

EN
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Answer given by Mr Brunner
on behalf of the European Commission
(14.9.2026)

The Commission deeply regrets the tragic loss of lives in the shipwreck of Steccato di Cutro. Rendering assistance to persons in distress at sea is a moral duty and a legal obligation under international law. Migrant deaths at sea are a tragic reminder of the need for a comprehensive approach to migration management and countering migrant smuggling.

Under international maritime law, responsibility for coordinating search and rescue operations lies primarily with the competent national authorities. It is for the competent national authorities, including judicial authorities where appropriate, to establish the facts and assess compliance with the applicable legal framework. The Commission continues to monitor developments within the limits of the competences conferred by the Treaties. The Commission has no competence to request an independent assessment of an individual search and rescue operation carried out by a Member State.

The Victims' Rights Directive¹, revised in June 2026², provides for a comprehensive set of rights for victims of crime and their family members³. It is for national authorities to ensure their application in the specific circumstances raised by the Honourable Member, in line also with the principle of access to justice as enshrined in Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union⁴.

The examination and issuance of visas fall within the competence of the Member States, as laid down in applicable EU law⁵.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2012/29/oj/eng>.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2026/1472/oj>.

³ In its role of Guardian of the Treaties, the Commission closely monitors the transposition and implementation of these rules by the Member States.

⁴ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union [2012] OJ C326/391, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/treaty/char_2012/oj.

⁵ Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) and Regulation (EU) 2018/1806 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (codification) (Visa Regulation).