Facing court over pollution, again

Several Greek municipalities will appear before the European Court in just three months on the shameful charge of polluting the environment by their failure to manage urban waste.

The 24 cities — which include the capitals of several prefectures, such as Katerini, Edessa and Igoumenitsa, either do not have waste processing plants or manage them so badly that they are either inadequate or out of commission.

The result is that raw sewage either ends up in the sea or polluting the water table, causing untold damage to health and the environment.

Needless to say, a number of municipalities in Attica, especially in Eastern Attica, are involved.

Last year, 30 municipalities received warning letters from the EU, but nearly all chose — a la Grecque — to take no action, and now 24 of them are just weeks away from a court case that will certainly entail heavy penalties for some of them.

In a country where the sea is the chief tourist attraction, this is a blatant example of local authorities’ indifference and irresponsibility in the fact that some people not only destroy the environment but also make Greek taxpayers shoulder the burden of massive fines to the European Union for the damage they suffer.

Of 279 waste processing plants in Greece, nearly a third are not in operation, according to Public Works Ministry statistics, because 50 are out of action and 26 are under construction, while two have just been awarded funding and will be built in the future.

That is to say nothing of the fact that some units have not been built where they should in order to avoid harming private interests, or have been built in areas with insufficient populations to sustain them and have become inoperative.

The story of the Augean stables is a Greek myth, but is it necessary, 3,000 years later, for some parts of Greece to still reek like a filthy stable?