

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001582/25
to the Commission
Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR)
(21 April 2025)

Subject: Lake Kremasta

The lack of rainfall in Greece, as in all of southern Europe, over the past two years has exacerbated the problem of water scarcity.

Attica mainly gets its water from the artificial lake of Marathon, which functions as a reservoir, and the drop in its level has led to consideration of the scenario of transferring water from Lake Kremasta (Aetolia-Acarnania). This is the largest lake in Greece and is planned to become the main source of water for transfer to the capital.

However, the artificial lake of Kremasta has seen the creation of a proverbial wetland with many types of birds and intense vegetation — in addition to the natural beauty of the area. The rate of water absorption from there for transfer to the capital is planned to be 5% of the water, but this may increase, as the problem has not been definitively resolved. The channelling of water from there to Athens, which will require significant investment, also carries the risk of disturbing the ecosystem that has formed, disrupting the whole lake.

In light of the above:

1. Does the Commission intend to monitor the requirements of the studies and the possible execution of the project, which carries the risk of disrupting the ecosystem?
2. Does a framework exist for an artificial lake to become a protected area?
3. How can the Commission ensure that the ecological balance is not disrupted by such actions, even if their aim is to resolve such a serious issue as water scarcity?

Submitted: 21.4.2025

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

1. According to the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive ⁽¹⁾, works for the transfer of water resources between river basins where that transfer aims at preventing possible shortages of water and where the amount of water transferred exceeds 100 million cubic metres/year must first be assessed for their impact on the environment. It is the responsibility of the competent authorities to ensure that this assessment is done.
2. An artificial lake can be designated as a Natura 2000 site under the Birds ⁽²⁾ or Habitats ⁽³⁾ Directives, if the criteria therein are fulfilled. The Commission has no data that would suggest the need for lake Kremasta to be included in the Natura 2000 network. The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 ⁽⁴⁾ provides that by 2030, 30% of the EU land and 30% of EU marine area should become legally protected and one third of this (10% of EU land and 10% of EU marine area) should become strictly protected. It is Member States' national competence to designate additional protected areas to contribute to this voluntary target. However, it should be noted that the Natura 2000 site 'Koilada Achelooi Kai Ori Valtou' depends on the status of lake Kremasta.
3. According to information provided by the Greek authorities ⁽⁵⁾, Lake Kremasta is in good ecological potential under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) ⁽⁶⁾. Changes in the hydrological conditions, such as those that could be due to the transfer of water to the artificial lake of Marathon, cannot lead to a deterioration of ecological potential, unless the competent authorities can duly invoke the exemption included in Article 4(7) of the WFD and meet all the strict conditions listed therein.

⁽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⁾ Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds, OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7-25.

⁽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⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en.

⁽⁵⁾ https://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/gr/eu/wfd2022/documents/el04/envzjdu3g/EL04_2REV_SDLAP_signed.pdf.

⁽⁶⁾ 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, as amended by Commission Directive 2014/101/EU of 30 October 2014, OJ L 311, 31.10.2014, p. 32-35.