

New Special Spatial Planning Framework for Renewable Energy Sources (Government Gazette D' 694/19.08.2026)

Key Changes to the RES Siting Framework



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New Special Spatial Planning Framework for Renewable Energy Sources (Government Gazette D' 694/19.08.2026) – Key Changes to the RES Siting Framework

By virtue of Decision No. ΥΠΕΝ/ΔΝΕΠ/89998/3072 of the Minister and Deputy Ministers of Environment and Energy (Government Gazette D' 694/19.08.2026), the new Special Spatial Planning Framework for Renewable Energy Sources (RES) is approved, replacing the previous framework (Government Gazette B' 2464/03.12.2008). The new framework introduces revised siting rules and criteria for RES projects, as well as the necessary restrictions for the purposes of environmental protection and management.

The new framework is based on the following key pillars:

- Establishment of activity and spatial categories for the spatial planning and organisation of RES development. In particular, the national territory is divided into mainland Greece (including Evia and Crete), Attica and the Thessaloniki Metropolitan Area, the insular territory and the offshore marine area (territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone - EEZ). Mainland Greece is further divided into: (a) Suitability Areas, namely areas at municipal-unit level with significant wind potential, where the siting of wind energy installations is, as a rule, permitted in accordance with the provisions of the new framework; and (b) Acceleration Areas, which constitute a subset of the aforementioned Suitability Areas.
- Introduction of technology-specific siting rules for each RES technology.
- Revision of exclusion areas and identification of

broader suitability and priority areas for RES development.

- Promotion of new forms of RES, including offshore wind energy, floating photovoltaic installations and agrivoltaic projects.
- Alignment of the Special Spatial Planning Framework for RES with the remaining Special Spatial Planning Frameworks, as well as with regional spatial planning (Regional Spatial Planning Frameworks - RSPFs) and local spatial and urban planning instruments (Local Urban Plans - LUPs and Special Urban Plans - SUPs).
- Alignment with Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 (Critical Raw Materials Act - CRMA), ensuring that the siting of RES projects does not hinder access to Critical Raw Materials (CRMs) deposits.

The most important legal provisions of the new framework are summarised as follows:

Legal provisions relating to wind energy projects

For wind energy projects, specific terms and conditions are established depending on the relevant spatial category. In particular, expanded exclusion areas and incompatibility zones are set, together with specific siting criteria applicable to mainland Greece, the insular territory, the marine area, Attica and the Thessaloniki Metropolitan Area. In addition, new requirements are introduced for the issuance of Producer's Certificates / Special Certificates, as well as for amendments thereto resulting from changes in wind turbine rotor diameter. Such requirements include, inter alia, the establishment of maximum carrying-capacity thresholds and specific quantitative limits applicable to each area.

The aforementioned exclusion areas and incompatibility zones now also encompass areas

located at an altitude exceeding 1,200 metres, islands with a surface area of less than 300 km², Special Protection Areas (SPAs), where installation may exceptionally be permitted only on the basis of an approved Special Environmental Study (SES), provided that specific wind potential has been identified by RAAEY, Landscapes of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as well as Roadless Areas designated pursuant to relevant decisions of the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

The aforementioned areas further include areas designated for urban expansion or for the inclusion of new residential areas under applicable urban planning instruments, as well as other areas designated for residential and tourism uses beyond Integrated Tourism Development Areas (ITDAs) and Organised Development Areas for Productive Activities (ODAPAs), including Specially Regulated Urbanisation Areas (SRUAs), Environmental Upgrading and Private Urbanisation Areas (EUPUAs), Special Spatial Development Plans for Strategic Investments (SSDPSIs) and Special Spatial Development Plans for Public Properties (SSDPPPs).

Finally, the aforementioned areas also include thematic parks and tourist marinas, where installation may exceptionally be permitted subject to the consent of the competent operator, as well as municipal units characterized as areas of high tourism development under the Special Spatial Planning Framework for Tourism or the underlying planning instruments.

Legal provisions relating to solar energy installations

For solar energy installations, a maximum land coverage threshold is established for photovoltaic installations, whether combined with energy storage facilities or not, at the level of each Regional Unit, corresponding to 1.5% of the total land area. This threshold varies depending on the capacity of the installations concerned and their distance from cities, settlements, traditional settlements, areas of environmental and cultural interest and other protected areas.

The legal provisions governing such installations also include a rule pursuant to which photovoltaic installations may be developed within a distance of 1,500 metres from monuments included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and other sites of major historical and archaeological significance, as well as within a distance of 1,000 metres from designated Zone A Areas of Absolute Protection, other archaeological sites, monuments and historic sites,

provided that a special visibility study is submitted during the environmental permitting procedure.

Legal provisions relating to Small Hydropower Projects (SHPs)

Siting criteria and rules for Small Hydropower Projects (SHPs) are introduced, taking into account, inter alia, the carrying capacity of the areas designated for their development. In addition, exclusion areas for the siting of SHPs are established, including: nature protection zones and strict nature protection zones, priority habitats within the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) of the Natura 2000 Network, core areas of national parks, designated natural monuments and aesthetic forests, landscapes of outstanding natural beauty, traditional settlements and historic town centres or parts thereof, specific sections of mining and quarrying areas, as well as watercourses classified as being of poor ecological status or potential.

Legal provisions relating to biomass, biogas and biofuels

Priority areas are established for the siting of energy generation installations using biomass, biogas and biofuels, taking into account the proximity to feedstock production sites, the designation of Acceleration Areas and exclusion areas. In addition, specific siting criteria are introduced, relating, inter alia, to High Productivity Agricultural Land and protected areas.

Legal provisions relating to geothermal energy

Based on the distinction of geothermal fields into fields of national interest and local interest, as introduced by Law 4602/2019, priority areas, Acceleration Areas and exclusion areas are established for the development of geothermal energy projects. In addition, specific siting rules are introduced, relating, inter alia, to quarrying and mining areas, reservoirs, waste disposal and landfill sites, transport networks and other related areas.

Legal provisions relating to floating photovoltaic stations

An innovation introduced by the new framework is the establishment of specific siting rules for floating photovoltaic stations. Such installations are permitted within all types of ponds, artificial lakes, reservoirs, artificial water bodies and water storage facilities (not classified as water bodies), while they are prohibited within exclusion areas, namely designated marine parks, navigation corridors, diving parks, Posidonia meadows and other similar areas.

Legal provisions relating to energy storage installations

For the first time, the Special Spatial Planning Framework includes exclusion areas, as well as siting rules and criteria for electricity storage installations. The exclusion areas are based on the same rationale as that governing the above-mentioned RES technologies, while the relevant siting rules and criteria are primarily guided by the principle of alignment with the criteria applicable to the RES installations into which the storage infrastructure is integrated or with which it is co-located.

Integration of RES installations into the landscape

The new framework establishes specific rules for the integration of RES installations into the landscape, in alignment with the European Landscape Convention, as ratified in the Greek legal order through Law 3827/2010.

In particular, with regard to the integration of wind energy projects into the landscape, the preparation of a special landscape study is required as part of the environmental permitting procedure.

Projects excluded from the scope of the Special Spatial Planning Framework for RES

According to the new framework, the following activities are excluded from its regulatory scope:

- RES electricity generation stations that are exempt from the requirement to obtain a Production Licence, a Producer's Certificate or a Special Certificate, with the exception of photovoltaic systems;
- Large Hydroelectric Projects and pumped-storage energy storage stations;
- fixed photovoltaic systems installed on building rooftops, in uncovered areas, as well as on artificial and constructed surfaces;
- electricity generation stations using wave energy and other forms of ocean energy;
- renewable hydrogen production installations; and
- ancillary RES and High-Efficiency Cogeneration of Heat and Power (HECHP) projects, Hybrid Stations, RES and HECHP projects incorporating electricity storage, as well as energy storage installations.

Transitional provisions

Specific transitional arrangements are established for projects that are at different stages of the licensing process. In particular, licences and approvals already issued remain valid, subject to certain conditions, while specific rules are introduced for projects that have already obtained Installation Licences, Environmental Terms Approval decisions (ETAs), Standard Environmental Commitments (SECs), certificates of exemption from environmental permitting requirements, or are subject to pending environmental permitting procedures at the time the framework enters into force, in order to clarify the extent to which, and the conditions under which, such projects will be subject to the new siting regime.

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This Newsletter aims to provide the reader with general information on the above-mentioned matters. No action should be taken without first obtaining professional advice specifically relating to the factual circumstances of each case.

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