

**Question for written answer E-010285/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Merja Kyllönen (GUE/NGL)

Subject: Environmental risk posed by wrecked ships

In the Baltic Sea there are around a thousand wrecked ships containing oil. They constitute a significant concealed environmental hazard. At the bottom of the world's seas there are estimated to be a total of over 8 500 wrecks containing oil, either as cargo or as fuel. A fifth of these are oil tankers, in which the quantity of oil per wreck is very high, from 2 million to as much as 14.6 million tonnes. Of these wrecks, 75% date from the Second World War. Recently one WWII wreck, the SS Stuttgart, off Poland, has broken up so badly that heavy fuel oil has leaked from the tanks, polluting the seabed sediment. This could have been prevented if controlled anti-pollution measures had managed to be taken on the wreck before the rust had done its work and broken it up.

We should launch a mapping exercise on wrecks to enable us to be at least aware whether there is a risk of the oil in the tanks leaking into the environment. At the same time we should map the condition of the wreck, any environmental impact of oil damage and ways of recovering the oil. Steel tanks are prone to corrosion in seawater. Accordingly, controlled anti-oil pollution measures should be taken before it is too late. It is estimated to be ten times more expensive to recover oil that has leaked into the sea than to recover contained oil from a wreck. The mapping of those wrecks which pose the greatest danger to the marine environment should begin in areas such as the Baltic Sea where the natural environment is sensitive. Is the Commission launching active mapping operations with a view to identifying risk-prone wrecks and organising oil recovery measures where necessary?