood idly by, can the Commission say whether:

1. The maintenance work on the Lavagnina dam was carried out in accordance with the EU standards set out in the Habitats and Birds Directives, given that the work was carried out with EU funding?
2. It intends to hold the local authorities to account by requesting an independent scientific report on the environmental and economic damage caused and on how to remedy it?
3. It intends to ensure that any future measures requested by the Commission are actually carried out?

Submitted: 4.2.2025

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(21 March 2025)**

The Commission has no specific information about the project referred to by the Honourable Member and about its alleged environmental impacts. According to the information available, this project is not financed by European funds.

Under Article 6(2) of the Habitats Directive ⁽¹⁾, Member States must take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of natural habitats and habitats of species in Natura 2000 sites.

As regards projects that are likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the directive, Member States have to carry out an assessment of the impacts in view of the site's conservation objectives.

In the case of a negative assessment, national authorities may authorise the project only for imperative reasons of overriding public interest and provided that there are no alternative solutions. In such cases, Member States shall take compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected.

The Commission published several guidance documents to help Member States implement the above-mentioned provisions ⁽²⁾. Italy has transposed these provisions in its national legislation ⁽³⁾ and, in 2019, adopted tailored national guidelines to facilitate and ensure their consistent implementation across its regions ⁽⁴⁾. The Region of Piedmont has also adopted relevant and up-to-date rules transposing the above provisions and guidelines ⁽⁵⁾.

Member States are primarily responsible for ensuring compliance with EU law, including verifying individual cases of potential breach of the relevant rules, and to take the necessary steps for enforcement.

In its role as guardian of the Treaties, the Commission will continue monitoring the situation and may decide to take appropriate action.

⁽¹⁾ 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, p. 7-50.

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance_en.htm

⁽³⁾ <https://www.mase.gov.it/pagina/la-valutazione-di-incidenza-vinca#:~:text=Si%20tratta%20del%20processo%20d,di%20significativit%C3%A0%20di%20tali%20incidenze.>

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/12/28/19A07968/SG>

⁽⁵⁾ Delibera Giunta Regionale n. 55-7222/2023/XI:

<https://www.regione.piemonte.it/web/temi/ambiente-territorio/biodiversita-aree-naturali/rete-natura-2000/valutazione-incidenza>