

**Question for written answer E-003992/2014  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Beach conservation on the island of Porto Santo

The beach along the southern coast of the island of Porto Santo, in the Madeira archipelago, is an important public environmental resource and a real natural treasure which is strategically important to the island's present and future, in terms of attracting tourism and for the local and regional economy.

Physiographical changes in the dunes and beach, particularly the length of the beach and the dune system, are giving rise to problems and threats which have already been described in various technical and scientific studies. These changes are largely linked to different forms of human activity. Over the years, factors which have contributed to changes in the coastline and the shape and narrowing of the beach have included the removal of sand from the beach, construction of the harbour, marina and related facilities, damage caused by the oil slick from the Spanish tanker Aragon, which reached the coast of Porto Santo in 1990, construction of public infrastructure at the edge of the dunes and resulting removal of plant cover from the dunes themselves, construction of small dams on rivers in the south of the island and of hotels and tourism complexes along the coast, as well as the high rate of construction in the centre-west of the island. Different technical and scientific analyses and research projects which have rigorously assessed the evolution of Porto Santo's southern coast have shown that the island lost 28 hectares of sand from its beach areas between 1937 and 1995.

The risks give rise to legitimate concerns; they call for action to not only conserve the ecosystem of the dunes along the southern coastline of Porto Santo, but also to gain a better knowledge of the biodiversity of this dune system and protect and preserve it and, above all, defend it as a key, strategic socioeconomic asset of the island and its people.

1. What measures and support can be used to protect and preserve the beach of Porto Santo, in order to maintain its specific characteristics?
2. What funds – whether under direct or shared management – could be used to finance necessary and appropriate initiatives at the various above-mentioned levels?