

**Question for written answer E-002702/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Unlawful felling of trees in Alqueva and failure to comply with EU legislation

Last year 11 500 protected holm oak, olive, and cork oak trees were felled 'unlawfully' in Alqueva. The Portuguese Nature Conservation League (LPN) responded by asking for explanations from a number of authorities and calling for action to be taken against the persons involved.

The current legislation allows (protected) trees to be felled only when authorisation been requested and the trees themselves have been marked, neither of which happened in this case. Furthermore, the contract for the felling work was awarded without a call for tenders, again without authorisation.

Apparently, the reason for the felling was that the trees were dead. This might have been true in part, given that the water level had been allowed to rise up to the maximum limit. However, because of the way of proceeding, which was unlawful to the extent that no authorisation was sought and the trees were not marked, it was impossible to ascertain how many trees were actually dead.

According to the LPN, it has been the case from the outset that paper mills have been dismantled with no environmental precautions and several areas have been cleared and deforested, posing a threat to protected species, bearing in mind that the site concerned was being used to support osprey introduction projects; all this has been done in blatant disregard of environmental legislation and EU directives.

In the light of the foregoing, can the Commission comment on this situation and can it say, having regard to the EU legislation in force, whether it considers the felling of protected trees in Alqueva to have been carried out legally?

In addition:

1. Has Annex III of the Water Framework Directive been complied with (as regards the prices set by the Government for irrigation water)?
2. What is the position regarding the extension of the irrigation zone under the new environmental impact assessment (EIA) plan, taking into account the Natura network and protected species?