

**Question for written answer E-004302/2021
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Virginie Joron (ID)

Subject: Lack of response from Brussels to Australia breaking EUR 56 billion contract with French group

On Wednesday 15 September 2021, Australia announced that it was backing out of a major contract – worth an estimated EUR 56 billion – signed in 2016 with the French company Naval Group for the supply of conventional submarines. Instead, the Australian Government has decided to call on American and British expertise to build nuclear-powered submarines¹.

This unlawful breach of contract requires a deterrent response.

Of all the firms benefitting from EU cohesion funding, the Australian company Macquarie, which constructs motorways, receives the second highest level of support – a total of EUR 300 million². Through a front subsidiary and the tax haven of Bermuda, this financial giant owns 50% of the APRR/AREA motorways in France^{3,4,5}. The acquisition of 2 318 km of motorways in France by this Australian company was authorised by the Commission in 2006⁶.

Given that the Commission likes to boast that it is a power multiplier for France:

1. Why did it not immediately respond in support of the French Government?
2. What sanctions, such as putting an end to EU subsidies for Australian investors and prohibiting them from being awarded EU public contracts, is it considering or has it imposed?
3. Is it in favour of France nationalising or doing away with the tolls on French motorways owned by Australian parties?

¹ https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2021/09/16/l-australie-rompt-le-contrat-du-siecle-avec-la-france-sur-les-sous-marins-au-profit-de-technologies-americaines-et-britanniques_6094854_3210.html

² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-002838_EN.html

³ See: <https://www.atlasarteria.com/portfolio/aprr>; Arnaud Montebourg sat on APRR's board of directors for several years (https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2010/10/11/arnaud-montebourg-resiste-a-eiffage-pour-le-controle-d-autoroutes-paris-rhin-rhone_1423370_3234.html); and https://aprr.com/sites/www.aprr.com/files/pdf_upload/Publication/2008/RA_2007_FR.pdf?FileID=pdf%2Fra_2007_fr.pdf.

⁴ <https://www.atlasarteria.com/aboutus>

⁵ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2019-001149_EN.html

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/competition/mergers/cases/decisions/m4087_20060215_20310_en.pdf