

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002209/26
to the Commission
Yannis Maniatis (S&D)
(1 June 2026)**

Subject: Accumulation of large energy projects in the Vounasa/Kamvounia mountainous zone in Western Macedonia and carrying capacity

In December 2025, the Regional Council of Western Macedonia gave a unanimously negative opinion on the EIA of the pumped storage projects 'Flambouro' and 'Trani Rachi' in Vounasa in the Municipalities of Grevena, Deskati and Servia. Despite this opinion, a decision of Approval of Environmental Terms was issued in January 2026. Meanwhile, the environmental licensing of the pumped storage project 'Petroto' in the Municipality of Deskati is pending.

The wider Vounasa/Kamvounia mountainous zone in Western Macedonia already hosts a large number of RES projects, energy storage and related infrastructure. Seven pumped storage projects, with a total capacity of approximately 2,000 MW, are being promoted in the same geographical area without a comprehensive assessment of the carrying capacity of the area and the cumulative environmental, social and economic impacts.

Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, provides for the assessment of the cumulative impacts of major projects, while the Aarhus Convention guarantees effective public participation in environmental decision-making processes.

Can the Commission answer the following:

1. How are the carrying capacity and cumulative impacts taken into account when authorising major energy projects in areas such as the above, with a high concentration of infrastructure?
2. Does the Commission consider that the existing procedures ensure the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and the effective participation of local communities?
3. Is the Commission considering promoting European guidelines or mechanisms to ensure fair distribution of the benefits of the energy transition in regions hosting large-scale energy infrastructure?

Submitted: 1.6.2026

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(17 July 2026)**

According to Article 5(1) of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive ⁽¹⁾ where an EIA is required, a report must be prepared and include the information required by Annex IV of the directive including 'a description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment resulting from (...) the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects (...)' ⁽²⁾.

Article 6 of the Aarhus Convention ⁽³⁾ requires Greece to ensure effective public participation and take its results into account. However, the Convention does not require parties to adopt a specific decision solely on the basis of a negative opinion issued by a local authority.

Without prejudice to the Commission's role as guardian of the Treaties, it is primarily the responsibility of the Greek authorities to ensure that projects are developed and authorised in full compliance with EU environmental legislation.

In addition, Article 15(d) of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) ⁽⁴⁾ includes an obligation for Member States to promote public acceptance of renewable energy projects by means of direct and indirect participation of local communities.

In December 2025, the Commission proposed the European Grids Package ⁽⁵⁾ which includes sectorial measures on the authorisation procedures for large scale energy infrastructures and new public participation requirements under the RED, including in relation to benefit-sharing.

⁽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, OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1-21, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014, OJ L 124, 25.4.2014, p. 1-18.

⁽²⁾ Annex IV point 5(e).

⁽³⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/law-and-governance/aarhus_en.

⁽⁴⁾ Directive (EU) 2023/2413 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 October 2023 amending Directive (EU) 2018/2001, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and Directive 98/70/EC as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, and repealing Council Directive (EU) 2015/652, OJ L, 2023/2413, 31.10.2023.

⁽⁵⁾ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/infrastructure/european-grids_en.

The Commission continues to support implementation of public participation provisions through the exchange of good practices, including via the informal expert group on permitting and the Pact for Engagement initiative ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽⁶⁾ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/publications/pact-engagement_en.