

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000724/26
to the Commission
Galato Alexandraki (ECR)
(20 February 2026)**

Subject: Understaffing of Aegean forest services and risk of island regions losing EU funding

According to an official memorandum from the Municipality of Tilos, there is evidence of serious and persistent understaffing of the Aegean forest services, which directly affects the environmental licensing of projects, the management of forest maps, fire prevention and the protection of biodiversity. The impossibility of offering an on-the ground presence and providing technical support to small islands, such as Tilos, causes delays in projects co-financed by the Cohesion Funds, the Recovery Fund and LIFE programmes, with the risk of funding being lost. At the same time, the constitutional principle of insularity and the EU principle of territorial cohesion require specially adapted staffing policies for areas with spatial discontinuity.

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

1. How does it ensure that Member States' island regions have sufficient administrative and scientific capacity to properly absorb and implement environmental EU funds?
2. Does it intend to establish specific administrative capacity indicators for island forest services, as a condition for funding?
3. Can it deploy targeted technical assistance or specific support tools for Aegean forest services to prevent administrative weakening in peripheral areas?

Submitted: 20.2.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(29 April 2026)**

Technical assistance (TA) can support the strengthening of administrative capacity for the effective management of cohesion policy funds.

It plays an important role at all stages of implementation. Under the shared management principle, Member States are responsible to define investment priorities and allocate resources, accordingly, including for TA actions, in line with programmes' priorities and Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 ⁽¹⁾.

The LIFE programme supports a capacity-building project in Greece ⁽²⁾. However, as a competitive funding instrument, it does not provide for directly allocating resources to strengthen the administrative and scientific capacity of Member States, including in island regions. This remains the Member States' responsibility, including resources related to the implementation of EU environmental funding.

If the Commission's proposal for the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPP) Regulation ⁽³⁾ is adopted by the legislators, Greece will be able to propose specific measures to support Aegean Forest services, as investments or reforms.

Such measures could be submitted as part of the NRPP plan, following the consultations with relevant partners and stakeholders ⁽⁴⁾. EU support will supplement national public funding.

The organisation and adequate staffing of forest services is the Greek authorities' responsibility. Currently, cohesion policy supports capacity building actions for beneficiaries, including forest services in island regions, through the Environment and Climate Change programme ⁽⁵⁾, with a budget of 16.2 million ⁽⁶⁾.

Further support can be requested through EU technical assistance tools, such as the Technical Support Instrument ⁽⁷⁾, the TAIEX-REGIO Peer2Peer ⁽⁸⁾ and the Cohesion for Transitions ⁽⁹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021R1060>.

⁽²⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-details/43252405/101101858/LIFE2027>.

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025PC0565>.

⁽⁴⁾ Pursuant to Article 6 of the proposal for a regulation: see footnote 3.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://peka-program.gr/>.

⁽⁶⁾ EU contribution.

⁽⁷⁾ https://reforms-investments.ec.europa.eu/technical-support-instrument-0_en.

⁽⁸⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/how/improving-investment/region-peer-2-peer/taix-regio-peer-2-peer_en.

⁽⁹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/cohesion-4-transition_en.