

European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

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DOCUMENT 1-189/84

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on the
Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

on the protection of the habitat of the lakes of
Ganzirri and Faro (Messina)

and

on protection of the natural habitat of the ponds
of Vendicari (Syracuse)

Rapporteur: Mr M. MERTENS

PE 89.367/fin.

Or. De.

At its sitting of 5 July 1982, the European Parliament referred the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr DE PASQUALE (Doc. 1-428/82) and the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr DE PASQUALE and Mr CERAVOLO (Doc. 1-1339/82) pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection as the committee responsible.

At its meeting of 1 October 1982, the committee decided to draw up a report and appointed Mr MERTENS rapporteur.

The committee considered the draft report at its meeting of 18 April 1984 and adopted the motion for a resolution as a whole by 13 votes to nil with 1 abstention.

The committee decided to request application of Rule 34 of the Rules of Procedure.

The following took part in the vote: Mr Collins, chairman; Mr Ryan, vice-chairman; Mrs Schleicher, deputizing for the rapporteur; Mr Alber, Mr Bernard (deputizing for Mr Bomard), Mr Calvez (deputizing for Mrs Scrivener), Mr Ceravolo (deputizing for Mr Spinelli), Mr Forth, Mrs Lentz-Cornette, Mr Schall (deputizing for Mr Del Duca), Mrs Seibel-Emmerling, Mrs Spaak, Mr Remilly and Mr Verroken (deputizing for Mr Ghergo).

The report was tabled on 18 April 1984.

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ANNEX: MOTIONS FOR RESOLUTIONS (Docs. 1-428/82 and 1-1339/82)

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the protection of the habitat of the Lakes of Ganzirri and Faro (Messina) and on protection of the natural habitat of the ponds of Vendicari (Syracuse)

The European Parliament,

having regard to

- the motion for a resolution by Mr DE PASQUALE of 1 July 1982 on the protection of the habitat of the Lakes of Ganzirri and Faro (Messina) (Doc. 1-428/82),
 - the motion for a resolution by Mr DE PASQUALE and Mr CERAVOLO of 3 March 1983 on protection of the natural habitat of the ponds of Vendicari (Syracuse) (Doc. 1-1339/82),
 - the position adopted by the World Wildlife Fund - Italy (Messina section) on 23 February 1976,
 - the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection (Doc. 1-189/84),
1. Calls on the Council to adopt without delay the Directive on environmental impact assessment for certain public and private projects;
 2. Calls on the Commission
 - (a) to ensure that the provisions of Directive 79/409 of April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds is adhered to in all Member States and to make such compliance with its provisions compulsory, if necessary by recourse to the Court of Justice;
 - (b) to examine whether, under the Directive on the conservation of wild birds, the ponds of Vendicari should be classified as internationally important wetlands and, if necessary, to draw the attention of Italy specifically to this point;
 - (c) to examine to what extent the Vendicari ponds and the lakes of Faro and Ganzirri are included in the ecological mapping being carried out by the Commission and how they are evaluated and classified, and if necessary to make appropriate recommendations to Italy;
 3. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. The motions for resolutions

1. Both motions for resolutions relate to building projects for tourism which the authors of the motions for resolutions believe represent unacceptable interference with the present ecosystem and a threat to its survival.
2. In the two coastal lakes of Faro and Ganzirri, the local authorities are planning to build a tourist port for motorboats and yachts; and in the area around the Vendicari ponds in the province of Syracuse, a private consortium is planning a tourist centre with accommodation for approximately 5,000 people.
- 3.(a) Only a few centuries ago the lakes of Faro and Ganzirri were just moorland. The local inhabitants then began to clean and conserve the banks and water and exploit it for shellfish cultivation, among other things by creating artificial sandbanks.

(b) These centuries of work created a form of customary law of acquisition for the shellfish farmers in respect of the shellfish banks and the surrounding water and lakesides, which was given proper legal form in the middle of the last century by the Royal Government so that now the shellfish farmers are quite obviously the owners of the lakes and surrounding land.

(c) In 1807 and 1810 both lakes were connected to the open sea by canals; at the time, this must have totally transformed the flora and fauna of the area.

(d) According the World Wildlife Fund (Messina Section) the lakes now possess a very specific biological equilibrium which is preserved by certain unique sulphur-oxidizing types of bacteria and which is of considerable international scientific interest. Certain unique varieties of shellfish and fish live in the lakes, as do certain special varieties of small crustaceans, all of which would be threatened with total extinction by changes to the ecosystem.

- (e) The lakes are currently subject to environmental protection (by decree of the President of the Region of Sicily of 6 July 1967) and are also subject to the RAMSAR Convention, which contains provisions on the protection of internationally important areas worthy of conservation. Moreover, they have been designated as one of the areas worthy of conservation by the National Scientific Council and are listed as such in Articles 51 and 52 of Messina's previous land utilization plan.
- (f) A new land utilization plan drawn up in 1975 provides for the construction of a tourist port known as 'Marina del Faro'. According to the World Wildlife Fund, the construction of this port would not only destroy a unique ecosystem but would also violate the property rights of the shellfish farmers and the law of the Messina region. Nor is the economic success of such a port assured, particularly as similar installations are planned nearby; the money required to fund this project could be used to greater benefit to finance projects of more general interest.
- 4.(a) The Vendicari ponds, covering an area of some 1,200 acres, are the best preserved feature of the coastal saltwater marshes that characterize the southeastern tip of Sicily.
- (b) The Vendicari ponds serve as a staging post for some 180 species of migrant birds. They are also the habitat of a large number of animals which are extremely important for the ecological equilibrium of the area.
- (c) As Sicilian wetlands of great scientific and ecological interest, the ponds have been put forward for recognition under the RAMSAR Convention as wetlands of international importance. The Sicilian Forestry Commission has submitted a plan to make the ponds a nature reserve, which has been supported by numerous ecological organizations, and this has been submitted for approval to the Regional Authority for Regional Development and the Environment.
- (d) The authors of the motion for a resolution fear that the construction of the planned hotel and tourist centre and the resulting influx of tourists would undermine the protective function of a nature reserve.

5. Given the very inadequate documentation, it is hard for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection to arrive at a well founded assessment of the necessity to construct the proposed tourist facilities, their economic advantages and disadvantages and the threat to the ecosystem and wetlands which it is feared would result.

It appears reasonable, however, to draw certain general conclusions and formulate demands in line with other opinions of the committee.

II. Conclusions

6. The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection calls on the Council to adopt without delay the Directive on environmental impact assessment for certain public and private projects.

7. The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection calls on the Commission

(a) to ensure that the provisions of Directive 79/409 of April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds is adhered to in all Member States and to make such compliance with its provisions compulsory, if necessary by recourse to the Court of Justice;

(b) to examine whether, under the Directive on the conservation of wild birds, the ponds of Vendicari should be classified as internationally important wetlands and, if necessary, to draw the attention of Italy specifically to this point;

(c) to examine to what extent the Vendicari ponds and the lakes of Faro and Ganzirri are included in the ecological mapping being carried out by the Commission and how they are evaluated and classified.

tabled by Mr PASQUALE

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on the protection of the habitat of the lakes of Ganzirri and Faro (Messina)

- A. having regard to the local authority project to construct a tourist port on the two coastal lakes of Ganzirri and Faro (Messina) at the north-eastern tip of Sicily,
- B. having regard to the very high scenic, ecological and geomorphological value of these lakes,
- C. whereas the specific natural features of these lakes and the presence in them of a wide variety of rare and unique animal species have aroused the scientific interest of eminent scholars and prestigious international organizations,
- D. having regard to their inclusion in the International Biological Programme, the most important worldwide census of inland and coastal waters worthy of protection,
- E. whereas the construction of a tourist port on one of the two lakes would inevitably disturb their age-old natural and biological balance and would lead to the disappearance of rare living species, without bringing any significant economic benefits to the local population, who at present derive their livelihood from the lakes (cultivation of shellfish, fishing, etc.),
- F. whereas the conservation of habitats was designated by the Commission as one of the central problems in its draft action programme of the European Communities on the environment, forwarded to the Council on 4 November 1981,
- G. whereas this programme states that a Community framework must be considered essential if due cohesion is to be given to environmental initiatives at local, regional and national level. 'Such a framework', the programme maintains, 'would ensure that a network of properly protected biotopes, sufficient in both extent and number, and interlinked in a rational fashion, was set up and maintained. The network should be designed in such a way as to guarantee - as far as the habitat is concerned - the survival of all species native to the Community',
- H. having regard to the proposal for a directive from the Commission of 11 June 1980, on the assessment of the environmental impact of certain public and private works, designed to protect the Community's environmental resources,
 1. Calls on the Council to adopt immediately both the programme and the directive proposed by the Commission, so that the latter may be enabled to implement these at an early date;
 2. Calls on the Council to take action, in concert with the authorities of the Member State concerned, to prevent the disappearance of the coastal lakes of Ganzirri and Faro, which are unique elements of the Community's natural and biological patrimony;
 3. Calls on the Commission to act immediately, on the basis of the existing directives and recommendations, to ensure the maximum possible protection of the environment and territory of the Community, and to arrange for the implementation of the projects outlined in the draft action programme of 4 November 1981;
 4. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the appropriate national authorities.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (DOCUMENT 1-1339/82)

tabled by Mr DE PASQUALE and Mr CERAVOLO

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on protection of the natural habitat of the ponds of Vendicari (Syracuse)

The European Parliament,

- A. having learned that a group of private entrepreneurs intends to construct a vast tourist complex with accommodation for no less than 5000 in the Vendicari nature reserve in the province of Syracuse,
- B. whereas the ponds of Vendicari, covering an area of some 1200 hectares, are the most extensive and best preserved feature of the coastal salt-water marshes that characterize the south-eastern tip of Sicily (Capo Passero area),
- C. whereas their natural environment is regarded by prominent scholars as the most interesting natural and ecological wetlands of Sicily in general and has been proposed as a wetland of international importance to the International Waterfowl Research Bureaux under the Ramsar Convention Directives,
- D. whereas the Vendicari ponds are the ideal refuge for some 180 species of migrant birds, some of them extremely rare, and are a unique animal habitat of extreme importance to the ecological equilibrium,
- E. whereas the above tourist complex (which will involve the influx of thousands of people, the construction of hotel complexes, the creation of artificial dunes and a zoo for the species of birds driven out) will radically change the concept of a nature reserve,
- F. whereas a plan to make the ponds of Vendicari a reserve drawn up by the Sicilian Forestry Commission (Azienda Foreste Demaniali) has been submitted for approval to the Regional Councillor for Regional Development and the Environment and has obtained the support of numerous ecological organizations such as the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and the LIPU (Italian League for the Protection of Birds),

- G. whereas the Community's third environmental action programme, submitted by the Commission to the Council on 4 November 1981, regards the conservation of habitats as a central problem and deems joint measures to coordinate national and local initiatives to be essential,
- H. whereas the proposal for a Council directive of 11 June 1980 on the assessment of the environmental effect of certain public and private projects, now at an advanced stage of discussion in the Council, is aimed at safeguarding the environmental assets of the European Community,
- I. whereas Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds requires the Member States to protect wetlands, particularly those of international importance, create land and sea protection areas for migrant species and prevent pollution or deterioration of habitats in the protected areas,
1. Calls on the Council immediately to adopt the programme and the directives on the environment proposed by the Commission so that it can proceed with their implementation within a reasonable time;
 2. Calls on the Council to make representations to the Member State and through it to the Sicilian region recommending adoption of the proposal for a nature reserve round the ponds of Vendicari submitted by the Forestry Commission and requesting confirmation that approval for the proposed hotel complex has in the meantime been refused;
 3. Deplores the fact that the Italian Republic has not taken steps to implement Directive 79/409/EEC of April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds after so many years, although it was required to do so within two years;
 4. Calls on the Commission to take action immediately under existing directives and recommendations to guarantee maximum protection of the environment and territory of the Community and to implement the programme guidelines laid down in the proposal of 4 November 1981;
 5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the national and regional authorities concerned.