Question for written answer E-002143/2021/rev.1 to the Commission
Rule 138
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Subject: Mapping, securing and removing corroding shipwrecks dating back to the Second World War

Three quarters of the world’s major wrecks date back to the Second World War. They are thought to contain a total of 2.5-20 million tonnes of oil. For more than ten years, attention has been drawn to the increasing problem posed by corrosion (inter alia, in a Norwegian report¹).

Some pollutants in the seabed in the Gulf of Gdansk exceed the limit values by a factor of a thousand (see “Vergessene Wracks – Schwarze Tränen der Meere²”). In many of these ships, the tanks could break open over the coming years as a result of corrosion; however, Norway is the only country which pumps off the oil as a preventive measure. A particular problem with oil from German wrecks is the fact that it is especially prone to mixing with water, thus significantly hindering clean-up.

The charting and salvaging of wrecks is hampered by the lack of an international treaty on the removal of war wrecks.

1. What does the Commission know about this problem and how serious is it in its view?
2. What are the respective responsibilities of the Member States and the EU institutions, and what role should the Commission itself play in tackling the problem?
3. What actions are planned or deemed conceivable by the Commission with regard to the exploration, charting, monitoring and removal of wrecks?

¹ https://sintef.brage.unit.no/sintef-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2449062/A27827%2bShipwreck%2boils.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
² https://programm.ard.de/TV/arte/vergessene-wracks/eid_287243198817151