

**Question for written answer E-004338/2018
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Miguel Viegas (GUE/NGL)

Subject: Studies on the decline of the oak grove

In the 1990s, a set of problems was found in cork oak groves in a number of areas on the Iberian Peninsula and labelled the 'decline of the oak grove'. Despite decades of research being carried out, nothing has yet been found to fully explain and mitigate the problem. The importance of cork oak groves, which currently take up an area of some 700 000 hectares in Portugal, goes beyond cork production, as they form an ecosystem with enormous economic and environmental potential.

The number of cork oak trees in Portugal fell by 13% between 1995 and 2005, mostly in the centre and south of the country. In 2010, more than 50% of cork oak and holm oak populations were showing signs of decline. More recent estimates from the União da Floresta Mediterrânica (Mediterranean Forest Union) state that a fifth of the area of cork oak groves is in decline. The decline in trees belonging to the *Quercus* genus (to which oaks, including cork oaks and holm oaks, belong) is also widespread in other Mediterranean countries.

What specific Horizon 2020 research lines could be used to support international projects which examine the mechanics of the decline and death of the cork oak grove?