

**Question for written answer E-000372/2024
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Additional measures for the protection of particularly exposed and vulnerable habitats of specific animal species such as the black olm

The black olm (*proteus anguinus parkelj*) is an underground aquatic salamander that inhabits the subterranean waters of Bela Krajina, Slovenia. Estimates indicate that the entire population numbers less than a thousand adult individuals. Scientists have assessed the status of the black olm as being critical.

Key threats to its survival include all types of pollution of the karst environment in the catchment area for the underground waters in which the black olm lives. This pollution, which is a result of intensive agriculture, industrial and municipal waste and emissions, urbanisation and illegal dumping, has degraded the quality of the habitat and reduced its area. Among the toxic and hazardous substances posing a particular threat are artificial fertilisers, pesticides and heavy metals.

1. Will the Commission propose additional protective measures for particularly vulnerable areas with high ecological value, such as karst regions, which are habitats for rare animal species such as the black olm?
2. Does the Commission plan to establish more appropriate, lower threshold values for pollutants, especially nitrates, in underground waters that are habitats for critically endangered species such as the black olm, or for particularly vulnerable and pollution-sensitive ecosystems?
3. As part of biodiversity enhancement and conservation measures, will the Commission formulate additional financial measures to compensate for income loss in affected activities in areas of specific habitats such as karst regions?

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