

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000935/25
to the Commission
César Luena (S&D)
(5 March 2025)**

Subject: Products from Chinese-flagged tuna vessels caught with North Korean labour and authorised for export to the European Union

The North Korean regime exports labour, often forced and unpaid, from a large part of its population to prop up the country's economy and generate income that supposedly helps finance its nuclear programme. A key destination for this labour is China.

The use of North Korean labour outside the country is prohibited by the United Nations Security Council. The European Union has a legal framework in place to prevent goods produced by North Koreans from entering its supply chains. However, recent investigations ⁽¹⁾ have identified 12 Chinese-flagged tuna vessels using North Korean labour on board. Four of these vessels are authorised to export to the EU. The findings also show that North Korean crew have suffered serious abuse, with frequent transfers between vessels and stints at sea lasting for up to a decade.

What is the Commission doing to investigate, trace and monitor products from Chinese-flagged tuna vessels caught with North Korean labour and authorised for export to the European Union?

Submitted: 5.3.2025

**Answer given by Mr Šefčovič on behalf of the European Commission
(5 May 2025)**

The Commission deplores violations of the fundamental rights at work committed against any worker, including high-risk jobs such as fishers.

In line with this, the Commission actively promotes the effective implementation of fundamental international labour standards from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) within the EU and by partner countries ⁽¹⁾, including the conventions setting out standards on adequate working conditions for fishers ⁽²⁾ and the elimination of forced or compulsory labour ⁽³⁾.

As a member country of the ILO, China has the obligation to uphold the fundamental principles and rights at work. Through its human rights dialogue with China, the EU raises its concerns about labour rights and the use of forced labour with the Chinese authorities ⁽⁴⁾.

In addition, the EU adopted in 2024 the Forced Labour Regulation ⁽⁵⁾, which prohibits products made with forced labour on the EU market.

From the entry into application of the regulation in December 2027, the Commission and Member States' competent authorities will be able to investigate allegations about the presence of forced labour practices in the manufacturing products intended for the EU market and eventually ban the products concerned when sufficient evidence is found.

¹ Report: 'Trapped At Sea', published by the Environmental Justice Foundation, <https://ejfoundation.org/reports/trapped-at-sea-exposing-north-korean-forced-labour-on-chinas-indian-ocean-tuna-fleet>.

⁽¹⁾ For an overview of policies and measures, see the communication from the Commission on decent work worldwide for a global just transition and a sustainable recovery (COM/2022/66 final) <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=25260&langId=en>, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52022DC0066>

⁽²⁾ ILO Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No 188).

⁽³⁾ ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No 29); ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No 105).

⁽⁴⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china-39th-human-rights-dialogue-european-union-took-place-chongqing_en

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/3015 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2024 on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market and amending Directive (EU) 2019/1937 (OJ L, 2024/3015, 12.12.2024), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/3015/oj/eng>