

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000543/25
to the Commission
Cristina Guarda (Verts/ALE)
(5 February 2025)

Subject: Potential threats to the Tagliamento River's ecosystem

The Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region recently approved ⁽¹⁾ a preliminary policy paper concerning the project to form an inline flood retention basin by building an inline weir with vertical sluice gates upstream of the Dignano bridge [‘Costruzione di una traversa laminante, con luci mobili a paratoie piane, adiacente al ponte di Dignano per la creazione di un bacino di espansione in linea, in alveo attivo’] ⁽²⁾.

As part of an appeal to preserve the River Tagliamento, the international scientific community ⁽³⁾ has highlighted that the planned works would violate a number of European regulations and EU environmental directives ⁽⁴⁾ and that the weir would be built on a Site of Community Importance ⁽⁵⁾ and across a river that is classified under Directive 2000/60/EC as a body of water of high ecological status ⁽⁶⁾. Further shortcomings have been flagged by the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) and a number of associations ⁽⁷⁾ and activist groups ⁽⁸⁾.

Because climate change is a factor, the effective mitigation of hydrogeological risks requires an exhaustive analysis of all alternative proposals which, in addition to actively involving local communities, should also evaluate all potential benefits and drawbacks, not just flood risk.

Despite claims to the contrary, the Region's project would not eliminate the flood risk in the Middle and Lower Tagliamento but only mitigate it, thus putting the planned works on a par with a number of alternative proposals that have not been given due consideration.

In the light of the above,

¹ Decision No 530 of 11 April 2024 of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region.

² The works will be carried out as part of the Eastern Alps River Basin Authority's Flood Risk Management Plan.

³ Coordinated by the Italian Centre for River Restoration (CIRF), this appeal was signed by over 800 researchers hailing from 35 countries https://www.freetagliamento.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Tagliamento_petition_26Oct24_EN_rev.pdf

⁴ They include the Water, Birds and Habitat Directives (Directives 2000/60/EC, 2009/147/EC and 92/43/EEC respectively), the Nature Restoration Law and the Alpine Convention.

⁵ Greto del Tagliamento SPA/SAC No IT3310007

⁶ https://distrettoalpiorientali.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/PDG_22_27_Vol_4a.pdf.

⁷ They include ‘Assieme per il Tagliamento’ [‘All together for the Tagliamento’], whose petition against altering the river's morphology has gathered 13 750 signatures.

⁸ <https://www.consiglio.regione.fvg.it/pagineinterne/Portale/comunicatiStampaDettaglio.aspx?ID=867391>.

1. Will the Commission verify whether the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region's project complies with EU law?
2. What is the Commission planning to do to protect the Tagliamento?

Submitted: 5.2.2025

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(24 April 2025)

1. The Commission does not undertake impact assessments of plans and projects on the environment, as Member States are primarily responsible to ensure implementation and enforcement of EU environmental law. According to information provided by the Italian authorities, the construction of a weir-bridge in Pinzano for the creation of a detention basin is a measure aimed at mitigating flood risk in Italy's Flood Risk Management Plan (FRMP). Following technical assessments and studies carried out by competent authorities and discussions with stakeholders, a set of interventions was identified to achieve the mitigation effect proposed by this measure ⁽¹⁾. The possible environmental impacts resulting from the measure are reported in the first FRMP, which underwent a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) ⁽²⁾. The measure is also included in the current FRMP. Having been the subject of an SEA already, the assessment of actual impacts requires a more defined project design of the interventions, to be evaluated through an Environmental Impact Assessment ⁽³⁾ and the appropriate assessment required under Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive ⁽⁴⁾. It must also be assessed whether these interventions would have an adverse effect on the status of the body of water concerned, and, if so, whether they would be covered by a derogation under Article 4(7) of the Water Framework Directive ⁽⁵⁾.
2. Based on the information above, the Commission has no evidence that the measure infringes EU law. In its role as guardian of the Treaties, the Commission will continue monitoring the situation and may decide to take appropriate action.

⁽¹⁾ The set of interventions includes: i) a weir with an in-line detention basin in the river reach crossed by the Dignano bridge; ii) a weir with an off-line detention basin, close to the Madrisio bridge, and iii) adjustments to enhance and/or retrofit levees, overflow channels, and the drainage network. The residual risk would be managed through the two non-structural measures: i) the Citizen Observatory (Osservatorio dei Cittadini) and ii) the update of Civil Protection Plans.

⁽²⁾ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, OJ L 197, 21.7.2001, p. 30-37.

⁽³⁾ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, OJ L 026 28.1.2012, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ 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.

⁽⁵⁾ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1.