

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0219/04
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to the Commission

Subject: Malta's accession and maritime safety

The Maltese commercial fleet, the third largest in the world, includes a number of oil tankers. The Erika was registered in Malta, for instance. On the eve of the country's entry into the European Union, ships flying the Maltese flag remain on the Paris Memorandum of Understanding blacklist.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the comprehensive monitoring report of 5 November 2003 on Malta's preparations for membership (SEC(2003) 1206 final) acknowledges that Malta risks not meeting the membership requirements that apply to the area of maritime transport in time for accession.

Is Malta's maritime administration, for all its efforts, actually able to ensure that checks are carried out on vessels that register with it and that Council Directive 94/57 is applied, when the vast majority of these vessels belong to shipowners from third countries?

Likewise, is the Maltese maritime administration capable of verifying that the organisations to which it entrusts inspection, survey and certification duties meet the approval requirements?

If Malta does not satisfactorily honour its duties with regard to inspections and safety, will the burden, and substantial and disproportionate responsibilities, not pass to the port States of the EU? Does the Commission consider that these countries have the regulatory and financial means to deal with a situation of this kind?

In view of the worryingly high detention rate in Community ports of Maltese-flagged vessels, how is the Commission planning to proceed in the case of ships that have been repeatedly detained within a period of a few months?