

Question for written answer E-003558/2019
to the Commission
Rule 138
Ernest Urtasun (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Neptune grass beds in the Balearic Islands

Neptune grass (*Posidonia oceanica*) beds in the waters around the Balearics are in steep decline owing to climate change and human activity. It is thought that there is now 40% less Neptune grass than there was in 1960.

One of the main reasons for the disappearance of Neptune grass is that so many pleasure boats are dropping anchor in the underwater meadows. Last year, the government of the Balearic Islands approved a decree banning vessels from dropping anchor in the Neptune grass beds. Many boats take no notice of this rule, however, and waste from boats is also damaging and killing the plant.

Neptune grass has been on the World Heritage list since 1990, and it is also protected under the Habitats Directive and EU fishing legislation.

1. What steps is the Commission taking to curb the loss of Neptune grass, and to protect and raise awareness about the plant?
2. Is the Commission intending to introduce penalties for the destruction of Neptune grass?