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Answer given by Mr Jørgensen
on behalf of the European Commission
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Under Article 4(2) of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive¹, ‘subject to Article 2(4), for projects listed in Annex II, Member States shall determine whether the project shall be made subject to an assessment in accordance with Articles 5 to 10. Member States shall make that determination through: (a) a case-by-case examination; or (b) thresholds or criteria set by the Member State’. These assessments should ensure that, even with the envisaged construction of a large numbers of solar energy plants, damage to the environment should be limited. The Commission does not assess the impacts of individual solar energy projects on the environment or their social and landscape impact.

With Directive (EU) 2023/2413² amending the Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2018/2001, the EU has adopted measures to speed up the deployment of renewable energy without lowering environmental standards. For example, Article 15 c) requires Member States to designate renewable acceleration areas where a lighter permitting regime applies. These should be areas where the renewable energy plants would not have a significant environmental impact.

Mindful of the need to balance energy production with other public interests, the Commission has issued recommendations and guidance for Member States on encouraging innovative technologies and forms of renewable energy deployment³, like agrivoltaics, as well as on permitting for renewable projects and related infrastructure⁴.

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 (codification) Text with EEA relevance OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1–21; Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment Text with EEA relevance OJ L 124, 25.4.2014, p. 1–18.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/2413/oj/eng>.

³ C(2025)4024 final and C(2025) 4011 final, respectively.

⁴ C(2024)2660 final and SWD(2024)333 final, respectively.