

Mr. Thomas Bajada
Member of the European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1000 Brussels
Belgium



Monday, 16 March 2026

Subject: Risks posed to Malta by the drifting Russian shadow-fleet tanker vessel 'Arctic Metagaz'

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing in my capacity as a Maltese Member of the European Parliament, a Member of the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety, and the European Parliament's Rapporteur on European Water Resilience. The situation created in the Central Mediterranean by the Russian shadow-fleet tanker 'Arctic Metagaz' requires urgent attention.

Following an alleged attack, publicly available information and official maritime notices indicate that the vessel is not under command and has been drifting in the waters between Malta and Italy. This has prompted maritime safety warnings from the Maltese authorities and raised concerns about the vessel's potential trajectory towards Maltese waters, including the area surrounding Gozo.

For Malta, this situation goes beyond a conventional maritime safety incident. It raises three interconnected concerns of strategic importance: European security, environmental protection, and water resilience.

First, in the current geopolitical climate, incidents involving vessels drifting without command in a sensitive maritime region raise legitimate security concerns for Member States and for the European Union as a whole. This is further complicated by the vessel's sanctioned status, which may create legal and operational constraints for any action required. Situations of this nature require strong coordination and preparedness between national authorities and European institutions and agencies to ensure that risks are identified and addressed swiftly.

Second, there is the environmental dimension. Reports indicate that the tanker is carrying hundreds of tonnes of fuel, as well as LNG and other residual materials on board, raising the potential consequences that any marine pollution incident could have for the fragile transboundary ecosystems of the Central Mediterranean and the Maltese coastline, including western shores of the island of Gozo.

Third, and particularly critically for Malta, there is the issue of water resilience. As an island Member State with very limited natural freshwater resources, Malta relies heavily on desalination plants for a significant share of its national water supply. Any marine pollution incident in proximity to these installations could have serious consequences for water security and for the functioning of essential national infrastructure.

The Maltese authorities are closely monitoring the situation and preparing for all possible scenarios. Malta and Italy are also cooperating closely in response to this evolving case. However, given the scale of the potential risks and Malta's geographic vulnerability as an island Member State, it is essential that European solidarity, support and preparedness mechanisms remain fully available and coordinated.

In this context, I urge the European Commission to ensure that all relevant EU tools remain ready to support the efforts of the Maltese and Italian authorities where necessary. This includes the possible mobilisation of EMSA's monitoring and pollution-response support services, which are designed to complement national capabilities and assist coastal Member States in preventing and responding to marine pollution emergencies.

More broadly, this case highlights the need for the European Union to be adequately prepared for similar incidents in the future, particularly in the context of increasing geopolitical tensions and maritime risks in the Mediterranean. The Union's southern maritime frontier must be treated as a strategic priority by our institutions.

Mr. Thomas Bajada
Member of the European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1000 Brussels
Belgium



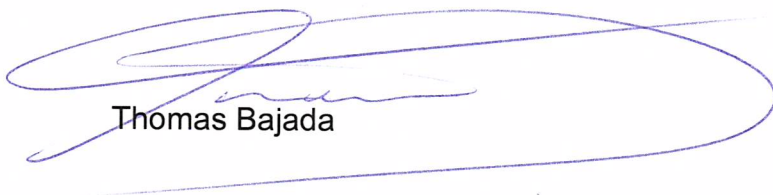
I would therefore welcome clarification from the Commission on:

1. what coordination and support the Commission has already provided, or stands ready to provide, to Malta and Italy in monitoring and managing the risks associated with the drifting vessel;
2. how EU instruments, including EMSA services, can support Malta and Italy in preventing potential environmental damage and protecting critical infrastructure, including desalination plants;
3. how the Commission assesses the broader security implications of such maritime incidents for Member States in the Mediterranean; and
4. whether the Commission intends to strengthen EU preparedness and contingency planning for similar situations affecting vulnerable coastal and island Member States.

Malta is doing its part in monitoring the situation and preparing responsibly for all possible scenarios. At the same time, incidents such as this underline the importance of European solidarity, coordination and preparedness, in order to safeguard both the environment and the essential infrastructure upon which citizens depend.

I look forward to your response and trust that this matter will receive your urgent attention.

Kind regards,



Thomas Bajada