Question for written answer E-001787/2020

to the Commission

Rule 138

Ignazio Corrao (NI)

Subject: Statute of limitations for fraud-related offences concerning EU funds. The Poseidon case in Catania

In 2011 the Catania Public Prosecutor’s Office launched the famous criminal investigation called Poseidon, focusing on the alleged offence of conspiracy to commit organised crime by public and private entities, which had allegedly intercepted EU fisheries funds to the tune of EUR 2.8 million.

The funding, paid out under the Regional Operational Programmes 2000-2006, to be implemented through the Integrated Territorial Project known as ‘The Aci Pact’, was officially earmarked for the development of maritime fishing in the municipalities of Acireale and Aci Castello, but was allegedly used for fictitious expenditure rather than for supporting local fishermen.

However, after years of investigation and a trial, the charges were dropped because the time limit had been exceeded under the statute of limitations. Therefore, we will be unable to discover the truth about the management of this funding, its compliance with regard to the relevant projects and the responsibility of the individuals concerned.

In the light of the above, can the Commission say:

1. whether and how it intends to recover that money from the Region of Sicily or the Member State;

2. whether it intends to punish the Member State and to adopt measures to prevent the impunity of those who siphon off EU funds, including by strengthening OLAF?