

(English version)

Question for written answer E-004344/25
to the Commission
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)
(4 November 2025)

Subject: Delay in the payment of *de minimis* aid to affected fishers in the Pagasetic Gulf following the pollution incident of August 2024

In August 2024, the Pagasetic Gulf was affected by an extensive pollution incident, which caused mass fish mortality and serious financial damage to professional fishers in Magnesia. Despite the announcement of compensation by the Greek Government in November 2024 and the publication of the relevant Joint Ministerial Decision (Government Gazette B' 1927/23.04.2025) regarding *de minimis* aid of EUR 1.1 million, the process of submitting applications and paying the amounts has not yet started.

The delay of many months is affecting the viability of small coastal communities, undermining the social fabric and the just transition objectives promoted by the EU in the fisheries sector.

In view of the above:

1. Does the Commission consider that the delays of more than six months in activating *de minimis* aid are consistent with the objectives of rapid compensation provided for in the EU fisheries framework (Regulation (EU) No 717/2014)?
2. How does the Commission intend to ensure that support measures for fishers affected by environmental phenomena, such as the pollution of the Pagasetic Gulf, are activated in a timely and adequate manner, in order to protect social cohesion and regional development?
3. Given that what happened in the Pagasetic Gulf has been classified as a major environmental incident, can the Commission indicate whether there is any possibility of supporting the affected fishers through European funds in addition to national *de minimis* aid?

Submitted: 4.11.2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Ribera on behalf of the European Commission
(16 January 2026)

1. Support that fulfils the conditions of the Fisheries *de minimis* regulation ⁽¹⁾ is deemed not to entail state aid and no prior notification and approval by the Commission is needed. It is therefore up to the Member State to activate the use of the *de minimis* support.
2. The Commission has enforcement powers to ensure that the state aid rules are respected. However, it is for the Member States to design the state aid policy and decide which situations require state aid support and when to grant this support, provided that the relevant provisions and general principles of EU law are respected ⁽²⁾.
3. The Greek European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) programme provides key support for the resilience and competitiveness of the fisheries sector and coastal communities. This includes a wide range of activities, such as diversifying activities to support income, fishing tourism, modernising fleets, mitigating impacts from climate change, invasive species, enhancing fishers' skills and income possibilities through training. Moreover, under the EMFAF legal framework projects related to small-scale fishing may be supported at an aid intensity of up to 100%. The Commission works with Greece to ensure its EMFAF programme meets sector-specific needs, with the Greek Managing Authority being responsible for providing EMFAF support for projects aligning with the national priorities. Aid to make good damage caused by exceptional occurrences or for temporary cessation of fishing activities can also be granted under the Guidelines for state aid in the fishery and aquaculture sector ⁽³⁾. If it were to be concluded that the extensive pollution incident was due to a natural disaster, aid can also be granted under the Fisheries Block Exemption Regulation ⁽⁴⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Commission Regulation (EU) No 717/2014 of 27 June 2014 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid in the fishery and aquaculture sector, as amended (OJ L 190 28.6.2014, p. 45).

⁽²⁾ Judgment of the Court of Justice of 23 January 2019, *Fallimento Traghetti del Mediterraneo*, C-387/17, EU:C:2019:51, paragraph 66.

⁽³⁾ Communication from the Commission Guidelines for state aid in the fishery and aquaculture sector 2023/C 107/01 (OJ C 107, 23.3.2023, p. 1).

⁽⁴⁾ Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/2473 of 14 December 2022 declaring certain categories of aid to undertakings active in the production, processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (OJ L 327, 21.12.2022, p. 82).