

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000567/24
to the Commission
Bas Eickhout (Verts/ALE)
(21 February 2024)**

Subject: European Habitats Directive in Montenegro

Montenegro is in the process of implementing the European Habitats Directive ⁽¹⁾. Researchers recently observed 17 species falling under Annexes II and IV of the directive in the Komarnica Valley. Their presence is indicative of pristine and natural habitats that are becoming increasingly rare in Europe. However, there are plans to develop a new hydropower plant in the area, which would irreversibly damage the local ecosystem. Moreover, the plans would affect both a candidate Emerald Network site and a site that may be designated a Special Protected Area under the EU Birds Directive ⁽²⁾.

1. Is the Commission aware of the dam's impact on the species protected under the Habitats Directive and on the potential sites, and is it assessing this impact?
2. How does the Commission view the potential conflict between the dam's development and the implementation of the European Habitats Directive in Montenegro?
3. If the Commission believes that there is a conflict, how will it address this with the Montenegrin authorities?

Submitted: 21.2.2024

**Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission
(6 May 2024)**

Montenegro, as an EU candidate country, is expected to gradually align with the EU environmental acquis, including EU nature protection legislation such as the Birds ⁽³⁾ and Habitats ⁽⁴⁾ Directives.

The Commission received information on the potential impact of the envisaged dam in the Komarnica Valley by means of a study undertaken by the European Biodiversity Survey ⁽⁵⁾.

A complaint to the Bern Convention on the impacts of the hydropower plant on the candidate Emerald site Komarnica (ME000000P) is currently under consideration.

The Commission has repeatedly stressed that investments in hydropower in Montenegro need to comply with the EU environmental acquis, national and international nature protection and water management obligations, ensure public participation and consultation, and guarantee high quality environmental impact assessment reports that include cumulative impacts on nature and biodiversity ⁽⁶⁾.

The Commission attaches great importance to environmental issues in the context of the accession negotiations and will continue to discuss with the Montenegrin authorities the proper alignment with the nature protection acquis, including in the Subcommittee on Transport, Energy, Environment, Climate Change and Regional Policy, in the framework of the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Agreement.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7).

⁽²⁾ Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7).

⁽³⁾ Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7).

⁽⁴⁾ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7).

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.biodiversitysurvey.eu/>

⁽⁶⁾ For instance: SWD(2020) 353 final, European Commission Montenegro 2020 Report, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a44e633d-cd16-444b-903a-8f97e66ce86d_en?filename=montenegro_report_2020.pdf page 110.