

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003320/26
to the Commission
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)
(24 August 2026)**

Subject: Measures and regulations governing access to the Silvestri Craters, in Natura 2000 special area of conservation (SAC) ITA070009, Mount Etna

According to information published in October 2025 ⁽¹⁾, access regulation systems — including marked trails and other infrastructure to manage tourist flows — may have been introduced in the area around the Silvestri Craters, which are in special area of conservation (SAC) ITA070009, Fascia altomontana dell'Etna, part of the Natura 2000 network established under Directive 92/43/EEC.

The area in question is also inside Etna Park and part of the Mount Etna Unesco World Heritage Site.

To date, no information is publicly available on whether the impact assessment provided for in Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive has been carried out or whether any further environmental and landscape permits have been issued.

In the light of the above:

1. Is the Commission aware of those measures and changes to the access regulations?
2. Is the construction of delineated paths, barriers or other access management infrastructure in a Natura 2000 site one of the measures that may require a prior assessment under Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43/EEC?
3. Will it ask the Italian authorities for clarification regarding compliance with the EU legislation applicable to sites in the Natura 2000 network?

Submitted: 24.8.2026

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(16 October 2026)**

The Commission has no further information on this issue beyond what has been reported in the media.

The Habitats Directive ⁽¹⁾ requires the establishment of the necessary conservation measures for special areas of conservation (Article 6(1)), and the deterioration of habitats and significant disturbance of the species for which the site was designated must be avoided (Article 6(2)).

If the project in question is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site, but likely to have an adverse impact, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, it must undergo an appropriate assessment of its implications in view of the site's conservation objectives (Article 6(3)). The Commission has published guidance on these provisions ⁽²⁾, as well as guidance on Natura 2000 and tourism ⁽³⁾.

Italy has transposed these provisions in its legislation and has adopted national guidelines ⁽⁴⁾ to improve the application of Article 6(3) across its regions.

The region of Sicily has also transposed them into its regional legal order ⁽⁵⁾. It is for the Italian competent authorities and, where necessary, national courts to apply the above rules and procedures and to ensure that, if damage to a protected site has occurred, it is adequately restored.

In its role as guardian of the Treaties, the Commission may decide to take appropriate action if systemic issues concerning the application of these provisions of EU law arise ⁽⁶⁾.

¹ <https://aic.camera.it/aic/scheda.html?core=aic&numero=4/06103&ramo=CAMERA&leg=19>. <https://www.lasicilia.it/news/cronaca/3000640/ticket-di-5-euro-per-visitare-i-crateri-silvestri-sull-etna-ed-e-polemica.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, pp. 7-50.

⁽²⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/11e4ee91-2a8a-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1>.

⁽³⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/staff-working-document-natura-2000-and-sustainable-tourism_en.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.mase.gov.it/pagina/linee-guida-nazionali-la-valutazione-di-incidenza-vinca-direttiva-92-43-cee-habitat-articolo>.

⁽⁵⁾ Decreto Assessoriale 36 del 14 febbraio 2022 'Adeguamento del quadro normativo regionale a quanto disposto dalle Linee guida Nazionali sulla Valutazione d'incidenza (VincA), approvate in conferenza Stato-Regioni in data 28 novembre 2019 e pubblicate sulla Gazzetta Ufficiale dello Stato Italiano del 28 dicembre 2019, n. 303.' Decreto Assessoriale n. 237 del 29 giugno 2023. 'Sostituzione degli allegati al decreto n. 36 del 14 febbraio 2022, concernente adeguamento del quadro normativo regionale a quanto disposto dalle Linee guida nazionali sulla valutazione di incidenza (VIncA)'.

⁽⁶⁾ Communication from the Commission — EU law: Better results through better application, OJ C 18, 19.1.2017, p. 10-20, and Communication from the Commission — Enforcing EU law for a Europe that delivers, 13.10.2022, COM(2022) 518 final.