

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001803/24  
to the Commission  
Michalis Hadjipantela (PPE)  
(24 September 2024)**

*Subject:* Construction and operation of a solar farm near the villages of Lythrodontas, Kataliontas and Mathiatis

In July 2024, five years after an initial proposal was put forward, a private company submitted the complete project file to the town planning department for the construction and operation of a 180 MW solar farm. The plan is to build the proposed solar farm in an area between the villages of Lythrodontas, Kataliontas and Mathiatis in Cyprus' Nicosia District. However, the proper procedure has not been followed as this proposal has not yet been put to public consultation, even though the inhabitants and local authorities of the three villages strongly oppose the project because of its environmental impact.

Specifically, the development project will have an overly negative impact on local flora and fauna and will destroy hundreds of hectares of forested land on an island that has limited forest cover. This runs counter to EU policy on protecting biodiversity and the new EU law on restoring degraded ecosystems.

In the absence of public consultation and given that this development project must comply with European environmental directives and take into account local biodiversity, what is the Commission's position on this issue?

Submitted: 24.9.2024

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

Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water are listed in Annex II.3.a of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive <sup>(1)</sup>.

According to Article 4 of the directive, prior to granting a consent for such projects, Member States must determine whether an environmental impact assessment, including public consultation, is necessary based on a case-by-case analysis or on specific criteria, such as the location, size or type of projects.

In case Natura 2000 sites are likely to be significantly affected, such projects shall be subject to an appropriate assessment of their implications for the sites and be authorised in accordance with the Habitats Directive <sup>(2)</sup>.

The recently revised Renewable Energy Directive <sup>(3)</sup> and Regulation 2022/2577 <sup>(4)</sup> further simplify and shorten administrative permit-granting procedures for renewable energy projects, without prejudice to the rights for public participation under the Aarhus Convention.

Member States are primarily responsible to ensure compliance with EU law, including verifying individual cases of potential breach of the relevant rules or taking the necessary steps for enforcement, and the appropriate measures to address any matter that has arisen. In its role as guardian of the Treaties, the Commission will monitor the situation and may decide to take appropriate action.

Once the project starts operating, the competent Cyprus authorities should verify whether the company operating the solar farm complies with the development consent that was granted to it and with any environmental conditions imposed.

Measures to protect biodiversity should be taken into account in the permitting phase, including when granting, reviewing and updating permits.

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<sup>(1)</sup> 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.

<sup>(2)</sup> Articles 6(3) and (4), Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7-50.

<sup>(3)</sup> Directive (EU) 2023/2413 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 October 2023, OJ L, 2023/2413, 31.10.2023.

<sup>(4)</sup> Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 of 22 December 2022 laying down a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy, OJ L 335, 29.12.2022, p. 36-44. The application of certain provisions of this regulation has been extended until 30 June 2025.