

**Question for written answer E-003338/2016
to the Commission**

Rule 130

Dimitrios Papadimoulis (GUE/NGL), Kostas Chrysogonos (GUE/NGL), Stelios Kouloglou (GUE/NGL), Kostadinka Kuneva (GUE/NGL), Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL), Curzio Maltese (GUE/NGL) and Eleonora Forenza (GUE/NGL)

Subject: 500 refugees missing in the Mediterranean Sea

On 13 April 2016, a delegation from the UN Refugee Agency met with survivors of an overcrowded boat that sank at an unknown location in the Mediterranean Sea between Libya and Italy. According to media reports, there were 500 people on board. The 41 survivors (37 men, three women and a three-year-old child) were rescued by a merchant ship and taken to Kalamata on 16 April 2016.

So far, the Italian Government has neither confirmed nor denied the event publicly. Should the information prove to be accurate, this would be one of the biggest human tragedies, not only on a European but also on a global scale.

We therefore have the following questions:

1. Has the Commission been informed about this case? If so, has it pressed the countries possibly involved to move forward with the necessary search and rescue operations?
2. When and how does the Commission intend to secure safe and legal passage to Europe for refugees and efficiently combat smugglers' networks?
3. How does the Commission intend to deal with the reactivation of the North African route, which, according to the UN Refugee Agency, has seen an upsurge of 60 % since last year following the closure of the Balkan route and the deal with Turkey?