(English version)

Question for written answer E-001877/25
to the Commission
Maria Zacharia (NI)
(12 May 2025)

Subject: Carbon dioxide storage in Prinos

In January 2025, the Commission announced that it would invest EUR 1.25 billion in cross-border infrastructure from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). Among the projects selected for funding was the carbon dioxide (CO_2) storage project in Prinos (13.11-EL-W-M-24-Prinos CO_2).

The project will be implemented in a natural/geological oil reservoir system, with a total area of 256.86 km^2, and be located in marine, undersea and land-based sites a short distance off the coasts of Kavala and Thasos. It also includes the maritime transport of CO_2 from Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece and Italy. In accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC, a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment should thus have been prepared first and, in particular, neighbouring countries should have received advance information under Article 7, which was not the case.

In addition, the proposed project falls within the scope of the Seveso Directive (Directive 2012/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012), meaning that a safety report and emergency plans should have been drawn up. However, the project was submitted for an environmental impact assessment consultation on 25 November 2024, which was completed at a later stage and which does not even contain an adequate assessment of the geological risks present in an undersea area basically on top of the Anatolian fault line.

Was the Commission aware of this when it included the project in the CEF, and had an adequate risk assessment been carried out?

Submitted: 12.5.2025

Answer given by Mr Jørgensen on behalf of the European Commission
(25 July 2025)

The Honourable Member is right in pointing out that nearly EUR 120 million out of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Energy budget has been awarded for works on the Prinos CO_2 project in the beginning of 2025. The works subsidised by CEF Energy centre on the construction of a jetty and onshore work.

In order to reduce costs, increase efficiency and speed up construction periods, certain initial works can be undertaken in parallel with the application for and compliance with the various and multiple permits required.

The actual permits to use certain locations as storage for carbon dioxide are granted on the basis of Directive 2009/31/EC on the geological storage of carbon dioxide.

Under the Seveso-III Directive ([1]), upper-tier establishments ([2]) are required to produce a safety report as well as external and internal emergency plans ([3]). Member States' authorities are primarily responsible to ensure compliance with this legislation.

Regarding the application of the Seveso-III Directive ([4]), the requirements to produce a safety report, as well as internal and external emergency plans, only cover establishments classified as upper-tier ([5]). Member States' authorities are primarily responsible to ensure compliance with EU legislation.

It is up to Member States to verify whether obligations arising from applicable environmental Directives ([6]) regarding the project in question have been respected, including with regard to carrying out assessments where required.

([1]) Directive 2012/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directive 96/82/EC, OJ L 197, 24.7.2012, p. 1-37.
([2]) Where high quantities of substances may be present, and which are subject to more stringent requirements, as opposed to lower-tier establishments.
([3]) The safety report and the internal emergency plan have to be produced by the operator within a reasonable period prior to the start of operation or construction. The external emergency has to be drawn up within 2 years after reception of the required information sent by the operator to the competent authorities.
([4]) Directive 2012/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directive 96/82/EC, OJ L 197, 24.7.2012, p. 1-37.
([5]) Where high quantities of substances may be present, and which are subject to more stringent requirements, as opposed to lower-tier establishments.
([6]) E.g. 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*, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU. It is to be noted that directive 2001/42/EC applies to public plans and programmes.

As guardian of the Treaties, the Commission will monitor the situation and may decide to take action. In case of doubt, national Courts are fully competent to verify the compatibility of a permit with national and EU law.