

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000166/25
to the Commission
Maria Zacharia (NI)
(15 January 2025)**

Subject: Greece: a graveyard of steel as a result of inactive wind turbines

As the first generation of wind turbines installed in Greece comes to the end of its working life, the question arises of managing the mechanical installations, which for the most part are not being dismantled because it is not economically advantageous to do so. They remain in the mountainous regions of Greece, particularly in Natura 2000 areas such as Agrafta, the Mani, Evia and elsewhere, while on those occasions when a decision is taken to dismantle them, they are necessarily deposited in forest landfills, with adverse consequences for the environment because of the toxic materials contained in the blades.

In addition to this, there is also the issue of the restoration of the forest regions where they were installed and the forest transit roads, since the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030 (Commission Communication of 16 July 2021) stresses the need to restore forest biodiversity, as forest ecosystems are a natural ally in adapting to climate change, by performing carbon storage and carbon sink functions. At the moment there is no specific EU legislation to manage the issue, except for a reference in the general EU provisions on waste management (Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC).

Does the Commission intend to lay down a uniform policy for the restoration of the forest regions in question, particularly Natura 2000 areas?

Submitted: 16.1.2025

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(26 February 2025)**

Forests are a natural ally in adapting to and fighting against climate change and will play a vital role in making Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050.

To this end the EU Forest Strategy for 2030 ⁽¹⁾ calls for measures to increase their health and resilience. The Nature Restoration Regulation ⁽²⁾ requires Member States to put in place measures to restore certain degraded forest habitats and to enhance biodiversity also in forest ecosystems beyond those habitats.

Concerning Natura 2000 sites, the Habitats Directive ⁽³⁾ requires Member States to implement conservation measures to achieve the sites' conservation objectives and to take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species as well as significant disturbance of the species for which the sites have been designated.

In addition, plans and projects, including wind turbines, likely to have a significant effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, must be subject to an appropriate assessment of their implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

This assessment must include all stages of the project's life cycle, including post-operation. The competent national authorities can agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned, which may require decommissioning and restoration ⁽⁴⁾.

With regards to waste generated from wind turbines, currently there is no dedicated EU piece of legislation dealing with this waste stream.

However, Member States have to ensure that waste wind turbines are subject to waste management that fully complies with the provisions of the Waste Framework Directive ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/forest-strategy_en

⁽²⁾ Articles 4 and 12 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869, OJ L, 2024/1991, 29.7.2024.

⁽³⁾ 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.

⁽⁴⁾ Further guidance is provided in: European Commission: Directorate-General for Environment, Guidance document on wind energy developments and EU nature legislation, Publications Office of the European Union, 2020, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2779/457035>

⁽⁵⁾ Directive (EU) 2018/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste, OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 109-140.