

**Question for written answer E-007985/2016  
to the Commission**  
Rule 130  
**Hugues Bayet (S&D)**

Subject: Tax arrangements for Belgian inland ports

The Commission has launched an in-depth inquiry to determine whether or not the Belgian tax arrangements applicable to inland ports constitute State aid within the meaning of Article 107(1) TFEU.

The representatives of Belgium's inland ports take the view that, even though the ports are classified as businesses, the tax arrangements applicable to them are justified because their activities are necessarily carried out in the general interest. In a letter to the Belgian authorities dated 8 July 2016, the Commission states that it regards the ports' activities as 'economic'.

How can the Commission justify this in the light of the prerogatives the Member States enjoy to define services of general interest (SGIs) and to organise SGIs as they see fit and the Member States' obligation to ensure that SGIs are provided in a manner which fosters social and economic cohesion?