Question for written answer E-003883/2019
to the Commission
Rule 138
Dimitrios Papadimoulis (GUE/NGL)

Subject: Unfreezing the proceeds of economic crime after 18 months

Under Article 9(2) of Law 4637/2019 that entered into force yesterday in Greece, accounts, movable and fixed assets etc. frozen by the Greek Authority for the Prevention of Money Laundering must be released after a maximum of 18 months.

According to a recent foreign press report, [1] this is at odds with international anti-money laundering practices, and will benefit people such as shipowners, prominent businessmen and former bankers under investigation for misappropriation of funds and money laundering, resulting in the retroactive release of over EUR 1 billion in seized assets.

The report goes on to point out that, according to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and the Council of Europe’s anti-corruption monitoring body (GRECO), cash and properties seized during a criminal probe should remain frozen until all judicial procedures are completed.

It also quotes a FATF official as saying that the task force would be most concerned if the new provisions were implemented.

In view of this:

1. What is the Commission’s assessment of these new provisions as opposed to international practice and the rules previously applicable?

2. What consequences does it foresee if the new provisions are implemented?

[1] https://www.ft.com/content/37512b46-06b4-11ea-9afa-d9e2401fa7ca