(English version)

Priority question for written answer P-001631/24
to the Commission
Giuseppe Lupo (S&D)
(5 September 2024)

Subject: Risk of environmental pollution from the sinking of the *Bayesian* off Porticello (Province of Palermo)

On 19 August 2023, the *Bayesian* yacht sank off the coast of Porticello, Palermo, causing the tragic death of seven people. In addition to the major loss of human life, the yacht's sinking could trigger an environmental disaster, as it contains some 18 000 litres of fuel and oil. If those pollutants were to leak, it could cause serious damage to the marine ecosystem, triggering disastrous consequences for the local economy, particularly for fishers, whose livelihoods depend on the fishing resources in the area.

The Sicilian environmental protection agency (Arpa Sicilia) and the Italian Coast Guard are currently monitoring the situation to check for the presence of polluting substances; however, given the area's environmental and socioeconomic importance, timely and effective action must be taken to prevent irreversible damage.

In the light of the above:

1. What specific steps could the Commission take to monitor and prevent the risk of environmental pollution caused by the sinking of the *Bayesian*?

2. Will it introduce economic support measures for the local fisheries sector and communities if they suffer any financial consequences?

Submitted: 5.9.2024

Answer given by Mr Hoekstra on behalf of the European Commission
(21 October 2024)

1. The Commission is aware of the risk that shipwrecks pose to sensitive marine environments. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive ([1]) requires Member States to monitor any potential source of pollutions to European seas and to assess the impacts as part of their marine strategies. It is the responsibility of Italian authorities to ensure that pollution is at levels that do not harm to the marine environment. According to information available, the Italian Coast Guard is monitoring the area where the *Bayesian* yacht sank. The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) offers a range of top-up services ([2]) to help Member States to respond to oil marine pollution from ships, such as oil response vessels.

The Ship-Source Pollution Directive ([3]) requires Member States to penalise a ship where it can be proven that the ship discharged oil overboard illegally. Although the Ship-Source Pollution Directive does not apply to shipwrecks, it offers a basis for satellite surveillance that can alert the Italian authorities of a possible oil spill in the location where the yacht sank. In this context, the EMSA provided such services following a request by the Italian authorities during August and September 2024.

2. If the local fisheries sector and communities suffer financial consequences due to the environmental impact of the *Bayesian* yacht sinking, the Italian authorities ([4]) can consider mobilising the funds allocated under the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) to the Italian National Programme to provide support to the sector. The activation of EMFAF financial support should be in line with the objectives of the Italian EMFAF National Programme. The affected parties should coordinate with the relevant Italian authorities to apply for such support.

([1]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2008/56/oj
([2]) https://www.emsa.europa.eu/we-do/sustainability/pollution-response-services.html
([3]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32005L0035
([4]) Ministero dell'Agricoltura, della Sovranità Alimentare e delle Foreste (MASAF).