European Parliament
2019-2024

Plenary sitting

B9-0519/2022

21.11.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the protection of livestock farming and large carnivores in Europe
(2022/2952(RSP))

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on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group

B9-0519/2022

European Parliament resolution on the protection of livestock farming and large carnivores in Europe
(2022/2952(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

I. Grazing ecology and biodiversity; predator population dynamics – from local extinction to limited repopulation of former range

A. whereas wolves and other indigenous large carnivores such as bears have always been an intrinsic part of Europe's ecological communities, playing an important ecological role shaping habitats, biodiversity and population dynamics;

B. whereas traditional pastoralism developed over millennia in coexistence with wolves and other large carnivores, shaping unique semi-natural habitats with high biodiversity and cultural value and important rural livelihoods;

C. whereas extensive low density livestock herding, especially in uplands, is essential in maintaining rural communities and is important for maintaining biodiversity in species-rich grassland habitats. whereas although past habitat loss and eradication led to local and regional extinction across large parts of Europe, wolf and bear populations have in recent decades recovered some of their former ranges after an absence of many years, leading to conflicts in areas where traditional supervised pastoralism had meanwhile discontinued;

II. Socio-economic difficulties in the upland sheep grazing sector – outmigration and rural depopulation, cessation of traditional supervised herding

D. whereas the viability of pastoralism, especially the upland sheep sector, is more heavily impacted by wider socio-economic problems[1], including isolation, rural depopulation, outbreaks of animal diseases[2], market factors, low productivity and competitiveness, changes in consumption patterns, competition from intensive lowland operations nearer to ports importing feed, etc.;

E. whereas upland pastoralists are very 'active farmers' providing public goods, especially biodiversity, under extremely physically and economically demanding conditions, yet are often discriminated against by agricultural policy; whereas, for example, they receive a lower payment rate in terms of direct payments in some Member States, on top of which they are far from the market and face unfair competition from less

[1] European Parliament resolution of 3 May 2018 on the current situation and future prospects for the sheep and goat sectors in the EU (OJ C 41, 6.2.2020, p. 50).
[2] Diseases contribute significantly to sheep mortality in predator free systems, 2.5-35.8 % mortality (a mean of 13.8 %) from Murray et al, 2019: Descriptive analysis of ovine mortality in sentinel sheep flocks in Ireland. *Vet Rec.* 2019 May 25;184(21):649. doi: 10.1136/vr.105291. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6582811/

sustainable farming systems in the lowlands, on a very uneven playing field;

F. whereas a number of Member States still allocate insufficient funds to install livestock protection measures against large carnivores and not all farmers, especially small and medium ones, have sufficient funds to protect them themselves;

III. Predation facts and figures – behavioural and feeding ecology, unsupervised herding and depredation, population dynamics and monitoring the threat of extinction

G. whereas large wolf populations do not directly correlate with high livestock losses but higher depredation levels do correlate with unprotected/unsupervised husbandry systems and free-ranging livestock, and/or low densities of wild prey;

H. whereas many countries where annual depredation rates are very low also have substantial large carnivore populations, indicating that depredation can be lowered if livestock is suitably protected and supervised;

I. whereas peer-reviewed studies show that even when domestic livestock is abundant in wolf territory, wolves still prefer to feed on wild animals[3] and predation on domestic animals is largely caused by a scarcity of wolves' natural prey;

J. whereas the impact of depredation by large carnivores is relatively low compared to other causes of mortality; whereas the upper estimate of depredation of sheep by wolves, dogs and dog-wolf hybrids is 0.06 %, 0.004 % by bears, 0.001 % by lynx and an insignificant number by wolverines[4]; whereas other forms of sheep mortality without wolves or large predators was found to be 2.5-35.8 % (a mean of 13.8 %)[5], indicating that the background rate of loss of livestock, for example due to disease, husbandry and climate, greatly outweighs the depredation losses by large carnivores;

K. whereas data available both at subpopulation and national level for large predator populations must be interpreted with care; whereas the low risk of extinction at European level is not the same as the extinction risk in individual Member States, for example, the wolf is at risk of extinction on many national red lists[6]; whereas, in

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[3] A. Janeiro-Otero, T.M. Newsome, L.M. Van Eeden, W.J. Ripple, C.F. Dormann. 'Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) predation on livestock in relation to prey availability', *Biological Conservation*, Vol.243, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2020.108433
Figueiredo AM, Valente AM, Barros T, Carvalho J, Silva DAM, Fonseca C, et al. (2020) 'What does the wolf eat? Assessing the diet of the endangered Iberian wolf (*Canis lupus signatus*) in northeast Portugal', *PLoS ONE* 15(3): e0230433. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0230433

[4] Linnell, J. D. C. and Cretois, B., 'The revival of wolves and other large predators and its impact on farmers and their livelihood in rural regions of Europe', Research for the Committee on Agriculture, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels, 2018. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/617488/IPOL_STU(2018)617488_EN.pdf

[5] Control rates (no wolves) from Murray et al, 2019, 'Descriptive analysis of ovine mortality in sentinel sheep flocks in Ireland', *Vet Rec.* 2019 May 25;184(21):649. doi: 10.1136/vr.105291. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6582811/

[6] See latest figures presented to the Bern Convention in September 2022: https://rm.coe.int/inf45e-2022-wolf-assessment-bern-convention-2791-5979-4182-1-2/1680a7fa47
In many Member States wolves are assessed as threatened with extinction under the national Red List categories of 'vulnerable', 'endangered' or 'critically endangered'.

addition, a low extinction risk does not necessarily imply a 'Favourable Conservation Status' (FCS) as required by the Habitats Directive, as the FCS aims at restoring healthy species' populations throughout their natural range; whereas in order to survive extinction, a population must be large enough to survive genetic bottlenecks, inbreeding, hybridisation, and events such as wildfires, droughts and disease; whereas there is no direct link between a species achieving FCS and its protection level being downgraded; whereas some large predator populations are as low as a few individuals to a few hundred, and removing protected status would speed up their extinction; whereas, for example, the status of the nine subpopulations of *Canis lupus* cannot be considered in isolation, especially as there is no transboundary action plan in Europe that manages any of them; whereas, since management is at national level, conservation status must also be assessed at national level; whereas, since many European countries have *Canis lupus* in small numbers, they are awarded status under the Red List of species threatened with extinction;

IV. Benefits of wolves and large predators to the ecosystem

L. whereas wolves benefit wild and semi-natural ecosystems and biodiversity by regulating populations of wild prey (boar and ungulates such as deer), reducing damage wild prey causes to crops and allowing the regrowth of riparian vegetation as well as the natural regrowth of forests, which benefits flood prevention; whereas the presence of wolves reduces the transmission of disease including zoonoses such as tuberculosis and slows pandemics such as African Swine Fever[7];

M. whereas the presence of wolves also inhibits the predation of domesticated species by meso-predators such as jackals, lynx and foxes, which would otherwise prey on flocks or herds[8] and Iberian wolves even consume meso-predators such as cats and stone martens[9], thereby ensuring high biodiversity and ecological balance;

1. Observes in many parts of Europe an expansion of range or recolonisation by certain large predators including especially wolves and bears that have been absent from those territories for quite some time, which brings them into conflict with human activities, especially extensive grazing of sheep and cattle; notes the significant costs to pastoralists caused by depredation of their herds and the great disparity between Member States and regions in terms of measures, and in some cases a lack thereof, to support their farmers and public funds they make available for compensation and

[7] Tanner, E., White, A., Acevedo, P. et al.,'Wolves contribute to disease control in a multi-host system', *Sci Rep* 9, 7940 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-44148-9. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44148-9
Szewczyk et al (2021) in Viruses. doi: 10.3390/v13102062.
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8541390/ https://www.feedstrategy.com/african-swine-fever/research-wolves-may-be-helpful-in-fight-against-asf/

[8] T., Greenville, A., Ćirović, D. *et al.* Top predators constrain mesopredator distributions. *Nat Commun* 8, 15469 (2017). https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms15469
Also https://krog.sta.si/2427192/depleted-wolf-population-leading-to-spread-of-jackals-in-europe

[9] Figueiredo AM, Valente AM, Barros T, Carvalho J, Silva DAM, Fonseca C, et al. (2020), 'What does the wolf eat? Assessing the diet of the endangered Iberian wolf (*Canis lupus signatus*) in northeast Portugal', *PLoS ONE* 15(3): e0230433. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0230433

adaptation;

V. Culling proven to be at best ineffective and at worse it increases depredation

2. Notes the proven inefficacy of wolf culls on the rate of livestock depredation[10], especially regarding established packs, and that in the worst cases livestock depredation increases following culls due to the pack dynamic being destabilised or divided (e.g. lone wolves), or new unhabituated packs moving in to fill a niche[11];

3. Further notes that unregulated killing risks endangering the populations under protection, which may have only recently stabilised; notes that uncontrolled hunting would therefore actually trigger an increase in their protection status;

VI. Successful coexistence approaches

4. Notes that prevention measures to avoid conflicts of coexistence, when properly designed and implemented, such as the 40 successful LIFE+ projects already funded by the EU, have proven to be very effective in reducing the risk of predation; points out that these include reintroducing traditional agricultural practices such as shepherding and supervised pastoralism, night-time recovery shelters and guard dogs and combining these with modern techniques such as the use of electric fences, visual or acoustic deterrents and other innovative approaches such as digitisation and flock radio tracking in order to ensure the direct and continuous surveillance of grazing livestock; notes that one peer-reviewed study from Iberia found farmer satisfaction to be as high as 95-96 % with livestock guarding dogs and 100 % with electric fences[12], and that another study[13] assessed several individual methods as 'highly effective' (less than 75 % with guard dogs, electric fences, visual/sound deterrents or shepherding); notes further that approaches can be combined for even higher performance;

5. Points out that in some countries, well-measured, research-based population management activities combined with intensively implemented livestock protection measures have shown good results, ensuring both the protection of livestock and large predator populations; notes that in order to ensure the necessary protection of species, reliable data on their populations are needed; emphasises the need to include the widest

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[10] Krofel, M & Černe, R & Jerina, K 'Effectiveness of wolf (*Canis lupus*) culling to reduce livestock depredations' *Acta Silvae et Ligni*. 95. 11-22. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233792224_Effectiveness_of_wolf_Canis_lupus_culling_to_reduce_livestock_depredations

[11] Wielgus RB, Peebles KA (2014). Effects of Wolf Mortality on Livestock Depredations. *PLoS ONE* 9(12): e113505. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0113505
T. Oliveira, A. Treves, J.V. López-Bao, M. Krofel (2021), 'The contribution of the LIFE program to mitigating damages caused by large carnivores in Europe', *Global Ecology and Conservation*, Vol.31, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2021.e01815

[12] Cortés, Yolanda & Ribeiro, Silvia & Petrucci-Fonseca, Francisco & Blanco, Juan (2020), 'A decade of use of damage prevention measures in Spain and Portugal', *Carnivore Damage Prevention News* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346785659_A_DECADE_OF_USE_OF_DAMAGE_PREVENTION_MEASURES_IN_SPAIN_AND_PORTUGAL

[13] Oliveira, A. Treves, J.V. López-Bao, M. Krofel. The contribution of the LIFE program to mitigating damages caused by large carnivores in Europe. *Global Ecology and Conservation*, Vol.31, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2021.e01815

possible range of institutions and citizens in gathering that data, for example employees of state forest services, directorates of nature reserves and other protected area, hunters and non-governmental organisations (NGOs);

6. Calls on the Member States to change the legal status of working livestock guarding dogs, which are considered as pets in some jurisdictions (e.g. France), in order to better protect farmers in the event of unintended attacks by guarding dogs on tourists;

7. Calls for the mainstreaming of good practices on coexistence and successful administrative approaches used by Member States and regions, for example, coordinating offices for large carnivores made up of administrations, NGOs and forestry bodies tasked with reviewing compensations for losses[14] or, for example, German state-level (*Land*) advisors[15] tasked with monitoring wolf populations and predicting their migration who issue advance warnings in good time to help farmers to prepare protection measures and tend to their flocks in person or ensure supervision;

8. Underlines the importance of developing stakeholder platforms on coexistence with large predators at EU, national and local level and for promoting dialogue, exchanging experiences and cooperating in addressing conflicts between people and protected species; notes successful examples of collective management involving local authorities, farmers and naturalists, etc.[16]; calls for the success of Parliament pilot projects funding regional platforms in Italy and France to be built upon[17]; calls therefore for their replication, for example, as preparatory actions;

VII. Public support for pastoralists – funds available for coexistence and guidance for public authorities

9. Agrees that in balancing societal demands with biodiversity and ecological imperatives and rural livelihoods, farmers must not be left to pay the costs of conservation given the enormous financial pressures they can be exposed to, especially in remote upland areas where in some Member States they already face discriminatorily lower rates of basic common agricultural policy (CAP) payments; insists that prevention measures must be fully subsidised by public funds and damage must be fully compensated, including indirect costs;

10. Calls on the Member States to use adequate funding possibilities identified by the Commission within and outside of the CAP, in order to ensure the conservation and recovery of biodiversity, the coexistence of large carnivores and sustainable livestock farming practices in line with the overarching goals of the CAP and EU Biodiversity Strategy; notes that some Member States have successfully used rural development funds to enable coexistence between wolf populations and pastoralism[18];

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[14] https://baer-wolf-luchs.at/mitglieder.htm
[15] Land Nordrhein-Westfalen https://wolf.nrw/wolf/de/management/berater; Land Niedersachsen https://www.wolfsmonitoring.com/meldung/wolfsberater
[16] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/Fiche_case%20study_Switzerland.pdf
[17] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/regional_platforms_France.htm https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/regional_platforms_Italy.htm
[18] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/Fiche_case%20study_Greece.pdf

11. Notes that although numerous adequate funding opportunities exist under the CAP, LIFE+ and State aid, it may be difficult in some Member States or regions for pastoralists to access measures to protect their domestic animals; calls therefore for the obligatory inclusion of information in farmer advice and extension services, especially the Farm Advisory Service, focusing on which funds farmers can access and how; insists on the obligatory inclusion of publicly funded measures in Member States' CAP strategic plans and, where applicable, their regional variants;

VII.a. Compensation

12. Notes that compensation payments granted by some Member States do not fully compensate the direct and indirect damage suffered; insists that fair and generous compensation is essential both to maintain pastoralist livelihoods and also to ensure optimal coexistence with large carnivores; calls on Member States and regions to improve access to financial compensation; insists that all losses to pastoralists caused by large carnivores be fairly compensated, with a broad interpretation to cover not only the market cost of the carcass, bearing in mind possible market fluctuations, but also associated costs such as behavioural effects on herd and flock individuals, the impact on feeding and weight loss, stress, miscarriages, sub-lethal injuries and veterinary costs, etc.; insists that losses to hybrid species should also be included; highlights, however, that compensation should be linked to a comprehensive management approach and be evidence-based;

VII.b. Funding opportunities to cover costs under the CAP

13. Notes that by far the most substantial source of public money for measures is the CAP, giving the possibility of helping many more pastoralists to cover their 'costs incurred and income foregone';

14. Notes that supporting livestock damage prevention measures is now fully incorporated into the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation (SPR)[19], one of the few instances in the reform of full consensus for the Parliament's demands; believes the CAP can and should play a major role in supporting farmers to improve the protection of their grazing livestock from predators, thereby improving coexistence as well as achieving the CAP objective in Article 6(f) of the SPR;

15. Notes that losses and costs of adapting to coexistence are now included in the new CAP SPR under:

– the 'costs incurred, income foregone' approach in Article 72(1), (3) and (5) of the SPR covering area-specific disadvantages resulting from mandatory requirements under the Habitats Directive;

– Article 71[20] of the SPR, allowing for an annual top-up payment to farmers in areas of

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/Fiche_case%20study_Slovenia.pdf

[19] CAP Strategic Plans Regulation (SPR) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/2115#ntr1-L_2021435EN.01014601-E0001

[20] Art. 71 of the SPR: 'Member States may grant payments under this Article only in order to compensate

natural constraints;

– investments in adapting practices and infrastructure to coexistence with large predators, under Article 73 (3)d(ii) of the SPR, which receive 100 % EU financing according to Article 73(4)c(i) of the SPR[21]; this can cover costs of protecting livestock, including labour.

– insurance schemes covering losses and damage caused by predators under Article 76(3)a of the SPR. The EU can fund insurance of losses of up to 70 %.

– an additional 3 % of direct payments which may be awarded for insurance costs (Article 19 of the SPR);

16. Calls, therefore, on the Member States and regions to effectively use these opportunities and integrate the additional needs of farmers linked to wolves in their CAP strategic plans; calls on the Commission to insist that they be included in all relevant Strategic Plans during the evaluation phase throughout 2022; calls on the Member States and regions to implement these funds and promote uptake by farmers from 2023 onwards;

17. Calls also for their effective inclusion in the FAS, which is already obligatory under Article 15(4)(b), (d) and (e) of the SPR, and for exchanges between farmers, administrations and researchers to promote and mainstream successful approaches in the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System under Article 78 of the SPR; recalls that the Member States may also leverage 4 % of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development for technical assistance (Articles 95 and 125 of the SPR);

18. Notes the increased responsibility of the Member States under the New Delivery Model in designing their CAP strategic plans in order to take advantage of all the relevant funding opportunities; notes that Member States may at any time update and improve their strategic plans under Article 119 of the SPR to ensure a fair and accessible integrated coexistence approach;

VII.c. LIFE+ funds

19. Notes that the many examples from EU funded LIFE projects[22] and from experiences in national parks show the positive contribution of large carnivores to the increasingly popular nature-based tourism sector;

20. Notes that LIFE can also be used to promote joint approaches for transboundary populations, for example the LIFE project Euro Large Carnivores (2017-2022) involving Austria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain, the LIFE project Wolfalps EU (2019-2024)

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beneficiaries for all or part of the additional costs and income foregone related to the natural or other area-specific constraints in the area concerned'.

[21] 'Up to 100 % for the following investments: (i)… non-productive investments aimed at protecting livestock and crops against damage caused by wild animals'.

[22] See case studies collected under the EU Platform on large carnivores: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/case_studies.htm#Innovative%20Financing

involving Austria, France, Italy and Slovenia and the LIFEstockProtect project (2020-2025) entitled ‘Livestock Protection in Austria, Bavaria and South Tyrol’;

21. Calls for an increase in LIFE funding for nature projects, including for the protection of species and achievement of coexistence with large carnivores; calls for the prioritising of small-scale projects in the LIFE programme aimed at sharing and developing best practices on coexistence with large predators;

VII.d. Inter-regional cooperation

22. Calls for an exchange of best practice between Member States and regions in order to achieve effective systems that meet the needs of pastoralists and biodiversity; notes also that Interreg Europe can finance transnational management between regions of Member States;

VII.e. State aid

23. Notes that EU State aid rules now allow for full compensation (100 %) of both direct and indirect costs associated with coexistence;

VII.e. Need for Member States to effectively implement Commission guidelines

24. Notes the letter from the Commission on the Habitats Directive[23] and calls for effective implementation by Member States of the Commission’s new implementing guidelines on species protection[24], especially the annex to the guidance devoted specifically to wolves, covering, for example:
– Good management practices to reduce conflicts while ensuring species protection (e.g. prevention and compensation of livestock damage, involvement of stakeholders in drawing up conservation/management plans and in monitoring, improvement of stakeholders’ dialogue, provision of information, advice and technical assistance);
– Lethal control and examples of different types of derogations under Article 16(1) of the Habitats Directive;
– Management of dog-wolf hybrids;
– Management of ‘bold wolves’;
– Use of ‘soft-catch’ traps for wolves;
– Possibilities for derogations when the species has an unfavourable conservation status;
– Clarifications on the required scale of impact assessment when granting derogations;
– Opportunities to support coexistence measures (through EU funds and also State aid);

VIII. The Habitats Directive – existing opportunities and flexibility

25. Notes that under the Commission’s regulatory fitness and performance programme (REFIT), the recent review of the Habitats Directive was determined to be fit for purpose and to be delivering against its policy objectives; notes, furthermore, that in its

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[23] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/Letter_from_Commissioner_Sinkevicius_and_Commissioner_Wojciechowski.pdf

[24] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/guidance/index_en.htm

judgment of 10 October 2019 in Case C-674/17, the Court of Justice upheld its decision in favour of maintaining the Habitats Directive[25]; underlines that as the Commission reviews have repeatedly found that the Habitats Directive is fit for purpose and delivers against its policy objectives, it opposes any revision of the Directive or changes to species' protection status; supports, therefore, the Commission's policy not to downgrade the protection level of *Canis lupus* under the Bern Convention, to which the EU is signatory; calls on the Council to endorse the Commission's proposal for a decision;

26. Notes that progress in the conservation status of habitat types and species covered by the Habitats Directive is regularly monitored and reported and that the results are publicly available[26];

27. Notes the existing possibilities under Article 16 of the Habitats Directive to take culling action as a last resort in order to protect financial interests; highlights the fact that Member States have always been free to use these possibilities with a view to preventing serious damage to livestock, but have not always done so;

28. Considers that as a priority the Member States and regions should first use existing possibilities in the CAP, LIFE+ and State aid to compensate generously, insure against losses and fund adaptation to coexistence in order to ensure the conservation of both protected wildlife and livestock grazing;

29. Recalls that neighbouring Member States which share transboundary wolf populations can already decide to harmonise their monitoring and can jointly assess the status of those populations under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive; notes, however, that this does not mean that one Member State can rely upon one another to achieve FCS for a given species; stresses that since nature does not respect borders, FCS already needs to be achieved in each biogeographical region of each Member State;

30. Stresses the need for Member States to pay sufficient attention to the detection and elimination of wolf-dog hybrids; stresses that in order to protect the genetic vitality of the wolf population, it is necessary to carry out genetic tests on all hunted wolves and to exchange data between Member States, especially when tests are carried out in border areas;

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31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.

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[25] Judgment of the Court of Justice of 10 October 2019, *Luonnonsuojeluyhdistys Tapiola Pohjois-Savo – Kainuu ry v Risto Mustonen and Others*, C-178/03 ECLI:EU:C:2019:851.
[26] https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/state-of-nature-in-the-eu-2020
https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/rep_habitats/index_en.htm