

**Question for written answer E-009781/2012
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Reducing the sulphur content of marine fuels

With reference to the proposal from the Commission to Parliament and the Council, which seeks to amend Council Directive 1999/32/EC of 26 April 1999 relating to a reduction in the sulphur content of certain liquid fuels, attention should be drawn to the risk of the new provisions distorting competition between short sea shipping and land transport, as well as between EU maritime regions.

This is a particularly thorny issue for countries in Sulphur Emission Control Areas (SECAs), which would be required, under the proposed changes, to introduce a 0.1% limit on the sulphur content of all marine fuels used within the boundaries of such areas from 1 January 2015. Compliance with this low limit on the sulphur content of fuels will give rise not only to a significant increase in the price of marine fuels, but also extra costs for shipowners, who will be obliged to adapt their vessels to bring them into line with the new provisions.

Does the Commission intend to provide financial assistance to the maritime sector to help it bear the cost of adapting to the technological standards laid down by the new provisions, the purpose of which is to help meet the Europe 2020 strategy targets?