

Question for written answer P-002460/2018
to the Commission
Rule 130
David McAllister (PPE)

Subject: Natura 2000 sites - compensation for damage by foraging geese

The rural district of Stade (in Lower Saxony, Germany) has designated the 'Kehdinger Marsh' as a nature reserve. Measuring approximately 6 622 hectares, this nature reserve forms part of the V 18 'Unterelbe' special protection area for birds (EU identification No DE 2121-401) established under Council Directive 79/409/EEC (Birds Directive). The nature reserve has been established to provide a bird protection habitat that will ensure the survival in the long term of certain species of breeding and migratory birds referred to in Article 4 of the Birds Directive, as well as habitat types and species listed in Annexes I and II to the Habitats Directive.

However resting migratory birds protected under this Directive are becoming an increasingly big problem. The numbers of sedentary and resting migratory birds in northern Germany, including the barnacle goose, a protected bird, have risen sharply in recent years, while at the same time the size of the wild goose population has shot up. The latter cause serious damage to fields and grassland areas when foraging for food and leave behind excrement that restricts how productive land can be used.

Measures under the Birds Directive are causing both landowners and farmers to suffer what can be considerable financial losses and falls in yield.

- 1) Is the Commission aware of this problem?
- 2) What does the Commission plan to do to resolve this problem?
- 3) Why does the Commission want to keep the special protection status for the barnacle goose?