

**Question for written answer E-003962/2013
to the Commission
Rule 117
Satu Hassi (Verts/ALE)**

Subject: Protection of the Siberian flying squirrel in Finland

The deterioration and destruction of breeding sites and resting places of the Siberian flying squirrel (*Pteromys volans*) is prohibited in the European Union under the Habitats Directive (Article 12, Annex IV (a)). The majority of Siberian flying squirrels are to be found in Finland, where the biggest threat to the species is forestry. The species is in decline and was declared an endangered species on the 2010 Red List of Finnish Species.

In 2004, Finland issued national instructions on protecting the Siberian flying squirrel from the effects of forestry. Now, however, new studies have shown that the instructions leave too little forest space for the squirrels, and that their breeding sites and resting places are not preserved. In only 21–61 % of the forests managed according to the instructions have the squirrels' resting places been left undisturbed. The results vary from region to region and also depend on how they are interpreted. The basis for assessing the preservation of a breeding site or resting place should be the species' continuous reproduction, which means ensuring that the territory of the female of the species remains in the area. The contradictions that exist between the instructions issued for the Siberian flying squirrel and the Habitats Directive have led to lengthy debates on conservation in Finland; for example, with regard to the forest area of Konikallio near Forssa.

Will the Commission ensure that Finnish practice and the instructions that Finland has issued with regard to the protection of Siberian flying squirrels from the effects of forestry remain in line with the EU's Habitats Directive? If not, what steps does it intend to take?