

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001483/24
to the Commission
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)
(7 August 2024)**

Subject: Serious environmental and social impact of the Achlada coal mine operating in the municipality of Florina, Greece

The inhabitants of Achlada village in the municipality of Florina are confronted with unbearable living conditions because of the operations of a coal mine located within the village boundaries. The mine is of public interest but it is run by a private entity and has caused serious health and safety issues and environmental problems in the area.

Local inhabitants say the mine's daily operations are causing significant air pollution and noise, which is affecting their health and, in particular, the health of the children that attend the nearby primary school. Expropriation and mining have destabilised the ground, putting people's homes and lives at risk and causing problems for connections with the city of Florina. All of the coal (lignite) that is mined is exported to North Macedonia, meaning that local inhabitants suffer the consequences without any real benefits for them.

In the hope that the problems faced by the local inhabitants will be promptly and fairly dealt with and that solutions will be put in place to improve their quality of life, I wish to put the following questions to the Commission:

1. Is it aware of the impact that the operations of the Achlada coal mine are having and how does it plan to address the resulting environmental and social challenges?
2. What steps does it intend to take to ensure protection of the health and safety of local inhabitants?
3. How can monitoring and checks be reinforced in respect of the activities of private companies that use public goods in areas of critical importance such as Achlada?

Submitted: 7.8.2024

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Šefčovič on behalf of the European Commission
(9 October 2024)**

The Commission was not aware of the alleged problematic functioning of the coal mine in Achlada.

Industrial installations for the extraction of coal are listed in Annex II (point 2.e) of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive ⁽¹⁾.

According to Article 4 of the EIA Directive, prior to granting a consent for such projects, Member States are required to determine whether an environmental impact assessment is necessary, based on a case-by-case analysis or by setting specific criteria (such as the location, size or type of a project). Should such an assessment be required it would examine the impacts of the project on various elements, including on air quality.

Member States are primarily responsible to ensure compliance with EU law, including verifying individual cases of potential breach of the relevant rules, and taking the necessary steps for enforcement and the appropriate measures to address any matter that has arisen.

In the present case, the competent Greek authorities should verify whether the private company operating the mine complies with the permit that was granted to it, and in particular with any environmental conditions imposed.

It should be stressed that human health protection aspects shall be fully taken into account in the permitting phase, including at the stages of granting, reviewing and updating of permits.

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1-21, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014, OJ L 124, 25.4.2014, p. 1-18.