

**Priority question for written answer P-000663/2024
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR)

Subject: Unusually lengthy investigation into illegal state aid for the acquisition of land for conservation purposes in the Netherlands

In its judgment of 15 October 2018, the General Court ruled that the Commission was required to initiate a formal investigation procedure under Article 108(2) TFEU because, in the period from 1993 to 2012, 13 nature conservancy organisations in the Netherlands received at least an estimated EUR 1 billion in illegal state aid for the acquisition of land. This has been the subject of litigation for many years.

Five and a half years later, however, the Commission has still not complied with that judgment, as is evident from the answer of 20 February 2024 to my questions by Executive Vice-President Vestager on behalf of the Commission. The Commission states that it is actively looking into the case, which is precisely what Vice-President Vestager stated in her reply of 16 February 2023 to previous questions in this connection.

1. Can the Commission explain why it has been looking into this case for so long without initiating a formal investigative procedure?
2. Is the Commission aware that the fact that this case has been dragging on for such an unusually long time raises questions?
3. What are the consequences of the lengthiness of this investigation for the limitation period for approval of the state aid, and its possible recovery, and for the interest on the potentially recoverable amount of unlawfully granted state aid?

Submitted: 29.2.2024