

**Question for written answer E-013958/2015
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Viorica Dăncilă (S&D)

Subject: Protecting swallow colonies

Non-governmental environmental protection organisations have for some years now been pointing to a decrease in the number of swallows in Europe. Researchers, moreover, maintain that Europe's swallow population has fallen by over 20% in the last 10 years.

Their life-cycle makes swallows a good indicator of the state of the environment. The state of health of Europe's swallow colonies reflects the availability of aerial plankton and, indirectly, shows which areas are least affected by pesticides and pollution.

The decrease in the number of these birds is being accentuated by climate change but is mainly caused by changes in farming practices – centring on the wholesale use of pesticides, which pass on to swallows in the insects they eat – and the reclamation of lakes and ponds to create farmland, which reduces the area in which swallows can nest.

How can the Commission support swallow lovers in conducting, in conjunction with local and regional authorities, regular surveys and campaigns to raise public awareness, especially among the young, on the environmental importance of having a healthy swallow population, and in taking measures such as encouraging nest-building in areas at major risk of depopulation?