

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001432/25
to the Commission
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)
(8 April 2025)**

Subject: SMEs and energy communities excluded from the Just Transition Programme in Western Macedonia

Western Macedonia faces serious challenges as a result of the lignite phase-out and the need for a developmental transition to clean energy. However, it has been observed that in practice the Just Transition Programme does not ensure equal access for small and medium-sized enterprises and local communities that have invested in renewable energy projects and are awaiting responses from the competent national bodies, such as HEDNO [Hellenic Electricity Distribution Network Operator] and IPTO [Independent Power Transmission Operator]. Many such entities are excluded due to their inability to secure connection conditions, while significant amounts of money that have been paid in advance remain pending for several years.

At the same time, there is an unbalanced distribution of available resources in favour of large energy groups, leading to limited participation of local communities in the development process and thus undermining the philosophy of just transition and energy democracy.

Given that the Commission co-finances the Just Transition Programme and has an approved supervisory and auditing role:

1. Does the Commission consider it compatible with the spirit and objectives of Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 that small and medium-sized producers are not able to access national calls for applications due to bureaucratic obstacles, such as the lack of connection conditions?
2. Does the Commission intend to ask Greece to amend the conditions of Just Transition Programme calls for applications and take measures to ensure equal access of local communities, small and medium-sized RES producers and energy communities to financing, network connection and institutional support?
3. How does the Commission intend to support Western Macedonia against poverty and unemployment that are worsening due to lignite being phased out?

Submitted: 8.4.2025

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(28 May 2025)**

The Commission recognises the vital role of energy communities and small and medium-sized renewable energy producers for advancing the Just Transition Fund (JTF) goals. Through a dedicated call under the Just Transition Programme (JTP), an energy community ⁽¹⁾ has already been selected for funding ⁽²⁾.

Under the shared management of Cohesion Policy funds, Managing Authorities define the selection criteria and manage implementation. In this context, calls for proposals may prioritise projects with secured energy connections and sufficient maturity- both essential to meeting tight JTF implementation deadlines. However, grid capacity and connection permits lie with national grid operators and fall outside the JTF Managing Authority's remit.

Small and medium-sized enterprises and energy communities benefit from EU frameworks ensuring fair, proportionate procedures under the Electricity Market Directive 2019/944 ⁽³⁾ and the Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001 ⁽⁴⁾.

The revised Renewable Energy Directive 2023/2413 ⁽⁵⁾ further accelerates permitting for small-scale projects, including for renewable self-consumers and energy communities. The Commission supports Member States with implementation and will propose a European Grid Package in 2026.

⁽¹⁾ Selected energy community in Kozani:
https://eydam.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/MIS6007002_%CE%91%CF%80%CF%8C%CF%86%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%B7_%CE%A8%CE%94%CE%A6%CE%9A%CE%97-6%CE%9F%CE%A5.pdf.

⁽²⁾ <https://eydam.gr/27-9-2023-stirixi-energeiakon-koinotiton-gia-2/>.

⁽³⁾ Article 15 and 16 of Directive (EU) 2019/944 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on common rules for the internal market for electricity and amending Directive 2012/27/EU (recast).

⁽⁴⁾ Article 21 and 22 of Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (recast).

⁽⁵⁾ 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.

Out of a total budget of EUR 1.6 billion for the JTF, some EUR 1 billion is allocated to Western Macedonia to modernize its economy, restore jobs, up-/re-skill its workforce, promote social inclusion and employment ⁽⁶⁾ and support green transition ⁽⁷⁾. The region also receives some EUR 394 million from the regional programme Western Macedonia ⁽⁸⁾.

Member States can join the Just Transition Platform ⁽⁹⁾ and the Cohesion for Transitions Community of Practice ⁽¹⁰⁾ to exchange best practices and strengthen interinstitutional capacity.

⁽⁶⁾ JTF aims to support more than 20 000 unemployed persons and 8 000 persons at risk of unemployment in the areas affected by the de-carbonisation, mainly Western Macedonia and Megalopoli areas.

⁽⁷⁾ Green transition actions include energy efficiency, RES expansion, and land repurposing.

⁽⁸⁾ Through the support of the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund+.

⁽⁹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/just-transition-fund/just-transition-platform_en.

⁽¹⁰⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/cohesion-4-transition_en.