

EN

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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Šefčovič
on behalf of the European Commission
(16.10.2024)

The freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) is protected by the Habitats Directive¹. It is listed in its Annex II as a species of Community interest whose conservation requires the designation of Natura 2000 sites and in Annex V as a species of Community interest whose taking in the wild and exploitation may be subject to management measures.

In Natura 2000 sites, Member States must take appropriate steps to avoid deterioration of habitats and significant disturbance of species for which the sites have been designated. They may also decide on additional designation of protection zones alongside rivers and streams, outside Natura 2000 sites.

There are 19 Natura 2000 sites designated for the protection of the freshwater pearl mussel in Finland, but none of these sites comprises the population of the freshwater pearl mussel at Hukkajoki river.

In addition, the Regulation on Nature Restoration² requires Member States to put in place measures for restoration of terrestrial, coastal and freshwater habitats of species listed in Annex II, IV or V to the Habitats Directive, therefore including habitats of the freshwater pearl mussel, necessary to improve the quality and quantity of those habitats, including by re-establishing them and to enhance connectivity. Measures taken to comply with above-mentioned legislation may include establishment of protection zones alongside rivers and streams.

¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7–50.

² Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869. OJ L, 2024/1991.