

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001996/25
to the Commission
Leire Pajín (S&D), Sandra Gómez López (S&D)
(19 May 2025)**

Subject: Protecting the Horta of Valencia from the actions of the Valencian Government

The Valencian Government has amended Law No 5/2018 on the Horta of Valencia (the municipality of Valencia and three neighbouring counties). The reform reclassifies protected areas, allows the construction of new buildings and paves the way for the granting of permits for new agricultural and tertiary uses. It also removes links to reports on the impact that projects have on the landscape and on the environment.

The Horta of Valencia is partially included in the Natura 2000 network. It's also protected under the Habitats and Birds directives. The management of the sites concerned — or parts of them — is subject to very strict conditions under the supervision of the European Commission. In particular, any plan or project likely to have a significant impact on the sites — even indirectly — must be subject to a rigorous environmental assessment of the implications and of the sites' conservation objectives.

As the guardian of EU law and of environmental legislation, could the Commission clarify:

1. What steps it has taken to monitor the situation and assess the impact of the new law on the Horta of Valencia and its potential effects on protected sites?
2. What steps it has taken to protect the culture, heritage and environment of the Horta of Valencia?

Submitted: 19.5.2025

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(12 August 2025)**

As stated in its reply to Written Question E-000780/2025, Natura 2000 sites or parts of them can only be de-designated under very strict conditions ⁽¹⁾, and are protected under the regime set out in Article 6 of the Habitats Directive ⁽²⁾.

The Commission has issued guidance documents to support Member States in the management of Natura 2000 sites ⁽³⁾. In addition, any project, plan or programme likely to have significant effects on the environment will have to comply with the relevant requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive ⁽⁴⁾ or the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive ⁽⁵⁾, which require that proposed developments assess their potential impacts on the environment and on cultural heritage among other factors.

Without prejudice to the Commission's role as guardian of the Treaties, Member States are primarily responsible for ensuring compliance with EU law.

In line with its strategic approach on enforcement action ⁽⁶⁾, which focuses on cases of systemic non-compliance, the Commission considers that the means of redress available under national legislation would be the most appropriate mechanism to address individual cases of possible non-compliance.

The safeguarding of cultural heritage is also primarily a national responsibility. Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union stipulates that action by the EU is limited to encouraging cooperation between Member States and supporting and supplementing their action, with a view to conserving and safeguarding cultural heritage of European significance.

⁽¹⁾ <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/fcb355ee-7434-4448-a53d-5dc5d1dac678/library/8555aa28-9fb6-411f-8228-f8c99b296564/details>.

⁽²⁾ 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.

⁽³⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/natura-2000/managing-and-protecting-natura-2000-sites_en.

⁽⁴⁾ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. — OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1-21, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of 16 April 2014 — OJ L 124, 25.4.2014, p. 1-18.

⁽⁵⁾ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment — OJ L 197, 21.7.2001, p. 30-37.

⁽⁶⁾ As set out in the communication of 19 January 2017 (EU law: Better results through better application — C/2016/8600, OJ C 18, 19.1.2017, p. 10-20) and in the communication of 13 October 2022 COM(2022) 518 final — Enforcing EU law for a Europe that delivers.