

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002167/25
to the Commission
Isabel Serra Sánchez (The Left)
(29 May 2025)**

Subject: Tragedy in the port of La Restinga (El Hierro) and EU responsibility for rescue and migration policies

On 28 May 2025, an open boat carrying more than 180 people from Senegal capsized as it arrived in the port of La Restinga on the island of El Hierro in the Canaries. Despite being aided by members of Spain's maritime rescue service just five metres from the quay, at least four women and three girls died, and one baby is missing. This incident once again highlights the painful consequences of the EU's migration policies: a dearth of legal, safe routes; the criminalisation of migrants; and the lack of effective public resources for rescue operations.

In view of the above:

1. Is the Commission intending to investigate what happened in El Hierro and assess the actions of the Spanish authorities with regard to rescue operations at sea and the protection of people who migrate?
2. What steps is the Commission going to take to ensure legal and safe routes and strengthen public rescue schemes in response to the outsourcing and militarisation of migration policy?
3. Is the Commission intending to promote specific protection measures for women and girls who migrate, as victims of intersectional violence, in accordance with the gender equality strategy 2020-2025?

Submitted: 29.5.2025

**Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission
(28 August 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 has no power to carry out investigations in this area; it is for national authorities to investigate and ensure the necessary follow-up, as relevant.

The Commission is reinforcing its cooperation with partner countries on legal pathways through Talent Partnerships, to foster mutually beneficial labour mobility.

The Commission also proposed the EU Talent Pool ⁽¹⁾, which will be the first EU-wide platform and has the objective of facilitating access to legal migration pathways in the EU.

The Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation ⁽²⁾ also offers pathways to protection to the most vulnerable.

The Commission's work in promoting complementary pathways aims also to provide safe and legal avenues to protection in addition to resettlement and humanitarian admission ⁽³⁾.

The Pact on Migration and Asylum ⁽⁴⁾ further strengthens the protection of vulnerable persons, including women and girls, by ensuring that gender-related aspects are duly considered in the screening, in asylum procedures and that adequate support is provided to women and girls in the reception system.

The Commission has intensified cooperation with transit countries in Western Africa, notably Mauritania and Senegal, focusing as well on search and rescue at sea, to save lives, and migrants protection, notably the most vulnerable, including women and children.

⁽¹⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-resettlement/work/eu-talent-pool_en.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1350/oj/eng>.

⁽³⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-resettlement/resettlement-and-humanitarian-admission_en#complementary-pathways-linked-to-education-and-labour.

⁽⁴⁾ Qualification Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 Articles 8(5)(b), 9(2)(f) and 10(1) — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1347/oj/eng>, Asylum Procedure Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 Articles 13(7)(a), 20(4), 21(2), 34(2)(d) and 36(5) — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1348/oj/eng>, Reception Conditions Directive (EU) 2024/1346 Articles 20(3), 20(4), 22(1), 24, 25 and 28(1) — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1346/oj/eng>.