

**Question for written answer E-005540/2013
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Georgios Stavrakakis (S&D)

Subject: Passenger transport in the EU's island regions

The EU's island regions, and in particular the small Greek islands, have to face permanent difficulties in ensuring both the transport of goods and persons and access to public services. Even where the acquisition of vessels for passenger transport – serving the public interest by providing regular and reliable access to small islands – is eligible for subsidy under the EU Structural Funds' rules, the running costs of these vessels are too high to be recovered through the commercial exploitation of the routes in question. For this reason, the private sector has very little interest in providing adequate services to remote or small islands with low populations.

Against this background, the Commission is kindly asked to answer the following questions:

1. What are the limits to EU state aid rules as regards the financing of services of general interest allowing the public sector (whether state, regional or municipal) to provide compensation for the running costs of vessels (through national, regional, municipal or Union funding) in order to ensure adequate connections to and between such islands at affordable ticket prices? Do the rules apply in the same way regardless of the source of the financing used by the public entity to provide such compensation?
2. What types of costs for providing public transport services can be covered through such compensation in order to ensure affordable ticket prices? Are any of these costs eligible for EU funding?
3. With regard to the above questions, do different rules apply where a public entity operates a vessel that is owned by a private entity?