

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002181/24
to the Commission
Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR)
(18 October 2024)

Subject: Development of the yachting tourism sector in Greece

Yachting holidays are a tourism trend that is on the rise. Yachting takes place on a range of vessels of different sizes, small or large, under the guidance of certified skippers or merchant seamen.

The Adriatic-Ionian macroregional area and the Greek seas in general are a global magnet, since there is an abundance of choice with different meteorological patterns and locations, available for sailing for sport or tourism in both areas that are busy and others that are less frequented. This contributes to the economies of coastal regions, particularly those that have marinas, and provides work to qualified technicians.

Unfortunately, the growing interest is the result of the closed market for scheduled passenger vessels. In a sense, yachting contributes to non-geographically-restricted development. The challenges lie in the delayed development of infrastructure in relation to the boat supply industry, and the lack of specialist labour (such as technicians and certified crew members).

In view of this:

1. How can municipalities gain access to preferential financing to address the lack of infrastructure in marinas/berthing facilities, boat repair and maintenance facilities, sanitation and water and energy supply systems?
2. Does the Commission believe that directives 2008/106/EC and 2005/36/EC are sufficient to provide a legislative framework for Member States to cover their needs in terms of qualified staff?
3. Unfortunately, yachts not infrequently fly the flags of tax havens, because of tax and bureaucracy. Does the Commission plan to take any legislative initiatives to strengthen yachting within our borders?

Submitted: 18.10.2024

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(5 January 2025)

1. The 2021-27 regional programmes ⁽¹⁾, include Integrated Territorial Investments in both coastal and island areas promoting, amongst other, sustainable tourism activities, and income diversification through the Sustainable Blue Economy. Such actions can also be implemented through interregional cooperation and cross-border schemes to be funded by the five European Territorial Cooperation programmes, also in the context of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy. In addition, the GR-eco Islands initiative ⁽²⁾ will apply to a limited number of small islands and promote the transition to energy neutrality and sustainable economic activity, including tourism, in the South and North Aegean and the Ionian islands.

2. Directive (EU) 2022/993 ⁽³⁾ incorporates the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers of the International Maritime Organisation into Union law. It sets the minimum level of training of seafarers and the mutual recognition of EU seafarers' certificates.

It should also be noted that, in the area of occupational safety and health, the framework Directive 89/391/EEC ⁽⁴⁾, the Medical Assistance on Board Vessels Directive 92/29/EEC ⁽⁵⁾ and related Directives contain minimum training requirements applying to workers in this sector. A more detailed inquiry is needed to understand the Honourable Member's concerns and provide a tailored response.

3. The choice of state of registration of a vessel (flag state) is complex and may relate to the nationality of the owner or to other complex fiscal and regulatory aspects. The Commission does not have any plans for a related legislative initiative.

⁽¹⁾ Supported by Cohesion Policy Funds.

⁽²⁾ Based on a coherent strategic plan covering the areas of energy, environment, circular economy, transport, tourism, culture and agri-food.

⁽³⁾ Directive (EU) 2022/993 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2022 on the minimum level of training of seafarers (codification) (Text with EEA relevance).

⁽⁴⁾ Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work, OJ L 183, 29.6.1989, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ Council Directive 92/29/EEC of 31 March 1992 on the minimum safety and health requirements for improved medical treatment on board vessels, OJ L 113, 30/04/1992, p. 19.