

**Question for written answer E-003155/2023
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Ville Niinistö (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Lynx hunting for population management purposes in Finland

Under Finnish law, the lynx is protected, and according to the EU Habitats Directive it is strictly protected.

However, at the start of October the Finnish Wildlife Agency granted derogations for the hunting of 300 lynxes on population management grounds. The number of derogations represents approximately 12% of the entire Finnish lynx population.

The derogations were issued 'for population management reasons'. No such grounds for derogations may be found in Finnish law or the EU Habitats Directive. Following the decision, cases have come to light where the receipt of a permit appears to have been based merely on the fact that one had been obtained previously.

It is important from the viewpoint of improving public acceptance that hunting permits granted on population management grounds are based on individual, legal decisions and that these take account of the role of the lynx as part of the ecosystem, for example as a species that can reduce the excessively large roe deer populations. In both the Finnish Hunting Act and the EU Habitats Directive acceptable grounds for derogations are, for example, the protection of public health, the prevention of serious damage, or the protection of other wild animals or plants.

The lynx does not cause any such danger to humans, animals or property outside the reindeer herding area.

Does the Commission consider that the Finnish policy to issue hunting permits for protected species, without any proper statutory grounds, fulfils its obligations under EU law?

Submitted: 25.10.2023