

**Priority question for written answer P-003538/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Protecting heritage and promoting infrastructure in Thessaloniki's Venizelos metro station

The archaeological site revealed during the construction of Thessaloniki's Venizelos metro station, dating from 4th to 9th century AD and connected to the city's 15 UNESCO world heritage monuments, is of exceptional importance¹. Nevertheless, the Greek Government plans to dismantle this monumental complex (1 500m²), put its pieces into storage and, after the completion of the station, transfer them back and reconstruct it. This choice will destroy the integrity and authenticity of the antiquities (basic principles of the UNESCO 1972 World Heritage Convention²), and is opposed globally by the scientific community³. There is, however, the more time- and cost-efficient technical option, strongly supported by civil and scientific society⁴, of excavating and constructing the station under the archaeological layers, keeping this important archaeological complex intact *in situ*⁵.

1. Is the Commission aware of the appeals of experts and civil society?
2. How will it promote the *in situ* preservation of this outstanding archaeological site, while ensuring the necessary development of transport infrastructure?
3. Can it confirm that the EU deadline for the completion and functioning of the project is February 2025, and given the fact that the project has been virtually stagnant for the last two years, would it consider extending the deadline?

¹ <https://www.icomos.org/en/get-involved/inform-us/heritage-alert/current-alerts/86769-heritage-alert-in-situ-preservation-of-antiquities-at-the-venizelos-metro-station-in-thessaloniki-greece>

² <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide12-en.pdf>

³ <https://www.europanostra.org/europa-nostra-board-call-for-thessaloniki-antiquities-to-be-preserved-in-situ/>

⁴ <https://www.lefigaro.fr/culture/l-exceptionnelle-ville-byzantine-decouverte-sous-le-sol-de-thessalonique-est-menacee-de-destruction-20210623>

⁵ <http://www.sea.org.gr/details.php?id=1190>