

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000556/25
to the Commission
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)
(6 February 2025)**

Subject: Protecting areas of particular natural beauty and controlling building activities in the EU: a new hotel in Sarakiniko — development or environmental disaster?

A building permit was recently issued for the construction of a 5-star hotel in Sarakiniko, an area of the Greek island of Milos known for its unique natural landscape. The move was met with outcry from the local community and environmental organisations. It also highlights possible shortcomings in regional planning and in the protection of areas of particular environmental importance.

In view of the European directives on environmental protection and sustainable development, can the Commission say:

1. What measures does it intend to take to ensure that areas of particular natural beauty, such as Sarakiniko, are protected from uncontrolled building activities?
2. How does the Commission assess the effectiveness of national procedures for issuing building permits in areas of environmental importance and what does it propose to strengthen checks and transparency in relation to these procedures?
3. Are there any European programmes or funding tools that could support enhanced regional planning and environmental protection in regions such as Milos?

Submitted: 6.2.2025

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(14 April 2025)**

According to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive ⁽¹⁾, prior to granting consent for such projects, it is up to Member States to determine whether an EIA is necessary, based on a case-by-case analysis or by setting specific criteria ⁽²⁾. Such an assessment, if required, will consider the impacts of the projects on cultural heritage and environmental aspects.

The Commission does not verify whether individual building permits comply with the relevant national legislation. Without prejudice to the Commission's role as guardian of the Treaties, it is primarily the responsibility of the Greek authorities to ensure that projects are developed in full compliance with EU law.

In parallel, the Commission prioritises its enforcement efforts on cases pointing to a systemic breach of EU law ⁽³⁾. For instance, the Commission ensures that the national legal framework complies with EU legislation by checking the transposition of directives, which it has done for the EIA Directive.

The Commission also prioritises infringements preventing national judicial systems from ensuring effective enforcement of EU law or showing a persistent failure by a Member State to apply EU law correctly, with sufficient evidence of a general practice.

Funding possibilities are available under the EU Cohesion Policy Funds ⁽⁴⁾, ⁽⁵⁾. Under the shared management and subsidiarity principles governing these funds, project selection and implementation fall under the responsibility of the Member State. No financial support has been provided by the Cohesion Policy funds for this project.

There is a relevant reform ⁽⁶⁾ included in the Greek Recovery and Resilience Plan ⁽⁷⁾. There are also funding opportunities through the EU programme for the environment and climate action ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁾ 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.

⁽²⁾ such as the location, size or type of project.

⁽³⁾ As set out in the communication of 19 January 2017 (EU law: Better results through better application — C/2016/8600, OJ C 18, 19.1.2017, p. 10-20) and in the communication of 13 October 2022 COM(2022) 518 final — Enforcing EU law for a Europe that delivers.

⁽⁴⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/cohesion-fund_en

⁽⁵⁾ <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/countries/GR/21-27>

⁽⁶⁾ 'Preparation of Urban Plans in implementation of the urban policy reform'

⁽⁷⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/greeces-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en

⁽⁸⁾ LIFE, https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en