

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-003193/26**  
**to the Commission**  
**Maria Zacharia (NI)**  
(3 August 2026)

*Subject:* European legislative framework for the protection of seafarers in maritime war zones and high-risk areas

The exposure of seafarers to maritime war zones and high-risk areas has become severe due to attacks against merchant ships and the destabilisation of critical sea corridors. Despite the provisions of international and EU law, including the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as transposed into EU law through Directive 2009/13/EC, there is currently no specific, comprehensive and binding European framework for the protection of seafarers in maritime war zones and high-risk areas. As a result, the fundamental rights of seafarers with regard to information, refusal to work, insurance and compensation cover and repatriation are dependent on the ship's flag, the applicable contractual regime or the collective bargaining agreement in place, creating unequal levels of protection in European shipping.

In view of the above, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Does it acknowledge that there is a regulatory gap in EU legislation regarding the specific and uniform protection of seafarers serving in maritime war zones and high-risk areas?
2. Does it intend to consider putting forward a legislative proposal establishing binding European minimum standards of protection, including the right of seafarers to refuse to work in such areas without risking dismissal or other adverse consequences, as well as common rules on information, insurance and compensation cover and repatriation?
3. Does it intend to consult European social partners in the maritime sector on the development of a common binding protection framework, taking into account the existing international arrangements for Warlike Operations Areas?

Submitted: 3.8.2026

**Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas on behalf of the European Commission**  
(17 September 2026)

1. The Commission fully shares the objective of ensuring a high level of protection for seafarers operating in warlike or high-risk areas. The EU already has a legal framework protecting seafarers, based on the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as incorporated into EU law. This includes rules on repatriation, shipowners' liability, health and safety, and financial security. Directive 2009/13/EC <sup>(1)</sup> provides for repatriation at no cost to seafarers and lays down corresponding obligations for shipowners and Member States. In addition, seafarers may benefit from further protections under collective bargaining arrangements, such as the Warlike Operations Area arrangements. Against this background, the Commission considers that an important body of international, EU and collectively agreed rules already applies. It will continue to work with Member States and the European social partners to support effective implementation and enforcement.
2. The Commission has no plans at present to propose a dedicated EU legislative framework specifically for seafarers operating in warlike or high-risk areas. It will continue to monitor the implementation and enforcement of existing EU rules on seafarers' working and living conditions and their consistency with applicable international standards.
3. The Commission regularly engages with the European social partners through the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Maritime Transport. This remains the appropriate forum for discussing the protection of seafarers, including in warlike or high-risk areas, taking account of existing international and collective bargaining arrangements. The Commission will continue this engagement.

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<sup>(1)</sup> <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2009/13/oj>.