

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3598/08

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to the Commission

Subject: Northern slopes of Kom peak in the Balkan Mountains in Bulgaria excluded from the Natura 2000 site Zapadna Stara Planina and Predbalkan

The area of Kom peak in the Balkan Mountains is threatened by the development of a projected ski resort. The area is of highest conservation importance. It protects one of the four habitats of lynx on the western border of Bulgaria. The species were extinct and the process of natural restoration is coming from mountains in Serbia. The site and area of the Kom peak is also a very important habitat and stepping stone for bears and wolves – priority species under the Habitats Directive. The area includes well-preserved natural habitats of *Hydrophilous* tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the mountain to alpine levels, alpine and boreal heaths, Tilio-Acerion forest of slopes, screes and ravines and sub-continental steppic grasslands. It is extremely vital for *Canis lupus*, *Ursus arctos*, *Vormela peregusna*, *Spermophilus citellus*, *Rhinolophus mehelyi*, *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, *Rhinolophus euryale*, *Rhinolophus blasii*, *Myotis blythii*, *Barbastella barbastellus*, *Myotis capaccinii*, *Myotis emarginatus*, *Myotis myotis*, *Rupicapra rupicapra balcanica*, *Miniopterus schreibersii*, *Triturus karelinii*, *Emys orbicularis*, *Bombina variegata* and *Testudo hermanni*, which are listed as priority species in Annex II of the Habitats Directive. The Municipality of Berkovitzha has approved a General Master Plan for the development of a ski resort in the mountain, accompanied by the construction of hotels, ski slopes and ski facilities and new roads. Natural habitats will be destroyed and fragmented and large carnivores will be chased away. The Government of Bulgaria has excluded the northern slopes of the Kom peak from the Natura 2000 site Zapadna Stara Planina and Predbalkan because of the plan for a ski resort. The northern slopes of the Kom peak should be added again to the Natura 2000 network.

1. Does the Commission know that this planned ski resort will result in a catastrophe for Europe's famous natural heritage located in the area of the Kom peak in Bulgaria, and what will the Commission do to prevent it?
2. How will the Commission ensure the fulfilment of Bulgaria's obligations under Directive 92/43/EEC¹, and when will the Commission undertake infringement proceedings against Bulgaria?

¹ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.