

EN
E-000827/2016
Answer given by Mr Moscovici
on behalf of the Commission
(1.8.2016)

1. The Commission maintains that Greece should reduce the carbon content of its fuel mix, including for heating and cooling, and adopt more efficient appliances, which would significantly reduce the problem of particulate concentration.
2. Particulate matter increases mortality due to respiratory and cardiovascular problems, and more than 11 000 premature deaths in Greece are attributed to exposure each year. Directive 2008/50/EC provides limit values for particulate matter. For particulates smaller than 10µm (PM10) limit values became binding on 1 January 2005; for those smaller than 2.5µm (PM2.5) on 1 January 2015. In October 2014, the Commission addressed a Reasoned Opinion to the Greek authorities for the breach of Articles 13 and 23 with regard to particulate matter (PM10). As soon as the Commission receives the annual air quality reports for the calendar year 2015 (to be submitted by 30 September 2016 at the latest), it will assess the compliance situation.
3. EU legislation only sets harmonised minimum rates. Decisions of Member States on excise duty and VAT rates above these minima depend on national policies, including fiscal policy. Greece can reduce the rates applied to the products mentioned by the Honourable Member but has to ensure that its fiscal targets are met. All the fiscal measures that Greece committed to take for ensuring sustainable public finances and achieve sizeable and sustainable primary surpluses over the medium-term are described in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Greece and the Commission, acting on behalf of the European Stability Mechanism¹.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/assistance_eu_ms/greek_loan_facility/pdf/01_mou_20150811_en.pdf