

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3667/06
by Guido Podestà (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Sale of ABX to the 3i investment fund

Following Commission approval of the restructuring plan for ABX Logistics Worldwide (logistics subsidiary of the SNCB, Belgium's State-owned national railways) in December 2005, the purchase of ABX by the UK investment fund 3i was announced a few weeks ago.

The privatisation of the SNCB's logistics subsidiary before the end of 2006 was a precondition for Commission approval of the procedure. According to a report which appeared in L'Echo on 20 June 2006, the agreement with 3i was concluded shortly after the SNCB and ABX had conducted consultations with a number of potential purchasers. However, with reference to the selection procedure, it should be noted that 3i's purchase of ABX occurred during the course of enquiries launched by the Commission's Directorate-General for the Internal Market in response to a complaint lodged with the Commission Secretariat on 17 February 2006 by the group MCC Sofipa SGR S.p.a against the State-controlled SNCB Holding S.A.

With reference to the infringement complaint lodged by MCC Sofipa SGR S.p.a, can the Commission state: (a) what view it takes of the situation brought to its notice; (b) what steps have been taken since the complaint was made; and (c) what action it intends to take on the matter. Lastly, what view does it take of press reports to the effect that Laurent Levaux (former CEO of ABX Logistics Worldwide) and Kris Geysler (former Finance Director of ABX Logistics Worldwide) have been appointed to the Board of Directors of the newly formed company, the 3i fund?