

**Question for written answer E-001432/2025
to the Commission**
Rule 144
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)

Subject: SMEs and energy communities excluded from the Just Transition Programme in Western Macedonia

Western Macedonia faces serious challenges as a result of the lignite phase-out and the need for a developmental transition to clean energy. However, it has been observed that in practice the Just Transition Programme does not ensure equal access for small and medium-sized enterprises and local communities that have invested in renewable energy projects and are awaiting responses from the competent national bodies, such as HEDNO [Hellenic Electricity Distribution Network Operator] and IPTO [Independent Power Transmission Operator]. Many such entities are excluded due to their inability to secure connection conditions, while significant amounts of money that have been paid in advance remain pending for several years.

At the same time, there is an unbalanced distribution of available resources in favour of large energy groups, leading to limited participation of local communities in the development process and thus undermining the philosophy of just transition and energy democracy.

Given that the Commission co-finances the Just Transition Programme and has an approved supervisory and auditing role:

1. Does the Commission consider it compatible with the spirit and objectives of Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 that small and medium-sized producers are not able to access national calls for applications due to bureaucratic obstacles, such as the lack of connection conditions?
2. Does the Commission intend to ask Greece to amend the conditions of Just Transition Programme calls for applications and take measures to ensure equal access of local communities, small and medium-sized RES producers and energy communities to financing, network connection and institutional support?
3. How does the Commission intend to support Western Macedonia against poverty and unemployment that are worsening due to lignite being phased out?

Submitted: 8.4.2025