

EN

E-000979/2025

Answer given by Mr Brunner
on behalf of the European Commission
(19.6.2025)

1. Regulation 656/2014¹ applies in the context of operational cooperation coordinated by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and does not affect the division of competences between the EU and the Member States or the obligations of the national authorities under the relevant international conventions². This also includes the responsibility for declaring and coordinating search and rescue (SAR) activities in cases such as the one in question. In line with international law, this competence belongs exclusively to the rescue coordination centre(s) that oversee the area in which the specific incident takes place.

2. The Commission has no competence to influence the way SAR activities are declared or performed by the responsible national authorities. Nevertheless, saving lives at sea is a moral duty, as well as a legal obligation for Member States under international law, independently from the circumstances that lead people to find themselves in distress at sea. The Commission remains committed to supporting the Member States to operate in line with this principle. The Commission repeatedly calls on all actors involved in SAR to always prioritise saving lives at sea and to comply with the relevant legal framework.

3. According to open sources, the persons stranded on the Miskar oil platform were rescued by Sea-Watch and subsequently safely disembarked in Lampedusa on 4 March 2025, upon instructions received by Sea-Watch from the Italian Coast Guard.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 656/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 establishing rules for the surveillance of the external sea borders in the context of operational cooperation coordinated by the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union. OJ L 189, 27.6.2014, p. 93–107.

² Such as the International Convention on the Law of the Sea, the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, and the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue.