

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001529/24
to the Commission
Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR)
(20 August 2024)**

Subject: Addressing the problem of integrated waste management on the Greek islands

Article 174 TFEU provides for ‘actions leading to the strengthening of territorial cohesion in geographically disadvantaged areas’.

Waste management forms part of the extremely complex set of challenges faced by islands.

In 2021, the Commission reported that insufficient progress had been made with regard to waste management infrastructure (recycling, circular economy). More than 90% of the waste generated on the Greek islands — around 285 000 tonnes/year — is simply buried or ‘baled’.

During the 2014-2020 period, almost EUR 1 billion was made available from the European Structural and Investment Funds ⁽¹⁾ to improve waste management activities, but to little avail... Until 2022, the total fines for the ineffective management of hazardous waste exceeded EUR 180 000 000, with further fines expected.

Notably, the South Aegean Region took the decision to transfer waste from Kalymnos to the landfill site in Kos. The move was met with opposition by the municipal authorities of Kos, prompting a devious ‘offer of help’ from expansionist Türkiye.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes/overview-funding-programmes/european-structural-and-investment-funds_en

1. The Greek Government has made promises to invest in measures to address the problem ⁽²⁾ in the 2021-2027 period. Provided that the Commission is aware of these promises, does it believe that they will lead to modern/integrated waste management on the Greek islands or not?
2. In the Commission's view, what other initiatives do the Greek authorities need to take in order to achieve a comprehensive and viable solution?
3. To what extent have the Greek authorities benefited from the TAIEX Environmental Implementation Review PEER 2 PEER programme ⁽³⁾?

Submitted: 20.8.2024

Answer given by Ms Ferreira on behalf of the European Commission
(12 November 2024)

1. Greece faces challenges in meeting EU municipal waste recycling targets of 55%, 60% and 65% by 2025, 2030 and 2035 ⁽¹⁾, with a current recycling rate of 21% (EU average is 49%) ⁽²⁾. The 2021-2027 'Environment and Climate Change' ⁽³⁾ Programme, backed by EUR 900 million, marks a strategic shift towards modern recycling and recovery facilities, focusing on separate waste collection and a gradually declining input of mixed waste. These investments need to be in line with the Regional Waste Management Plans ⁽⁴⁾ — one for each region, including the island regions — which are the responsibility of Regional Waste Management Bodies ⁽⁵⁾. The newly established waste regulator ⁽⁶⁾ oversees national waste management implementation and proper functioning of local waste management utilities. These measures provide a solid framework that coupled with sustained efforts from Greek authorities will ensure integrated waste management on the Greek islands and across the country.
2. The island regions should set up tailor-made Regional Waste Management Plans focusing on waste prevention and recycling, combined with economic incentives to reduce landfilling. The polluter pays principle and raising awareness measures need to be part of an integrated strategy at the local level. Furthermore, Waste Management Bodies in the islands require adequate and competent staffing to ensure the proper functioning of the sector.
3. From 2018 to August 2024, Greece organised four events (two on waste management) ⁽⁷⁾ ⁽⁸⁾, one study visit on biowaste recycling ⁽⁹⁾, 16 workshops ⁽¹⁰⁾ linked to waste management and took part in over 15 multi-country workshops including two flagships on biowaste and textile recycling. A total of 130 Greek participants were involved in these events.

² https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/2021_2027/

³ The Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) tool supporting Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) between peers (Peer 2 Peer) https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/p2p/index_en.htm

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2008/98/EC, Article 11, as amended by Directive (EU) 2018/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02008L0098-20180705#d1e32-27-1>

⁽²⁾ Directorate-General for Environment, *Ελλάδα, Πορεία επίτευξης των στόχων της ΕΕ για την ανακύκλωση αποβλήτων έως το 2025*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2779/218973>

⁽³⁾ Environment and Climate Change Programme (Πρόγραμμα Περιβάλλον και Κλιματική Αλλαγή (ΠΕΚΑ)) <https://peka-program.gr/paroyiasi-programma/>

⁽⁴⁾ Περιφερειακά Σχέδια Διαχείρισης Αποβλήτων ΠΕΣΔΑ (PESDA). The composition of waste management plans is a requirement of Directive 2008/98/EC, Article 28, as amended by Directive (EU) 2018/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018.

⁽⁵⁾ Φορείς Διαχείρισης Στερεών Αποβλήτων ΦΟΔΣΑ (FODSA) : <https://fodsakm.gr/en/swmb/>

⁽⁶⁾ The waste regulatory authority is put in place in the context of the Greek Recovery and Resilience Plan and is part of the Regulatory Authority for Waste, Energy and Water (RAAEY). Greece's recovery and resilience plan — European Commission (europa.eu) 'Waste management law for the implementation of sustainable landfilling and recycling' measure ID: 16772 https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/greeces-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en

⁽⁷⁾ TAIEX-EIR PEER 2 PEER Workshop on Waste Management for Greek Cities: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/TMSWebRestrict/resources/js/app/#/library/detail/67644>

⁽⁸⁾ TAIEX-EIR PEER 2 PEER Study Visit on Successful Bio-Waste Recycling: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/TMSWebRestrict/resources/js/app/#/library/detail/69347>

⁽⁹⁾ See footnote 8.

⁽¹⁰⁾ See footnote 7.