Question for written answer E-000605/2018
to the Commission
Rule 130
Anna Elżbieta Fotyga (ECR)

Subject: Aggressive trading by Lidl in Central and Eastern Europe

For years now, the Schwarz Group (owner of the Lidl supermarket chain) has received support in the form of loans from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to help it expand into countries in Central and Eastern Europe. EBRD funds largely come from the budgets of EU Member States and the European Investment Bank.

Many of the Schwarz Group's activities, however, have a negative impact on competition in the EU, breaching consumers' rights. On two recent occasions in Poland, Lidl has placed own-brand products on sale which are misleadingly similar in both appearance and name to popular Polish branded products. The Lidl products were displayed next to the original (Polish-produced) ones, meaning that consumers could easily be confused.

Given that Lidl's chain stores have been granted publicly funded (EBRD) loans with preferential terms for the purpose of expanding into Central and Eastern Europe:

Does the Commission take the view that the practice described above is consistent with EU consumer policy?

It is the Commission's responsibility to prevent and correct anti-competitive activities. With that in mind, does the Commission take the view that the Schwarz Group's policy, which is slashing the local producers' share of the market into which Lidl is expanding, constitutes abuse of a dominant position? Should it be subject to Commission oversight?

Does the Commission not take the view that granting Lidl public funds from the EBRD to help it expand into Central and Eastern Europe constitutes a breach of the principles underpinning the EU's single market?