

Governmental plan emerges for the procurement of electric buses along with a Greece-based production unit

An ambitious plan was introduced to the European Transport Commissioner, Mrs Violetta Bulc, during the Regional Transport Investment Conference, by the Greek Infrastructure Minister, Mr. Christos Spirtzis, according to safe information of Ypodomes.com.

Reportedly, the Greek Infrastructure Ministry is interested in a large-scale buses' fleet renewal primarily in Athens, Thessaloniki and other towns that are keen on renovating their vehicles. All this could be implemented through Clean Transport Facility, a European funding tool for urban transportation.

The procurement concerns electric or LNG buses, that comply to the European policy towards a drastic emissions' reduction in the continent's major urban areas. Based on early estimates, Greece could place a sizeable order of 4,000 new generation vehicles. The idea is for Athens and Thessaloniki to use smaller buses, which will function as feeders to the fixed-rail network while for smaller towns, the orders will adjust to meet their specific needs.

The challenge

The challenge for the Greek Infrastructure Ministry is to combine the procurement of the aforementioned buses with the establishment of 2 production units in Greece, by the tender's winner.

That means that the tender would include a clear term that the

procurator will have to open 2 production units along with a long-term contract. It seems ambitious but it is not impossible. A similar model has already been adopted in Russia.

If this plan proceeds, there will be a double, significant benefit: firstly, more environmentally friendly buses in the country and secondly, the creation of production units from foreign investors.

The same sources, when asked from Ypodomes.com as to where these units could be based, replied that potentially, a unit could be created in ELBO's facilities in Thessaloniki, Northern Greece.

We shouldn't forget that both Athens and Thessaloniki are dealing with ageing, problematic buses and maintenance issues, making the fleet renewal option not only a luxury but actually a necessity.

EIB is also positive to fund these investments under the umbrella of CTF to an extent between 30 and 50%. Greek officials though are quite optimistic that, should the plan enters an implementation trajectory, EIB's support could be even bigger.

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