(English version)

Question for written answer E-003295/25
to the Commission
Özlem Demirel (The Left)
(26 August 2025)

Subject: Libyan attack on the ‘Ocean Viking’

On 24 August 2025, the crew of a Libyan coast guard vessel attacked the rescue ship Ocean Viking in international waters subjecting it to a 20-minute barrage of fire. There were 87 people on board who had been rescued from distress at sea. Following instructions from the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Rome, the crew had been searching for another emergency. The Corrubia class Libyan patrol boat (thought to be the ‘Houn’ with the identifier ‘PB 664’) was handed over to Libya by Italy in 2018 or 2023 under the EU programme ‘Support to Integrated border and migration management in Libya’ (SIBMMIL).

1. What EU funds have been used to finance the patrol boat that can be seen in photos, to whom in Libya was it handed over, and which militia is operating it?

2. What support measures have been carried out since 2023 for maintenance or repair, as well as for training measures, on the patrol boats donated by the EU within the framework of SIBMMIL, and what resources were used for this purpose, and in what amount?

3. Who in Libya is investigating the unprecedented brutal attack, how is this being supported by the Commission, and what are the consequences for the use of EU funds for the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, apart from the call for the incident to be investigated and for those responsible to be prosecuted?

Submitted: 26.8.2025

Answer given by Ms Šuica on behalf of the European Commission
(11 December 2025)

The P664 Houn Corrubia-class vessel has been refurbished under the EU-funded *Support to Integrated Border and Migration Management in Libya* (SIBMMIL) programme and donated to the Libyan Coast Guard in June 2023, which is still operating it.

Since 2017, the programme aims to strengthen the Libyan authorities’ capacity to conduct search and rescue (SAR) operations in full respect of international standards and human rights, through the provision of equipment, training, and expertise for the development of standard operating procedures in close cooperation with Member States.

The SIBMMIL programme provides support for vessel repair and maintenance activities, including the training of maintenance personnel from both the General Administration of Coastal Surveillance, under the Ministry of Interior, and the Libyan Coast Guard. Since 2023 approximately EUR 5.4 million were allocated to these activities.

These funds were used by the project’s implementing partner, the Italian Ministry of Interior, to deliver maintenance services and training for the overall SAR fleet, to the benefit of the aforementioned Libyan institutions.

Following similar incidents in the past, the EU had called for investigations by competent national authorities. Countries remain sovereign and responsible for their law enforcement bodies.

The EU does not have investigative powers itself and does not comment on such investigations, though the EU finds the incident deeply concerning and have urged responsible authorities to investigate the event thoroughly.

In this case, the Libyan authorities have confirmed that an investigation is ongoing. The Commission will assess the outcome of this investigation thoroughly in order to determine any further measures.

The Commission considers that, to improve the situation on the ground, it is necessary to continue engaging with the Libyan authorities to improve the humanitarian conditions of migrants and to avoid deaths at sea and in the desert.

The Commission is reinforcing its monitoring and dialogue mechanisms to ensure that human rights standards are upheld in all EU-supported activities.

The EU remains fully committed to saving lives at sea in line with international maritime law and no rescuer should be put in danger while carrying out life-saving work.