

WRITTEN QUESTION P-5682/06
by Piia-Noora Kauppi (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: LIFE-funded Vattaja dune conservation project and use of the area as a military practice and shooting range

The wrangling which has been continuing for decades over the use of the Vattaja area, in Lohtaja, Ostrobothnia, on Finland's Baltic coast, is moving towards a curious outcome.

The Finnish Defence Forces are being given permission to expand their exercise and shooting activities in an area forming part of the EU-funded Vattaja dune LIFE project. The Vattaja sands are the largest Natura 2000 area in Finland containing sand dune biotopes.

Is the Commission aware that the LIFE project is being used to enable military activities to be expanded in what is a Natura 2000 area? How will it be possible to achieve the main aim of the LIFE project, namely to reduce the stress being inflicted on this area of great conservation value, if, at the same time, the activities of the Defence Forces are to be intensified?

Is the Commission certain that sufficient research material was available when the LIFE project was being drawn up and the relevant application was submitted? Has a clear understanding been gained of, among other things, the ways in which contamination from ammunition and explosives affects the dune habitats, groundwater, and the marine environment?