

**Question for written answer E-000606/2016  
to the Commission**

Rule 130

**Therese Comodini Cachia (PPE)**

Subject: High nitrate levels in Maltese watercourses - EU Nitrates Directive

Studies published by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) as part of Malta's water catchment management plan for 2009-2015 have shown that all three of Malta's natural watercourses and a valley in Gozo have registered high nitrate levels.

Scientific studies have also shown that the flora of wetlands in Malta has changed over the years. Most oligotrophic species (species that require limited nutrients) have decreased in number, while nitrophilic plant species have increased.

Watercourses in Malta are an important habitat as they are home to various species, including the endemic freshwater crab, the native painted frog, which has limited geographic distribution, and various other plant species.

High nitrate levels can cause eutrophication, oxygen depletion and thus death to aquatic life.

Can the Commission outline:

- whether there is awareness of the persistent situation, despite the publication of its recent reports outlining the problem;
- to what extent Malta has adopted the EU Nitrates Directive;
- and whether the Maltese Government or the Commission have come up with supplementary action plans in order to tackle the persistent and continuing situation in Malta?