

**Question for written answer E-002595/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: EUR 1.1 billion in EU funding for Danube Delta projects gone astray

According to an article in this week's NRC Handelsblad newspaper,¹ over EUR 1.1 billion in EU subsidies has been earmarked for poverty reduction, nature conservation and environmental protection projects along the Danube Delta in Romania. However, its investigations have revealed that, rather than being used for their intended purpose, the funds have apparently been used to swell numerous private and corporate coffers. It has also emerged that the integrated territorial investment (ITI) mechanism selected for this purpose is, under certain circumstances, particularly open to corruption.

Cohesion policy is a cornerstone of the European Union, benefiting tens of millions of Europeans. In order to keep it firmly in place however, we must be extra vigilant in fending off predators.

1. In view of this and the numerous OLAF fraud investigations in Romania that have been instigated in recent years, can the Commission say what additional measures it has taken to contain the increased risk of fraud regarding EU funding earmarked for the Danube delta and ensure that it is used for its intended purpose?
2. How does it intend to recover the embezzled funds and ensure that those responsible are called to account? What role will the European Public Prosecutor's Office play in this regard?
3. Is it willing to investigate the extent to which other ITIs may be open to fraud, in view of what has happened in this instance?

¹ As pointed out in the NRC edition of 9 May 2021, this has left the Danube Delta programme short of EUR 1.1 billion in EU funding.