

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002051/24
to the Commission
Konstantinos Arvanitis (The Left)
(14 October 2024)**

Subject: Protection of bee-keeping and primary production on the island of Evia

In the Regional Unit of Evia, in Greece, an intervention of enormous proportions in the natural, anthropogenic and productive environment is being carried out through the installation of a huge number of wind turbines. Specifically, although Evia accounts for barely 2.79% of Greek territory, it is host to 25.85% of the wind turbines already installed (28% of the installed capacity), a clear testament to the disproportion, unequal distribution and overall burden on the region. Moreover, forest fires (particularly in 2021) have destroyed a total of 51 200 hectares, 74% of which were forests and woodlands. The consequences of the extensive energy interventions and the forest fires are catastrophic for the environment and disincentivise any other beneficial activity in the region.

In view of the fact that: (a) the region is home to an abundance of primary activity (bee-keeping, livestock rearing, resin tapping and logging); (b) bee-keeping is facing enormous environmental risks due to climate change and receives special protection from EU legislation; and (c) 80% of cultivated and wild plants are dependent on animal pollinators, chief among them bees:

1. Has the Commission carried out checks on the compatibility of installing new wind turbines with the EU standards for the protection of bees and of the environment in general?
2. If infringements of the applicable EU law are identified, how does the Commission intend to intervene?
3. Does it intend to revise the regulatory framework and the energy development model to give more effective protection to the natural environment, in view of the threat posed by the climate crisis?

Submitted: 14.10.2024

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(16 December 2024)**

If a project is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site, an appropriate assessment of its impacts should be carried out; it can be approved only when it has been ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site ⁽¹⁾. Windfarm projects undergo an environmental impact assessment (EIA), based on the Greek legislation transposing EU law ⁽²⁾.

There are no EU binding standards on the protection of the honeybee species. However, in January 2023, the Commission revised the EU Pollinators Initiative ⁽³⁾ which, in conjunction with pollinator-relevant provisions of the Nature Restoration Regulation ⁽⁴⁾, forms ‘A new deal for Pollinators’ ⁽⁵⁾.

The latter aims to ensure better habitats for all pollinators, which will be beneficial also for cultivated pollinator species such as the honeybee.

National administrative or judicial bodies are the ones primarily responsible to verify compliance of individual projects with the EU law.

Citizens should use existing national means of redress to oppose the legality of a specific project. In its role as guardian of the Treaties, the Commission may decide to take appropriate action and follow up on systemic issues involving the application of EU law.

It has already launched an infringement procedure against Greece due to the non-compliance of the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Renewable Energy Resources with the Habitats Directive ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive — 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.

⁽²⁾ Directive 2011/92/EU 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 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, OJ L 124, 25.4.2014, p. 1-18.

⁽³⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/pollinators_en

⁽⁴⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-law_en

⁽⁵⁾ COM/2023/35 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2023%3A35%3AFIN&qid=1674555285177>

⁽⁶⁾ Article 6(3), Infringement case 2014/4073, [https://ec.europa.eu/atwork/applying-eu-law/infringements-proceedings/infringement_decisions/?lang_code=EN&typeOfSearch=false&active_only=0&noncom=0&r_dossier=INFR\(2014\)4073&decision_date_from=&decision_date_to=&title=&submit=Search&langCode=EN](https://ec.europa.eu/atwork/applying-eu-law/infringements-proceedings/infringement_decisions/?lang_code=EN&typeOfSearch=false&active_only=0&noncom=0&r_dossier=INFR(2014)4073&decision_date_from=&decision_date_to=&title=&submit=Search&langCode=EN)

The EU has adopted legislation setting the path for the Union's energy and climate objectives for 2030, including a revision of the Renewable Energy Directive ⁽⁷⁾, with new measures to streamline permitting procedures for renewables, while ensuring environmental protection. The focus now is on implementing these new rules.

⁽⁷⁾ Directive (EU) 2023/2413 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 October 2023 amending Directive (EU) 2018/2001, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and Directive 98/70/EC as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, and repealing Council Directive (EU) 2015/652, OJ L, 2023/2413, 31.10.2023.