



*Honourable Madame Ursula von der Leyen,  
President of the European Commission*

*Brussels, 24 July 2023*

***Subject: Need for an EU drowning prevention strategy***

*Dear Madame President von der Leyen,*

*We, the undersigned members of the European Parliament, write to you ahead of 25 July - World Drowning Prevention Day - and call on the Commission to prepare an EU drowning prevention strategy.*

*An estimated 236,000 people drown every year in the world, and drowning is among the ten leading causes of death for children aged 5-14 years. More than 90% of drowning deaths occur in rivers, lakes, wells, domestic water storage vessels and swimming pools in low- and middle-income countries, with children and adolescents in rural areas disproportionately affected.*

*Based on the last available data for 2017, around 5.100 deaths of European Union (EU) residents were caused by accidental drowning and submersion. Drowning is also the second leading causes of death for children and young people aged 1-24 years in the EU.*

*Drowning has tragic and profound impact on families and communities. What is more crucial is that drownings are mostly preventable through evidence-based and low-cost solutions. Some of those measures are introduction of swimming lessons in school curriculums, teaching water safety and safe rescue skills; installing barriers controlling access to water; providing safe places for children with capable childcare; appropriate training; setting and enforcing safe boating, shipping and ferry regulation; and improving flood risk management.*

*In particular, accidental drowning among children could be significantly reduced by the introduction of swimming lessons in school curriculums. According to our data, only 17 EU member states have included swimming lessons in school curriculums.*

*In 2021 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted its first resolution on drowning prevention<sup>1</sup> and the World Health Organisation also adopted this year its 1st ever such resolution<sup>2</sup>.*

*The EU and its member states are lacking behind in quality data on drownings and their causes, as well as in their own drowning prevention strategies. We need to step up our efforts in preventing preventable deaths by drowning and make Europe safer. No-one must drown!*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/106/27/pdf/N2110627.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB152/B152\(12\)-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB152/B152(12)-en.pdf)

*We therefore ask the Commission the following:*

- 1. Does the Commission intent to prepare an EU drowning prevention strategy and by when?*
- 2. What measures does the Commission foresee to prevent deaths by drowning and make Europe a safer place?*
- 3. Does the Commission intent to promote introduction of swimming lessons in schools curriculums in the EU?*

*We thank you for your consideration and for your cooperation on the matter.*

*Sincerely,*

*NEMEC Matjaž*

*SINČIĆ Ivan Vilibor*

*BOGOVIĆ Franc*

*OLEKAS Juozas*

*PAPADAKIS Demetris*

*JOVEVA Irena*

*GARCIA DEL BLANCO Ibán*

*ADAMOWICZ Magdalena*

*CARVALHO Maria*

*GROŠELJ Klemen*

*MATIAS Marisa*

*GUSMÃO José*

*OETJEN Jan-Christoph*

*CORRAO Ignazio*

*DURAND Pascal*

*GEORGOULIS Alexis*

*MARKEY Colm*

*CIUHODARU Tudor*

*VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL Viola*