Question for written answer E-000610/2021

to the Commission

Rule 138

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Subject: Search and rescue and safe disembarkation in the proposed Pact on Migration and Asylum

On 19 January 2021, The Guardian published the article ‘Shipwreck claims the lives of at least 43 migrants off the coast of Libya’, describing the first tragedy on the Central Mediterranean route in 2021. Only ten people survived and were brought back to Libya by the Libyan Coast Guard. In a joint statement, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration highlighted the need to re-activate state-led search and rescue (SAR) operations, to end returns to unsafe ports and to establish safe and predictable disembarkation mechanisms, and said that this must be followed by tangible solidarity from European states.

1. How does the Commission intend to address the lack of SAR operations in the Mediterranean in the proposed new Pact on Migration and Asylum?

2. Does it believe there is a need for an EU search and rescue fund to support Member States in rendering assistance to people in distress, especially given Frontex’s alleged involvement in pushback operations and its failure to uphold its mandate regarding SAR?

3. How will the proposed pact ensure safe and predictable disembarkation mechanisms coordinated at EU level?