

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0420/03
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to the Commission

Subject: The Stemnitsa

The EU's future director of maritime safety, Willem de Ruyter, has informed the Finnish media that the hazard posed by the oil tanker Stemnitsa operating in the Baltic is a matter to be resolved bilaterally by Finland and Russia, and that the EU cannot do anything about it.

Why can the EU supposedly not take any action in this respect? The Stemnitsa is sailing under the Greek flag, so that the matter can hardly be regarded as purely one for Finland and Russia. Moreover, the Baltic is virtually an internal sea of the EU: protecting the Baltic is even a major aspect of the Northern Dimension programme.

According to Mr de Ruyter, no Community standards exist for the protection of oil tankers against ice pressure. Yet ice is a natural annual phenomenon in the Northern parts of the EU. It is difficult to see, therefore, how it would be possible to maintain that the matter does not concern the EU.

What will the Commission do to prevent oil tankers like the Stemnitsa, which are inadequately protected against ice pressure, from operating in conditions for which they are not designed and in which they present a serious safety hazard?