(English version)

Question for written answer E-002094/25
to the Commission
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)
(26 May 2025)

Subject: Widespread phenomenon of fir and plane trees drying out in the mountainous areas of Greece — risk to biodiversity and forest ecosystems

In recent years, according to the Institute of Mediterranean Forest Ecosystems, a large number of fir and plane trees have been drying out in many mountainous areas of mainland Greece, with Tzoumerka, the Acheloos valley and Agrafa being typical examples. This phenomenon is a major concern for local communities and scientists, as it affects forest ecosystems, threatens biodiversity and increases the risk of fires and desertification.

The fact that fir and plane trees are drying out appears to be related both to the effects of climate change (prolonged droughts, extreme temperatures) and to biotic factors, such as attacks by bark-eating insects and fungi. However, to date, neither a single monitoring mechanism nor a coordinated response has been implemented at European level.

In the light of the above, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Does it monitor the widespread phenomenon of fir and plane trees drying out in EU Member States, in particular in mountainous areas such as Tzoumerka, the Acheloos valley and Agrafa?

2. Are there any European funding tools that can be used to research, prevent and tackle this phenomenon in these regions?

3. Does it intend to strengthen cooperation with the Member States to set up early warning and intervention mechanisms to protect forest ecosystems from the consequences of the climate crisis?

Submitted: 26.5.2025

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(30 July 2025)

The Commission does not, at the moment, have any programme dedicated to monitoring the phenomenon of fir and plane trees die-back in Member States. Nevertheless, the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) is working on climate resilience of forests, as shown with the recent JRC publications ([1]), ([2], [3], [4]).

Several funding tools are available to address the issue, for instance rural development forest measures under the Common Agricultural Policy ([5]) or the EU programme for the environment and climate action ([6]).

Under Horizon Europe ([7]), a co-funded partnership on Forests and Forestry for a Sustainable Future is proposed, where Member States are encouraged to join.

Within the Cohesion policy ([8]), the Greek Environment and Climate Change programme includes the implementation of plans for the prevention and management of climate change related forest risks, such as wildfires and diseases.

The Commission proposed to set up an early-warning system for forest disturbances as part of the proposal for a regulation on a monitoring framework for resilient European forests ([9]), currently with the European Parliament and the Council.

This would lay the necessary foundation for cooperation with the Member States on more comparable and higher quality monitoring of these negative impacts. On-the-ground interventions remain in the remit of the national authorities.

Lastly, the Commission has started preparing a European Climate Adaptation Plan, which will set out a comprehensive framework and plan for action to support EU countries on climate resilience and preparedness.

([1]) https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-022-04959-9.
([2]) https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378023000420.
([3]) https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC126966.
([4]) https://www.nature.com/articles/s41597-025-04408-y.
([5]) https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/sustainability/forestry/forestry-explained_en#financial-support-for-forestry-in-the-cap.
([6]) LIFE: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en.
([7]) https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/horizon-europe_en.
([8]) https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/2021-2027_en.
([9]) https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/proposal-regulation-forest-monitoring-framework_en.

Expected to be adopted during the second half of 2026, this initiative will be developed with all relevant stakeholders through an open and participatory process.