

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001780/26  
to the Commission**

**Tineke Strik (Verts/ALE), Erik Marquardt (Verts/ALE), Saskia Bricmont (Verts/ALE), Estrella Galán (The Left)**  
(30 April 2026)

*Subject:* Greece's ongoing criminalisation of NGOs and use of mutual recognition instruments against human rights defenders

Recent amendments to the Greek Migration Code <sup>(1)</sup> make membership of a registered non-governmental organisation (NGO) an aggravating circumstance in migration-related offences, elevating vaguely defined misdemeanours such as 'facilitation of illegal entry' to felonies carrying sanctions of at least 10 years' imprisonment and hefty fines. Greece has since issued a European arrest warrant against Norwegian national Tommy Olsen, founder of the NGO Aegean Boat Report <sup>(2)</sup>. Both Olsen and Panayote Dimitras, director of the NGO Greek Helsinki Monitor, had already been indicted for their work in documenting serious fundamental rights violations at the EU's borders, including pushbacks.

1. Can the Commission provide its assessment of the compatibility of this law with the EU *acquis*, paying particular attention to Article 12 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, the principles of legal certainty and proportionality, and life-saving obligations stemming from the international law of the sea, as recognised by the Commission's own guidance <sup>(3)</sup>?
2. What concrete steps has the Commission taken to assess these facts and ensure compliance of the Greek law and related prosecutorial practice with the EU *acquis*?
3. What will the Commission do, concretely, to prevent mutual recognition instruments such as the European arrest warrant from being misused in retaliatory or groundless prosecutions of human rights defenders?

Submitted: 30.4.2026

**Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission**  
(29 June 2026)

Saving lives at sea is a moral duty and an international law obligation. Current EU legislation on migrant smuggling <sup>(1)</sup> and the Commission's proposal for a revised Facilitation Directive <sup>(2)</sup> target smugglers who put migrants in danger for financial or material benefit.

The Commission takes note of the concerns raised regarding recent amendments to the Greek Migration Code and related prosecutorial actions.

In its 2025 Rule of Law Chapter for Greece <sup>(3)</sup>, the Commission recommended that Greece maintains an open framework for civil society organisations and strengthen dialogue with them.

The Commission further acknowledges the crucial role of civil society organisations and human rights defenders in the first-ever Strategy for Civil Society <sup>(4)</sup>, adopted in November 2025 <sup>(5)</sup>.

The European arrest warrant (EAW) is a judicial tool enabling the surrender of individuals between Member States based on mutual recognition and trust between Member States' legal systems. Decisions on EAWs are taken by judicial authorities and must remain free from political interference from national or other bodies.

The Commission cannot directly intervene in individual cases or dictate judicial outcomes. However, judicial authorities remain bound by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU when applying the EAW.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe, Expert Council on NGO Law, Opinion on the Law of Greece — 'Law on the Promotion of Legal Migration Policies', 18 March 2026, <https://rm.coe.int/coe-expert-council-greece-opinion-march-2026/48802affcd>.

<sup>2</sup> Nielsen, Nikolaj, 'Greece moves to arrest Nordic aid worker supporting migrants', *EUobserver*, 12 February 2026, <https://euobserver.com/202747/greece-moves-to-arrest-nordic-aid-worker-supporting-migrants/>.

<sup>3</sup> Commission communication of 23 September 2020 entitled 'Commission Guidance on the implementation of EU rules on definition and prevention of the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence' (OJ C 323, 1.10.2020, p. 1, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC\\_2020\\_323\\_R\\_0001](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2020_323_R_0001)).

<sup>(1)</sup> The Facilitators Package, namely Council Directive 2002/90/EC and Council Framework Decision 2002/946/JHA and the Commission's Guidance on the implementation of the Facilitators Package 2020/C 323/01.

<sup>(2)</sup> COM/2023/755 final.

<sup>(3)</sup> Commission staff working document, 2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Greece, SWD(2025) 908 final, 8 July 2025.

<sup>(4)</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/document/8c30975d-bc1c-4415-8dcd-a71cb28f3662\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/document/8c30975d-bc1c-4415-8dcd-a71cb28f3662_en).

<sup>(5)</sup> The strategy aims, among others, at providing support and protection for civil society at EU and national level and ensuring that they operate in a safe and enabling environment.