

EN

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Answer given by Mr Brunner
on behalf of the European Commission
(12.6.2025)

The duty to render assistance to persons in distress at sea is a legal obligation under international law. Actors involved in search and rescue operations must act in a lawful, swift and coordinated way to make sure that those in distress at sea are brought to safety as rapidly as possible independently from the circumstances. The Commission is in regular contact with Greece, continues to call for the national investigations and judicial proceedings to be conducted in a prompt and comprehensive manner and expects the authorities to prosecute any wrongdoing, as is their responsibility. In its Decision of 26 February 2024¹, the European Ombudsman noted that in the case of Pylos, Frontex has not breached any relevant rules concerning its emergency response obligations, although the report identified areas for improvement to help prevent tragedies in future.

Repeated migrant deaths at sea are a tragic reminder of the need for a comprehensive approach to migration management and renewed efforts to combat migrant smuggling. The EU supports Member States in migration management (e.g. through financial and operational support), with the objective of creating fair, efficient, and sustainable migration and asylum systems. At the same time, it will continue its work on preventing dangerous journeys from taking place. This is done by addressing the root causes of irregular migration and by reinforcing the existing framework to combat organised criminal networks along migratory routes to the EU.

¹ <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/decision/en/182665>.