

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1717/03
by Freddy Blak (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Stowaways

It is estimated that at any given time there are approximately 6000 stowaways on board ships world wide. Typically, stowaways are people from poor countries fleeing starvation, poverty, political persecution or unemployment in the hope of a better existence. The journey as a stowaway often ends in tragedy as a result of the duration of the voyage in unaccustomed surroundings and uncertainty, possibly with death as the outcome through gas from the cargo or being enclosed in spaces which are not designed for transporting people.

Apart from the obviously tragic human consequences, stowaways entail considerable additional expenditure each year for the shipping industry - money which could be better spent.

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has issued resolution No. A.871(2) laying down certain guidelines for the treatment of stowaways. The IMO has also adopted further rules concerning stowaways in IMO resolution No. FAL. 7(29) supplementing the above.

However, since these are only guidelines, far from all countries comply. Will the Commission therefore play a more active role in this area in the IMO and endeavour to persuade other countries to comply with these rules?