



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT
Directorate D – Biodiversity
ENV.D.3 – Nature Conservation

Brussels
ENV.D.3/AC

Subject: Letter to Csr transmitting an urgent complaint against the destruction of UNESCO site Parnon in Greece

Dear Petitioners,

Thank you for your petition sent to Commissioner Roswall on the planned construction of wind farms in the Mount Parnon range, in Peloponnese which, according to the petition, might impact the Natura 2000 site Oros Parnonas (kai periochi Malevis). Commissioner Roswall asked me to respond on her behalf.

Mount Parnon is a special area of conservation (SAC) (Oros Parnonas (kai periochi Malevis) SiteCode: GR2520006) designated under the Habitats Directive ⁽¹⁾.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, the competent authorities can agree to a plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned. A plan or project with adverse effects on a site can only exceptionally be approved if the conditions in Article 6(4) of the Directive are fulfilled.

Furthermore, Member States must take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of the natural habitats and significant disturbance of species for which the site has been designated as well as to comply with species protection rules. To assist the Member States' authorities in the correct implementation of the Habitats Directive, the Commission has issued guidance on the implementation of Article 6 of the Directive ⁽²⁾, and on the species

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7–50.

⁽²⁾ European Commission: Directorate-General for Environment, *Managing Natura 2000 sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*, Publications Office, 2019, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2779/02245> and

Commission notice Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC 2021/C 437/01 (OJ C, C/437, 28.10.2021, CELEX: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021XC1028\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021XC1028(02)))

protection provisions governed by articles Articles 12 and 16 ⁽³⁾, and on wind energy developments and Natura 2000 ⁽⁴⁾.

Without prejudice to the Commission's role as the guardian of the Treaties, Member States are required to ensure compliance of specific projects with Union and national law, including the environmental acquis. In other words, it is the responsibility of the national competent authorities to ensure compliance with EU legislation. If the petitioner considers that the Greek authorities have not complied with their obligations under EU legislation, the petitioner is invited to refer to the competent Greek judicial bodies, which fully apply EU Law as part of the EU judicial system.

In line with the policy approach announced in the Communication "EU law: Better results through better application" ⁽⁵⁾, and more recently in the Commission Communication "Enforcing EU law for a Europe that delivers" ⁽⁶⁾, the Commission prioritises its enforcement efforts as guardian of the Treaty on those structural cases that reveal a systematic breach of EU law in a Member State. However, should evidence point to a systemic breach of EU law, the Commission will consider further action, as appropriate.

We hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Electronically signed

Andrea Vettori
Head of Unit

⁽³⁾ See the Commission's guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/dab5274d-5891-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁽⁴⁾ European Commission: Directorate-General for Environment, Guidance document on wind energy developments and EU nature legislation, Publications Office of the European Union, 2020, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2779/095188>

⁽⁵⁾ Communication from the Commission 'EU law Better results through better application' (2017/C 18/02), 13 December 2016.

⁽⁶⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Enforcing EU law for a Europe that delivers' COM(2022) 518 final, 13.10.2022.