

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000430/25**  
**to the Commission**  
**Afroditi Latinopoulou (Pfe)**  
(30 January 2025)

*Subject:* Crop irrigation difficulties of farmers in Evros — EU action needed

The expiration of the cross-border agreement between Greece and Bulgaria for the supply of water resources via the River Arda — and the end of the three-month extension thereof — has created serious uncertainty for farmers in the Greek region of Evros, who rely on this water to irrigate more than 300 000 hectares of farmland. The situation is exacerbated by the lack of a stable government in Bulgaria, which is hampering the smooth negotiation of a new agreement.

The inability to find a solution threatens not only the viability of agricultural production in Evros, but also the social and economic cohesion of the region. At the same time, maintenance problems at the Kalyva and Kefali dams compound the problem further, as they limit the possibility of using local water resources.

Given the importance of cross-border cooperation and the EU's role in supporting the outermost regions, can the Commission say:

1. What can the EU do to ensure that a new cross-border deal is negotiated or concluded between Greece and Bulgaria, despite the political instability in our neighbouring country?
2. What European tools or programmes can be mobilised right away to meet irrigation needs and restore local irrigation infrastructure, ensuring the viability of agricultural production in Evros?

Submitted: 30.1.2025

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission**  
(17 March 2025)

1. The Commission makes considerable efforts to foster transboundary cooperation on water management as required by Article 13 of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) <sup>(1)</sup> which sets a requirement for Member States, in the case of an international river basin district, to ensure coordination for the benefit of water bodies. Moreover, Article 12 of the WFD lays down that where a Member State identifies an issue which has an impact on the management of its water but cannot be resolved by that Member State, it may report the issue to the Commission and any other Member State concerned and may make recommendations for the resolution of it. There are no records in the Commission of such a formal notification. The agreement on the River Arda continues to be the subject of bilateral discussions.

2. Precision irrigation, the use of wastewater in agriculture <sup>(2)</sup> and less water consuming crops can increase irrigation efficiency. Through the Common Agricultural Policy <sup>(3)</sup> the Greek Strategic Plan <sup>(4)</sup> offers tools supporting the irrigation sector. Under rural development, investment support is available for improving irrigation facilities, as well as for agricultural holdings adopting water conservation techniques. Furthermore, farmers may participate on a voluntarily basis in eco-schemes relevant to agricultural water sustainability, including the use of climate resilient crops and digital applications for irrigation. Finally, the cross-border cooperation Interreg programme Greece-Bulgaria 2021- 2027 <sup>(5)</sup> provides financial resources to facilitate cooperation and may also support actions related to protocols and cooperation plans.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1-73.

<sup>(2)</sup> According to EU Regulation 2020/74, farmers can irrigate with treated wastewater. This regulation facilitates the establishment of water reuse systems, utilising treated wastewater from local reclamation facilities, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2020/741/oj/eng>

<sup>(3)</sup> [https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy\\_en](https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy_en)

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://www.agrotikianaptixi.gr/category/sskap-2023-2027/sskap-egkrisi-tropopoiiseis/>

<sup>(5)</sup> <https://www.greece-bulgaria.eu/>