

**Question for written answer E-001478/2019
to the Commission**

Rule 130

Svetoslav Hristov Malinov (PPE)

Subject: Suspected violation of Article 17 of the Habitats Directive in Bulgaria

Bulgaria is obliged to report by 30 April 2019 on the conservation status of habitats and species under Article 17 of Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive).

On 14 December 2018, the Bulgarian Ministry of the Environment concluded a contract 'for analysis and research of species and habitat types in Bulgaria, subject to reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive'. My attention has been drawn by citizens' organisations in Bulgaria to that specific contract, which gives good grounds to suspect violations. The contractee is a consortium of Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian companies and research organisations. The leading company, which owns 49 % of the consortium, had only one staff member over the previous months. The contract has a budget of EUR 4.8 million and a duration of 27 months, and has to include two seasons of field research. It is not possible to do this by the 30 April deadline for reporting.

How will the Commission guarantee that Article 17 reporting in Bulgaria will be based on up-to-date field scientific data as per 30 April 2019 and that the European taxpayers' money will be used in the most cost-effective way?