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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Šefčovič
on behalf of the European Commission
(25.11.2024)

It is the duty of Cyprus authorities to verify compliance with national and EU environmental legislation and, after having consulted the public, to decide whether a permit for a new quarry can be issued. Impacts of plans and projects on the environment must be assessed in accordance with EU legislation on strategic environmental assessment¹ and/or environmental impact assessment². In case Natura 2000 sites are likely to be significantly affected, such projects shall be subject to an assessment of their implications for the sites and be authorised in accordance with Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive³. In relation to existing quarries in Natura 2000 sites, Member States must take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of the habitats and significant disturbance of species for which the sites have been designated.

The Environmental Liability Directive⁴ (ELD) provides a European framework requiring operators to remediate in kind occurrences of environmental damage which respond to the Directive criteria and to prevent the damage in case of imminent threat thereof. The ELD addresses cases of significant damage to species and sites protected under EU legislation⁵ as well as to water and land, in line with the polluter pays principle. The Regulation on nature restoration⁶ requires Member States to put in place measures which aim to ensure that key habitat types do not significantly deteriorate. It is for national authorities to identify, in their national restoration plan due by September 2026, the areas and the restoration measures to be implemented.

The Commission expects that the construction of marine and coastal projects is fully compliant with EU law and makes use of nature-based solutions.

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, OJ L 197, 21.7.2001, p. 30 – 37.

² 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. OJ L 124, 25.4.2014, p. 1–18.

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.

⁴ Directive 2004/35/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage, OJ L 143, 30.4.2004, p. 56–75.

⁵ Birds (Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds, OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7–25) and Habitats Directive.

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869. PE/74/2023/REV/1. OJ L, 2024/1991, 29.7.2024.