Question for written answer E-004138/2013
to the Commission
Rule 117
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Subject: Exemption for the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) project

On 6, 9 and 15 March 2013, the Italian and Greek regulatory authorities issued exemptions for the TAP project under Directive 2009/73/EC on natural gas.

In reference to these exemptions, the following points have been noted:

– The Natural Gas Directive foresees the carrying-out of a binding market test as a prerequisite for the granting of an exemption. The results of any such market test in Italy are unknown.

– TAP does not appear to fulfil the definition of an interconnector in the sense of the Natural Gas Directive, as the proposed pipeline would not cross the border between two Member States.

– It is questionable whether TAP provides for ‘enhancement of competition and security of supply’, as foreseen in the Natural Gas Directive, given that Italy already represents quite a diversified gas market and connections to other gas markets are as yet non-existent or unavailable.

– The maximum period of time for which an exemption can be granted is five years, and it is already clear that the TAP pipeline will not be operational until 2019 at the earliest, by which time any exemption granted now will have expired.

– In contrast to other projects holding exemptions, very little information has been made publicly available regarding the relevant exemption applications made by TAP in Italy and Greece.

Taking the above facts into consideration:

1. Is the assessment of the Commission on the decisions of the Greek and Italian regulatory authorities fully compliant with the criteria established by the Natural Gas Directive, particularly with regard to the binding market test, the duration of the exemption, the status of the TAP pipeline as an interconnector, as well as market criteria?

2. Does the Commission believe that the decisions of the Greek and Italian regulatory authorities comply with best practice measures, both in terms of transparency and in supporting the aim of providing a level playing field for all competing projects which hold exemptions?