

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002227/24
to the Commission
Nicolás González Casares (S&D)
(22 October 2024)**

Subject: Acceleration areas

The Autonomous Community of Galicia is the subject of an infringement case for failure to conform to the Habitats Directive with regard to the area and the management of the Natura 2000 network, as the Galician Government has protected an area equivalent to only 13% of the territory — compared with the 20% laid down in the directive — and has large deficits in its management figures, as evidenced by the Commission's answer to my Question E-002754/2022 ⁽¹⁾, in which the Commission wrote that it 'considers that the Master Plan established by Galicia for the management of Natura 2000 does not meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive'.

To conform to the revised Renewable Energy Directive, the competent authorities must designate renewables acceleration areas by February 2026 at the latest. In the light of the above:

1. Does the Commission consider it appropriate to set acceleration areas without nature conservation measures in line with EU legislation having been taken?
2. Does the Commission believe that the coverage of the Natura 2000 network should be extended so that it conforms to the Habitats Directive before acceleration areas are set?

Submitted: 22.10.2024

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(13 January 2025)**

1. Conservation measures taken for the management of Natura 2000 sites under Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive ⁽¹⁾ are not directly connected to the designation of renewables acceleration areas (RAAs). Under the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) ⁽²⁾, Member States have an obligation to designate RAAs in their territory for at least one renewable energy technology, but they have flexibility regarding the actual scope and size of these areas, including the regions covered. Furthermore, the plans designating RAAs must establish appropriate rules on effective mitigation measures including, where appropriate, to ensure compliance with Article 6(2) and Article 12(1) of the Habitats Directive and Article 5 of the Birds Directive ⁽³⁾.
2. Pursuant to the RED, Natura 2000 sites (except for artificial areas therein), as well as other areas identified based on sensitivity mapping must be excluded from RAAs. The Commission guidance on the designation of RAAs ⁽⁴⁾ calls for a swift completion of the Natura 2000 network to support timely RAAs designation. The Habitats Directive does not set a specific percentage for Natura 2000 coverage at national or subnational level, but in cases where there are insufficiencies in the Natura 2000 network, relevant areas should be identified and excluded from RAAs designation.

In September 2023, the Commission started an infringement procedure against Spain ⁽⁵⁾ for failing to propose enough sites of Community importance (SCI) within its territory ⁽⁶⁾. The Commission services are currently assessing Spain's reply.

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-002754-ASW_EN.html

⁽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⁾ Directive (EU) 2023/2413 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 October 2023 amending Directive (EU) 2018/2001, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and Directive 98/70/EC as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, and repealing Council Directive (EU) 2015/652, PE/36/2023/REV/2, (OJ L, 2023/2413, 31.10.2023)

⁽³⁾ Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (Codified version) (OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7-25).

⁽⁴⁾ Commission Staff Working Document Guidance on designating renewables acceleration areas: https://energy.ec.europa.eu/publications/guidance-designating-renewables-acceleration-areas_en

⁽⁵⁾ Ref. INFR(2023)2037. Press release under the following link: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_23_4367

⁽⁶⁾ Information available at : https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/inf_23_4367/INF_23_4367_EN.pdf