

**Question for written answer E-007030/2016  
to the Commission**

Rule 130

**José Inácio Faria (ALDE)**

Subject: Granting of EU funding for the culling of mammals on the Berlengas biogenetic reserve

Classified by the Council of Europe as a biogenetic reserve, the Berlengas archipelago protects not only individual species but an entire ecosystem. No research has been conducted or cited under the Berlengas LIFE project to prove that mammals on the archipelago are putting other species at risk, yet the culling of mammal populations is set to go ahead. A number of years ago, one of the project's promoters, the Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA), carried out a monitoring programme which found that rats did not pose a threat to bird numbers. There has been no such programme for the islands' rabbits, whose population numbers have remained stable for five centuries and whose role in the ecosystem is vulnerable and should not be arbitrarily interfered with.

What was the scientific basis for the decision to grant EU funding for the culling of mammals on the Berlengas archipelago?

Can the Commission confirm that the decision to grant funding was not backed up by any scientists fully familiar with conditions in the Berlengas reserve?

In view of the lack of credible and independent research and given that bird population numbers – supposedly at risk – have been on the rise for decades, who sanctioned the EUR 1.4 million grant? On what grounds was it authorised?