

**Question for oral answer O-000130/2018
to the Council**

Rule 128

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on behalf of the Committee on Petitions

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on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Subject: Concerns about Natura 2000 protected areas based on petitions received

In order to preserve and enhance the EU's natural capital, the Natura 2000 network grants protection for Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. From a citizens' perspective, this is one of the most identifiable achievements of the EU in the environmental field. 25 years on since the inception of the Natura 2000 network, challenges relating to its implementation persist, making it more difficult to halt biodiversity loss in Europe, mainly because economic systems do not value ecosystem services.

The prioritisation of short-term economic regional interests over the intangible value of conserving species and habitats of EU interest is reaching a point where large infrastructures or extractive industries are operating or being planned in highly significant protected areas. In some cases, such projects are funded by the EU. Petitioners are concerned about endangered areas, which also host important Natura 2000 sites.

In the light of the above:

1. Can the Council explain whether the expected percentage of territory covered by the Natura 2000 Network has been achieved, and how it is spread between the different Member States?
2. What action does the Council envisage to ensure compliance by Member States, not only with regard to the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), but also the enforcement of the obligations applicable under the Birds and Habitats Directives?
3. What measures does the Council envisage in order to play a more proactive role in protecting the habitats and species for which Natura 2000 sites were created?
4. Does the Council plan to further develop the current measures and enhance the model of protection and supervision within the framework of the renewed LIFE programme as from 2021?
5. Natura 2000 sites within agricultural areas are often in poor condition because their maintenance is not substantially backed by public support. Does the Council therefore intend to improve the aforementioned measures by making them more efficient in the context of the reformed common agricultural policy (CAP)?
6. How does the Council ensure that there is no direct or indirect EU funding for projects, such as infrastructures, that do irreversible harm to Natura 2000 sites?

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