

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002220/26
to the Commission
Stefano Cavedagna (ECR), Carlo Ciccioli (ECR)
(2 June 2026)**

Subject: Effectiveness of conservation measures concerning the critically endangered European Eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*)

For years, scientific studies of *Anguilla Anguilla* (a species which the IUCN has classed as critically endangered) have been highlighting the fact that its European stocks and ability to reproduce are in freefall.

Neither the EU's regulatory framework (particularly Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007) nor the Member States' management plans have been able to improve the awful plight of this species, which is reeling from the combined impact of habitat loss, migratory barriers and climate change.

Against this backdrop, the EU's conservation measures and the restrictions arising from the implementation of European law have a direct bearing on the businesses and socioeconomic fabric of areas like the Comacchio Lagoons that have historic links to eel fishing.

Seeing as *Anguilla Anguilla* plays a key role in supporting European river and coastal ecosystems, we ask the Commission:

1. Does it think that the protection measures currently in place are fit for the purposes of restoring European Eel stocks?
2. Will it revise the current regulatory framework in the light of the latest scientific data, with a view to preventing *Anguilla Anguilla* from reaching a point of no return and ensuring that Europe's long-term conservation strategy for this species is genuinely effective?

Submitted: 2.6.2026

**Answer given by Mr Kadis on behalf of the European Commission
(15 July 2026)**

Member States take various measures through their eel management plans (EMP) under the Eel Regulation ⁽¹⁾ and other legal instruments, such as:

- Temporary fishing closures are set at EU level under the Fishing Opportunities Regulation ⁽²⁾, and promoted by the EU at international level.
- The Water Framework Directive requires Member States to take measures to ensure a good status of water bodies, including as regards river continuity ⁽³⁾;
- In line with CITES ⁽⁴⁾ and the EU Wildlife Trade Regulation ⁽⁵⁾, the trade of European eel from and to the EU remains strictly prohibited.

The Commission's evaluation of the Eel Regulation concluded that it is fit for purpose, but the implementation needs to be improved ⁽⁶⁾.

The implementation of the EMPs is variable and the targets of the Eel Regulation have mostly not been met, as confirmed by this evaluation and by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) ⁽⁷⁾.

Fishing closures are not always effective. There are no signs of eel recovery. Further ambition is needed to address environmental mortalities, while continuing to take fisheries measures.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2007/1100/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2026/249/oj/eng>; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2026/266/oj/eng>; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2026/249/oj/eng>.

⁽³⁾ The Water Framework Directive requires Member States to implement measures to ensure that the status of water bodies, including as regards river continuity and fish communities, does not deviate, or only slightly, from undisturbed conditions. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32000L0060>.

⁽⁴⁾ The competent Scientific Authorities of the EU Member States agreed unanimously that they would not be able to issue a non-detriment finding for the export of European eel specimens, as it is Critically Endangered, as required under Article IV(2)(a) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Therefore, since 2010, a zero-export quota has been issued and published on CITES website.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/1997/338/oj/eng>.

⁽⁶⁾ Commission's evaluation report <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0035> and external study in support of this evaluation <https://op.europa.eu/fr/publication-detail/-/publication/afe6ca55-5f58-11ea-b735-01aa75ed71a1>.

⁽⁷⁾ Details about a most recent progress of Member States in implementing their EMPs and measures under the Eel Regulation are provided in the ICES advice in subject published in 2025 https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/EU_request_for_technical_evaluation_of_the_Eel_Management_Plan_progress_reports/28381268?file=54121004 and in the ICES report from the Workshop in support of this advice https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Workshop_for_the_Technical_Evaluation_of_EU_Member_States_Eel_Regulation_Progress_Reports_for_Submission_in_2024_2025_WKEMP4_/28788749?file=54098411.

Under the Marine Action Plan ⁽⁸⁾, the Commission called on the Member States to improve the protection of eels and revise their EMPs, or adopt new plans in light of new knowledge and scientific advice ⁽⁹⁾, and to strengthen transboundary cooperation. The Nature Restoration Regulation ⁽¹⁰⁾ will further boost the restoration of coastal habitats and rivers ⁽¹¹⁾ where eels live, together with the requirements for measures to reach good status under the Water Framework Directive.

The Commission continues to work with the Member States and stakeholders at EU, regional and international level to help rebuild the eel stock.

⁽⁸⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023DC0102>.

⁽⁹⁾ Most recent ICES advice published in November 2025: https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/European_eel_i_Anguilla_anguilla_i_throughout_its_natural_range/27203028?file=59290940 and ICES report from the Workshop in support of this advice, where country reports are annexed https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Joint_EIFAAC_ICES_GFCM_Working_Group_on_Eels_WGEEL_/30488120. ICES Eel Stock Annex provides for a comprehensive assessment of the stock and the impacts on the stock: https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Stock_Annex_European_eel_i_Anguilla_anguilla_i_throughout_its_natural_range/24517486?file=43077457.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1991/oj/eng>.

⁽¹¹⁾ The Nature Restoration Regulation requires Member States to make inventories of their artificial barriers to the connectivity of surface waters, and to plan for removals of barriers, primarily addressing obsolete ones, in order to reach the EU-wide objective of restoring 25000 km of rivers to free-flowing rivers between 2020 and 2030, which is expected to foster fish migration, including for eels.