



European Nature Heritage Fund, Bahnhofstr.35 D-71638 Ludwigsburg

Ministry of Mercantile Marine
Minister Manolis Kefalogiannis
Grigourio Lambraki 150
TK 185 18 Piraeus

European Nature Heritage Fund
Stiftung Europäisches Naturerbe
www.euronatur.org

Claus-Peter Hutter
President

E-Mail: claus-peter.hutter@euronatur.org

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Dear Minister Kefalogiannis,

At the end of last year, we were informed about your plans to construct a commercial transit port at Tympaki on the island of Crete. In February this year, we addressed you with a letter in which we expressed our concern regarding these plans. Now, we have been informed that despite the fact that the southern coast of Crete offers great potential for ecologically friendly tourism development as well as habitat for rare plant and animal species such as the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) which finds one of the last remaining nesting beaches in the Mediterranean in the Bay of Messara, you still adhere to this project.

Albeit the fact that – as far as the public is informed - up to now, no final decision has been taken, still, we would like to repeatedly express our demurs concerning the realisation of the project which will have great impacts (1) on the environment and (2) on the economy resulting in serious effects on Messara's social structures.

In doing so, we are also supporting local initiatives and NGOs arguing against the project.

- (1) The construction of the container terminal will have very serious and irreversible side effects on the broader marine and terrestrial environment of South Crete, including sand dunes which are being protected as nesting beach for the sea turtle *Caretta caretta*. The region also belongs to the Network "NATURA 2000" (SPA: GR 4310007/pSCI: GR 4310004).

Caretta caretta is – according to EU Legislation (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna – FFH Directive; App. II) a species of community interest and in need of strict protection – as well as its habitats. The construction of the container terminal will oppose these efforts to protect one of the most threatened sea turtle species in the Mediterranean.

President's Office
Bahnhofstr. 35, D-71638 Ludwigsburg
Tel. +49-(0)7141/920321, Fax +49-(0)7141/901183
E-mail: ludwigsburg@euronatur.org

Office Radolfzell
Konstanzer Str. 22, D-78315 Radolfzell
Tel. +49-(0)7732-92720 Fax +49-(0)7732-927222
Office Bonn
Grabenstr. 23, D-53359 Rheinbach/Bonn
Tel. +49-(0)2226/2045 Fax +49-(0)2226/2045

Presiding Committee
Claus-Peter Hutter (President)
Christel Schroeder (Vice President)
Lorenz Graf, Dr. Uwe Kozina,
Prof. Dr. Hubert Weiger;
Executive Director: Gabriel Schwaderer

(2) The construction of the container terminal will significantly degrade the historical, archaeological and cultural character of the area and, consequently, interfere with any other kind of activity and the perspective of ecologically friendly or conventional touristic development in the whole area of the bay and even further. At the same time, it will reduce the quality and the quantity of local agricultural products which comprise the basis of the region's economy.

As a consequence, the farmers and employees of touristic enterprises will become unemployed.

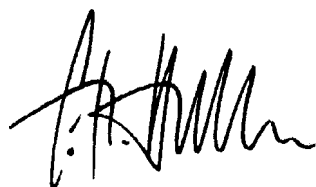
The above sketched environmental deterioration and changes in economy will have serious effects on the region's social structures resulting in social degradation.

We therefore call on you to consider the above raised objections and to abstain from the project in order to protect the pristine nature of the southern coast of Crete.

Ever since the discussion about the construction of the container terminal at Tympaki has started, the local population has expressed their worries about the project and clearly stated that such kind of development does not fit in the profile of the area. Due to your recent policy to keep any decisions and plans concerning the construction of the commercial transit port under secret, the local population is even more worried. As they will directly be affected by the impacts of the project, they have the right to be thoroughly informed to be able to express their demurs and to react on your decisions.

We therefore call on you to lay your plans concerning the construction of the container terminal open. We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,



Claus-Peter Hutter

CC:

Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Min. G. Souflias
Ministry of Tourism, Min. F. Palli-Petralia