(English version)

Question for written answer E-003713/19
to the Commission
Lefteris Christoforou (PPE)
(7 November 2019)

Subject: Need to create a photovoltaics research programme in Cyprus

Cyprus is exposed more sunshine than any other EU — or indeed European — State. It has more than 300 days of sunshine a year, making it the most suitable country for the more efficient and effective development of photovoltaic power systems.

Cyprus is the ideal geographic area for the EU to create or fund its research centres for to the development and improvement of solar energy use.

One of the projects it is funding is a research programme for photovoltaics combined with water resources, the 'MinWaterCSP', in Morocco.

Cyprus, which is also an EU Member State, can both develop research programmes and invest heavily in photovoltaics, with a view to harnessing solar energy and upgrading new technologies for photovoltaic systems.

In view of the above, can the Commission say:

1. How is it planning to utilise Cyprus's potential for the development of research centres for the utilisation of solar energy?

2. How can it help Cyprus to make the most of its comparative advantage, which is the abundance of solar energy on the island?

Answer given by Ms Simson on behalf of the European Commission
(6 February 2020)

The mentioned project (MinWaterCSP ([1])) is based on the concentrated solar power (CSP) technology. The Commission granted funding to two Cypriot CSP projects (Helios by Infinia — EUR 46.6 million and EOS Green Energy ([2]) by Alfa Mediterranean Enterprises — EUR 60.2 million) in 2014 under the New Entrant's Reserve (NER) 300 fund ([3]). The first was retracted in March 2019 while the second is making little progress and funds risk becoming unavailable on 30 June 2020 (a one-year extension is possible).

The Commission is aware of Cyprus' potential in photovoltaic electricity generation and of its economic advantages. The Commission has provided technical support to the Cypriot authorities on integration of renewable energy sources into power system.

The support helped the authorities to assess the current state of the transmission and distribution electricity systems and proposed solutions for increasing the amount of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) generation that could be fed on the electricity system. Whilst there is a substantial potential, in 2018 only seven photovoltaic plants for a total power of 52MW have been licensed ([4]) by the Cyprus Energy Regulatory Authority (CERA).

A further deployment of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency would allow Cyprus to reap significant benefits in terms of lower energy prices, better air quality, an improved trade balance, an increased attractiveness towards environmentally sustainable tourism and promoting qualified jobs.

The potential for such further development is reflected in the Commission's recommendation on the draft national energy and climate plan of Cyprus (2019/C 297/13) to increase the level of ambition for 2030 to a renewable energy share of at least 23%.

([1]) https://www.minwatercsp.eu/
([2]) http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2016-007271_EN.html
([3]) https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/innovation-fund/ner300_en
([4]) 2019 CERA Annual report, page 25.