*(English version)*

**Priority question for written answer P-003342/25**
**to the Commission**
**Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (Renew)**
*(1 September 2025)*

*Subject:* Lack of Dutch inspections of the Russian shadow fleet in the North Sea

Despite a parliamentary motion to inspect ships belonging to the Russian shadow fleet in the Dutch part of the North Sea, the Netherlands has not yet inspected a single ship. Meanwhile, more and more European countries are carrying out inspections by requesting ships to present their insurance documents. These ships pose a risk to the safety of vital infrastructure and the environment, given their poor condition and unclear insurance status.

In its answer to Question P-002100/2025 (6 August 2025) ([1]), the Commission stated that it is up to the Member States to take measures in their territorial waters, such as the Western Scheldt, to protect the marine environment and ensure compliance with international law.

1. How does the Commission view the fact that, despite this obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos) and despite the motion passed by the lower house of the Netherlands Parliament, the Netherlands has still not carried out any checks on ships belonging to the Russian shadow fleet?

2. Does the Commission consider this lack of checks in the Dutch North Sea and the Western Scheldt to pose a safety and environmental risk to vital European infrastructure and ecologically sensitive areas?

3. Is the Commission considering additional measures or coordination instruments to ensure that all coastal states, including the Netherlands, effectively fulfil their obligations, so that there are no weak links in the EU's approach to the Russian shadow fleet?

Submitted: 1.9.2025

**Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas on behalf of the European Commission**
*(24 September 2025)*

1. The Commission reiterates that it is the responsibility of Member States, as coastal States, to determine what enforcement action to take. The Commission also reiterates that any such action should be in line with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos) which stipulates that coastal States have sovereignty over their territorial sea, including for the adoption of laws and regulations related to marine environmental protection. Unclos provides a basis for boarding of foreign flagged ships, outside territorial waters, only in limited situations.

2. The Commission considers that the practices and operations of the so-called dark or shadow fleet pose maritime safety and environmental risks to the entire EU coastlines. It has therefore proposed several actions ([1]) aiming to counter such practices and risks both in the context of the EU and, together with Member States, internationally in the context of the International Maritime Organisation. This includes the amendment to Directive 2002/59/EC ([2]) requiring insurance information reporting for all vessels entering (current or future) EU Mandatory Ship Reporting Systems (MRS) in and around the EU coastline and waters.

3. The Commission is working with the Member States to ensure that the new requirement for insurance information reporting is shared with all Member States, irrespective of if they have any MRS or not. This is done by technical adaptations to the Union Maritime Information and Exchange System (SafeSeaNet), hosted in the European Maritime Safety Agency, which provides maritime surveillance at sea. The aim of that action is to avoid any ‘weak links’ by making all relevant information, including insurance information, available to all EU Member States in near real time.

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1 [1]https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-10-2025-002100-ASW_EN.html
([1]) As outlined in P-002100/2025.
([2]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2002/59/oj/eng.