

(English version)

Question for written answer E-003715/25
to the Commission
Sandro Gozi (Renew)
(24 September 2025)

Subject: Retention of an EU-owned vessel in Finland

Luna Tower Kft, a company registered in Hungary, acquired a vessel from a Russian citizen who is not subject to any EU sanctions. The vessel was duly de-registered from the Russian maritime register and re-registered in San Marino under the name of the new owner.

The vessel has been retained by the Finnish Customs Authority in the port of Kotka for more than one year, under the pretext of an 'audit' procedure that has yet to result in a formal decision. During this period, significant storage fees have been imposed without a clear legal basis, raising concerns about possible mismanagement or local collusion.

1. Will the Commission assess the legality of the prolonged retention by the Finnish Customs Authority and, if necessary, engage with the competent authorities on this matter?
2. Will it refer the case to the European Anti-Fraud Office in order to assess the potential risk of fraud or prejudice to the EU budget?

Submitted: 24.9.2025

Answer given by Mr Šefčovič on behalf of the European Commission
(14 November 2025)

1. The Union Customs Code provides that customs authorities may retain goods when necessary to carry out checks to ensure compliance with EU law. Such checks must be carried out within a reasonable period and, where appropriate, lead to a formal decision subject to appeal. Storage and handling fees are regulated at national level, but they must comply with EU customs provisions⁽¹⁾. The present reply is based on the assumption that the case concerns the application of customs legislation.

The primary responsibility for the implementation of EU restrictive measures rests with the competent authorities of Member States. The Commission provides on its website the contact details of all such authorities⁽²⁾, and has set up, at EU level, dedicated contact points to answer questions on these measures from economic operators⁽³⁾.

The Commission does not intervene in individual customs cases. It is the responsibility of the Finnish customs authorities and the national courts to ensure legality and provide judicial remedies, including with regard to storage fees.

2. The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is competent to investigate fraud and other irregularities affecting the financial interests of the EU. The case described does not seem to involve prejudice to the EU's budget. In this context, the appropriate remedies would lie with national judicial or administrative procedures. Operators may use available EU-level mechanisms, such as the Solvit network⁽⁴⁾. They may also lodge a complaint with the Commission. The Commission monitors the uniform application of EU legislation across Member States. Should indications arise of systemic misapplication, the Commission may engage with the national authorities concerned and initiate an infringement procedure.

⁽¹⁾ In particular, Article 52 of the Union Customs Code provides that customs formalities and controls are, in principle, free of charge, and that fees may only be imposed when they correspond to a specific service actually rendered by the customs authorities.

⁽²⁾ A PDF list of national competent authorities for implementation of EU sanctions (Member States' designated authorities) is available: https://finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/803d74d5-84a0-4bf4-a735-30f1fe5ae6dd_en?filename=national-competent-authorities-sanctions-implementation_en.pdf.

⁽³⁾ EU Sanctions Helpdesk: This dedicated platform supports EU small and medium-sized enterprises and other operators with questions on sanctions compliance (including due-diligence, product/country risk checks): https://eu-sanctions-compliance-helpdesk.europa.eu/index_en.

⁽⁴⁾ Official website: https://ec.europa.eu/solvit/index_en.htm.

'What is Solvit?' overview: https://ec.europa.eu/solvit/what-is-solvit/index_en.htm.

Contact page listing national Solvit centres: https://ec.europa.eu/solvit/contact/index_en.htm.