*(English version)*

**Question for written answer E-000499/26**
**to the Commission**
**Maria Zacharia (NI)**
*(6 February 2026)*

*Subject:* River diversion that delimits a Natura 2000 area in Achlada, Florina — flooding events and lack of flood control studies

In the Achlada area of Florina, in the context of the operation and expansion of an existing lignite mine, the Geropotamos riverbed has been diverted and/or displaced. This river constitutes a natural boundary delimiting the Natura 2000 area 'Ori Varnounta' (GR1340003), with the result that the intervention in its bed constitutes an indirect alteration of the natural boundaries and integrity of the protected area.

Despite the seriousness of the intervention, there is no evidence of the existence of a specific independent and adequate due diligence assessment of the impacts of the diversion on the integrity of the Natura 2000 area, nor of adequate water and flood control studies. Following the diversion of the river, flooding events resulting in the flooding of road sections and a bridge in the area have been recorded, raising issues of public safety and infrastructure protection.

It is noted that Greece has already been found in breach by the Court of Justice of the European Union for incorrect implementation of Directive 2007/60/EC on flood risk management, with the judgment of 19 December 2019 in Case C-24/19, European Commission v. Greece.

Accordingly:

1. How does the Commission assess the compatibility of the above intervention with Directives 92/43/EEC, 2000/60/EC and 2007/60/EC?

2. Does the Commission intend to investigate whether, through the diversion of the Geropotamos River, a substantial alteration of the boundaries of a Natura 2000 site is being attempted?

Submitted: 6.2.2026

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission**
*(24 April 2026)*

The Floods Directive ([1]) requires EU countries to carry out a preliminary flood risk assessment, prepare flood hazard and risk maps, and establish flood risk management plans, but the Commission does not assess whether concrete projects increase the risk of floods as this is not required under the legislation.

Case-law from the Court of Justice of the European Union on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) ([2]) indicates that, before a project affecting a water body is authorised, it must be shown that the project will not jeopardise the achievement of good ecological status in the affected water body or lead to the deterioration of the status of any of the quality elements defined by the WFD, including morphological conditions, unless an exemption on grounds of overriding public interest under Article 4(7) of the WFD applies.

According to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive ([3]), any plan or project likely to have a significant negative effect on a Natura 2000 site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, must be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

It can only be approved if it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned. Exceptions to this obligation may be accepted under the conditions established in Article 6(4).

Without prejudice to the Commission's role as guardian of the Treaties, it is primarily the responsibility of the Greek authorities to ensure compliance with EU environmental law.

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([1]) Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood, OJ L 288, 6.11.2007, p. 27-34.
([2]) 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.
([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.