

Question for written answer E-014922/2015
to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: Decommissioning of energy infrastructure

Infrastructure is at the core of any industrialised economy, but as economies and technologies have shifted, the demand for these structures has changed, with some demands increasing and others decreasing or transitioning. Furthermore, some of this infrastructure is approaching the end of, or has already exceeded, its originally intended design life, and is at risk of failing. We know that infrastructure systems have had a great impact on the environment, and their change in importance has paved the way for decommissioning and environmental restoration.

Decommissions are rarely carried out for purely environmental reasons, but they are driven primarily by economic concerns, with environmental restoration as a supporting, but clearly secondary, influence. It is both rare and difficult to decommission infrastructure – even infrastructure that is extremely damaging to the environment – if it is ably providing the service for which it was built. The EU focuses solely on obsolete nuclear facilities, leaving other energy infrastructure aside, and furthermore, the environmental consequences of, and ecosystem response to, infrastructure removal are in some cases unknown. Basic information on the magnitude and rate of change is needed in order to make informed infrastructure management decisions.

What measures is the EU implementing to raise awareness of and deal with this problem?