

**Question for written answer P-007355/2012  
to the Commission**  
Rule 117  
**John Attard-Montalto (S&D)**

Subject: Birds Directive

I refer to the ongoing correspondence between the Environment Commissioner, Janez Potočnik, and St. Hubert Hunters – Malta (KSU), an affiliate of the Federation for Hunting and Conservation – Malta (FKNK), regarding inconsistencies in the application of the derogation for spring hunting on the Maltese islands, with particular reference to the calculation of ‘small numbers’. The methodology in the framework legislation drawn up by the Maltese authorities and approved by the Commission is being questioned, as are the maximum quotas allowed for derogation.

The methodology initially divided by three the populations of *Streptopelia turtur* (turtle dove) and *Coturnix coturnix* (quail) on the unscientific assumption that these birds cross the three Mediterranean flyways in equal proportions. The Commission then deemed the resulting quotas to be unacceptable. The revised methodology led to new quotas, which surprisingly are far below the original ones, despite the fact that the population division was (correctly) dropped. The new quotas now in force, which Commissioner Potočnik described as being at the ‘upper limit’, were established by the Maltese authorities after consultation with, and endorsement by, the Commission.

There are serious doubts about the correctness of the Commission’s assessment of the Maltese Government’s framework legislation and the accuracy of the quotas, in view of the facts that:

1. political considerations were used, in the sense that only EU countries were taken into account, as opposed to European countries; and
2. certain countries were excluded purely because of lack of ringing records.

There is no basis for such a procedure in terms of the Birds Directive.

My question, therefore, is this:

Would the Commission present empirical evidence justifying its recognition of, and agreement with, the Maltese authorities’ calculation of the relevant population data at ‘385 651 pairs of quail and 1 131 504 pairs of turtle dove’?

My question is also motivated by the fact that the Maltese authorities failed to take note of the evidence based on scientific calculations submitted to them by the Hunting Federation, as well as failing to involve the said Federation in the talks held with the Commission.