

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0864/09
by Katerina Batzeli (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Degradation of archaeological site at Chaeronea

A permit has been granted to build and operate a gas-fired, alternatively diesel-fired, electricity generating plant with a capacity of 447 MW at Chaeronea, specifically at a distance of 830 metres from the listed archaeological site which incorporates the marble Lion, a monument to the Sacred Band who fell in the battle of 338 B.C. during a world-famous period of history. The plant is to be built over 15 hectares on the battlefield which marked the end of the ancient world, the break-up of the city state and the hegemony of the Macedonians and was the scene of other important battles through the ages. The area has remained completely rural, unsettled and unspoilt for over 2500 years. The height of the buildings is estimated to be 20 metres and the chimneys 40 metres. The entire area is highly productive and has recently undergone reafforestation, to which has been added agricultural infrastructure and closed irrigation networks, i.e. significant sums have been spent together with Community co-financing to promote agricultural production and save water resources. The area is crossed by the River Voiotikos Kifisos and a memorandum of cooperation has been signed by 16 municipalities in the river basin to promote the principles of sustainable and 'soft' forms of development. Community co-financing is being used to carry out major, innovative projects to save the archaeological treasures and to establish an archaeological theme park. The aim of these projects is to boost employment among local people in tourism and related economic activities, apart from traditional farming. Both the local community and the local authorities have voiced their concern over the potentially serious damage to the environment, the local economy and the historical nature of the area.

1. At a time when the EU is in the process of re-orientating towards renewable sources and energy saving, is it considered appropriate to establish yet another new gas (or diesel) fired plant
 - (a) in a country where 70% of the natural gas is 'wasted' on the production of electricity at the expense of more beneficial – in terms of energy and the environment – primary use, whereas the corresponding figure for the EU is 28%, and
 - (b) in an exceptional rural and historical area,authorisation for which was granted before European energy planning was developed?
2. How is the conversion of this rural, archaeological site into an industrial area consistent with the principles of regional planning when significant amounts of Community co-funding have been spent on its conservation, as referred to above, when there has been no consultation and despite strong opposition from the local community and the local authorities?