

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002116/23
to the Commission
Petros Kokkalis (The Left)
(4 July 2023)

Subject: Waste incineration plants in Greece

After receiving the Commission's letter of formal notice and the early warning report, the Greek Government believes that the only way to achieve the target of reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill is to incinerate it. Under an April 2023 amendment to the Greek national waste management plan published in 2020, at least four waste incineration plants are to operate, including mixed residual waste plants. The totally unfeasible target set by the Greek national waste management plan of diverting 90% of urban solid waste from landfill by 2030 rather than by 2040 — which is the target date set by the Waste Framework Directive — and Greece's inaction when it comes to carrying out works and making investments at the more advanced stages of the plan, are almost certain to derail the country's waste management agenda and circular economy targets.

In view of this:

1. Does the Commission consider the Greek government's plans to be in line with EU objectives, notably the circular economy and the Green Deal?
2. Does it consider these types of investment to be economically viable? Does it know whether they will receive EU funding?

Submitted: 4.7.2023

Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission
(15 September 2023)

1. Waste policy should focus on prevention, preparing for re-use and recycling as set out by the Green Deal ⁽¹⁾, the Circular Economy Action plan ⁽²⁾ and the waste hierarchy in Article 4 of the Waste Framework Directive ⁽³⁾. The inclusion of incineration plants in the Greek plan does not contravene the above instruments or other EU legislation and policy. Incineration could play a role in the circular economy by driving out unwanted substances, treating waste that cannot be recycled and extracting energy and useful materials from it. Incineration with energy recovery is higher placed in the waste hierarchy than other disposal operations such as incineration without energy recovery and landfilling.

2. In the 2021-2027 programming period for Cohesion policy ⁽⁴⁾, the Greek programmes do not provide for any support for the construction of incineration plants and no EU funding has been granted as regards these plants. According to the communication on the role of waste-to-energy in the circular economy ⁽⁵⁾, the use of EU funds shall be aimed towards the higher tiers of the waste hierarchy, i.e. prevention, preparing for re-use and recycling, and for sorting at source, separate collection, composting and raising awareness. Any request for EU co-financing will be appraised based on the above elements, as well as the specific rules applicable to each EU co-financing tool, including the Do No Significant Harm principle ⁽⁶⁾.

In the Recovery and Resilience Plan ⁽⁷⁾, Greece has included a waste management reform for sustainable use of resources and introduced a law for the implementation of sustainable landfilling and recycling.

⁽¹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en

⁽³⁾ Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste and repealing certain Directives, OJ L 312, 22.11.2008, p. 3-30, as amended by Directive (EU) 2018/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May, OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 109-140.

⁽⁴⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/what/investment-policy_en

⁽⁵⁾ Communication on the role of waste-to-energy in the circular economy, Brussels, 26.1.2017 COM(2017) 34 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0034>

⁽⁶⁾ <https://reform-support.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/2023%20Flagships%20Technical%20Support%20projects%20-%20dnsh.pdf>

⁽⁷⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en