

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-004839/25
to the Commission
Benoit Cassart (Renew)
(5 December 2025)**

Subject: Integrating private bird breeding into EU conservation policies

Many Europeans involved in breeding wild birds in protected areas point to how this could help conserve biodiversity. With the help of privately bred birds and small-scale European breeding, it has been possible to save or reintroduce several species currently classified as threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. These include the Hawaiian goose, Laysan albatross, Mauritian pink pigeon, Grayson's dove, and Rothschild's myna (Bali starling) — a species native to Asia and one of the most endangered birds in the world.

At the same time, some Member States are bringing in 'positive lists' that strictly limit the keeping of bird species, without always taking into account how these birds bred in captivity can contribute to conservation. At grassroots level there are fears that these restrictions are depleting a gene pool that may play a crucial role in future reintroduction programmes, including when it comes to globally endangered species. This situation goes against the spirit of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

With the above in mind, does the Commission intend to assess the impact of these restrictions on the future availability of back-up populations within the EU, including for the species that are seriously endangered on a global scale, such as the Rothschild's myna (Bali starling)?

Submitted: 5.12.2025

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(21 January 2026)**

Captive breeding, one of the tools of ex situ conservation, is mainly justified in emergency situations (e.g. saving critically endangered species).

It must be part of an approved and evidence-based conservation strategy which defines clear conservation goals, targeted actions and regular monitoring and evaluation.

The provisions of the Birds Directive ⁽¹⁾ apply to all naturally occurring birds in the wild state in the European territory of the Member States (Article 1).

Member States must take the requisite measures to establish a general system of protection for all species of birds referred to in Article 1 and prohibit, among others, their deliberate killing or capture and keeping birds of species the hunting and capture of which is prohibited (Article 5).

In the absence of other satisfactory alternatives Member States may derogate from these provisions for the purposes of repopulation, of reintroduction and for the breeding necessary for these purposes (Article 9). The decision in relation to captive breeding rests with the competent authorities of the Member States.

For species not covered by the Birds Directive, the competence of regulating the keeping and breeding of wild animals by private persons lies with the Member States.

In line with Action 19 of the 2022 revision of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking ⁽²⁾, the Commission launched a study in 2023 which aims to assess whether an EU-wide positive list could address problems linked to the EU pet trade and keeping sector, including biodiversity loss linked to legal trade, especially in source countries.

The results of this study, which is expected to be finalised in the first half of 2026, will inform the Commission's reflections on possible next steps.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds, OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7-25.

⁽²⁾ COM/2022/581 final; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0581>.