

WRITTEN QUESTION E-5306/07
by Péter Olajos (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Illegal slaughter of birds in Cyprus

The illegal hunting of protected and specially protected birds is, regrettably, a frequently recurring problem in the European Union. The threat to migratory birds is particularly acute: whereas in the countries where they breed, they are generally protected by strengthened national legislation and there are, in addition to international and EU provisions, sanctions against hunting them, the same cannot be said of areas where such species stop simply to rest or which they fly over.

In 2005, the question of implementing the relevant legislation arose in connection with the subject of illegal hunting in Malta. At the time, together with a number of fellow parliamentarians, I approached the Commission with question number E-2396/05, in which we asked what means might be employed to put an end to the further slaughter of birds. I am pleased to report that the Commission has today sent a reasoned opinion to Malta, and I trust that, if the latter continues in its failure to take the requisite steps, the Commission will not hesitate to bring the matter before the courts.

It seems that now, in 2007, hunting in Cyprus will take centre stage. Only this summer, Cyprus received a written warning from the Commission concerning spring hunting, although, pursuant to the most recent decision, this procedure has been suspended. Regrettably, more than 50 red-footed falcons have been slaughtered by poachers in Cyprus during October 2007. This species, which is colonial and migrates in groups, is specially protected in the European Union. The slaughter took place on the island of Cyprus, partly in territory under British sovereignty, which is known to be frequented by poachers.

A LIFE project has been launched in order to save this specially protected species; however, the project may well be rendered impotent by this and similar kinds of illegal hunting if the Commission does not take the necessary action against Member States.

What does the Commission intend to do in order to enforce the implementation of Directive 79/409/EEC¹ on the conservation of wild birds in that part of Cyprus which is in the EU?

Does the Commission intend to call upon Britain to ensure that EU legislation is fully enforced in those parts of Cyprus over which it has sovereignty?

What action does the Commission intend to take to put an end to large-scale illegal hunting?

¹ OJ L 103, 25.4.1979, p. 1.