

Question for written answer E-004778/2025
to the Commission
Rule 144
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)

Subject: Maintaining essential services in mountain settlements and possibilities for European support for cafés and grocery stores in the most inaccessible areas

In the mountainous and remote settlements of Greece, the remaining cafés and small grocery stores constitute crucial basic services: they function as social meeting places, access points to basic necessities and an essential ingredient in maintaining permanent residence. Their disappearance speeds up abandonment and intensifies territorial inequalities, an issue that directly concerns the implementation of the principle of territorial cohesion (Article 174 TFEU), which imposes special care for mountainous and sparsely populated areas.

Cohesion policy and the common agricultural policy (CAP) recognise the importance of basic services in rural areas, while in some Member States mechanisms to compensate for increased transport costs or specific support schemes for small businesses are implemented in isolated communities. However, in the most inaccessible areas of Greece, for example in the mountain villages of the Acheloos Valley, Agrafta, Tzoumerka and on small islands, these very small businesses face low demand, high transport costs and limited access to finance.

In view of the above:

1. How does the Commission assess the rapid disappearance of basic services in mountain settlements in light of the principle of territorial cohesion?
2. Will the Commission propose to Member States the establishment of transport equivalent mechanisms or other targeted support for small businesses in remote areas using ERDF, ESF+ or CAP resources without violating State aid rules?
3. Does the Commission intend to consider guidelines or tools for maintaining essential services in mountainous and sparsely populated areas?

Submitted: 3.12.2025