Question for written answer E-007073/2020

to the Commission

Rule 138

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Subject: Risk of lead poisoning on the location of the new migrant camp on Lesbos

On 8 December 2020, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report entitled ‘Greece: Lead Poisoning Concerns in New Migrant Camp’, with evidence of unexploded mortar projectiles and small arms ammunition found by migrants in the camp, which was built on a repurposed military firing range. Lead contamination can cause severe harm in the human body.

In response to a letter by HRW, Greek Migration and Asylum Minister Mitarachi stated that before migrants were moved to the site in September 2020, there was ‘no lead contamination’ in the camp, without providing any evidence.

1. What specific measures did the Commission take to ensure the safety of refugees and to stop further construction work by the Greek authorities, given this worrying information?

2. Minister Mitarachi also mentioned that the Greek government would conduct soil testing with the Commission in 2020. Could the Commission reveal the areas to be tested, the nature of testing, its methodology, and the actors involved to ensure the independence and transparency of the testing?

3. According to Minister Logothetis, five Member State government experts were hired by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), who then declared there was ‘no risk’ of lead contamination. Was the Commission involved in this process or aware of the process referred to by Minister in his contacts with HRW?