

**Question for written answer E-000597/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Sergio Berlato (ECR)

Subject: Urgent measures to protect eel (*Anguilla anguilla*)

Eels have been in decline across Europe since the 1970s, owing to the shrinkage of their natural habitats and the construction of artificial river barriers which prevent juvenile fish from travelling upstream and mature fish from reaching the sea on their reproductive migration.

One could also point to overfishing, especially of the small (blind) eels that migrate from the Sargasso Sea and then travel up Europe's watercourses or populate the valleys or wetlands of the entire continent.

Then there is the major impact of predation by cormorants and other fish-eating birds, which renders any eel farming activities unproductive. The European eel population is estimated to have decreased by around 95% since 1970, making eel an endangered species now included on the Red List of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).

In view of the above:

1. What does the Commission intend to do to protect eel and restore eel numbers to an appropriate level?
2. What incentives will it promote to regenerate eel farming activities hit by the drastic decline in eels, which is also due to massive predation by cormorants and other fish-eating birds?