

ORAL QUESTION O-0031/02/rev.1

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure

by Enrique Barón Crespo, Carlos Westendorp y Cabeza, Eryl McNally, Erika Mann, Wilhelm Piecyk, Garrelt Duin, Robert Goebbels and Bernhard Rapkay, on behalf of the PSE Group to the Commission

Subject: The state of the European shipbuilding industry

In the report by Karin Riis-Jørgensen on the proposal for a Council regulation concerning a temporary defensive mechanism to shipbuilding (COM(2001)0401/final – C5-0393/2001 – 2001/0153(CNS))¹ last year, in the Langen report (A5-0371/2000²) and in numerous questions to the Council and Commission, the European Parliament has called for fairer competition in world shipbuilding. After a thorough investigation of the situation in the Republic of Korea, the Commission concluded that competition was being distorted by means of dumping. Thereupon the Commission proposed that a WTO procedure be initiated against the Republic of Korea and that the option for the Member States to provide contract-related operating aid, which had expired on 31 December 2000, should be extended, provisionally only for the duration of the procedure. Incomprehensibly, the Council failed to agree on a decision, as further fact-finding was called for. Yet the study which has been completed, but unfortunately not yet published, considers in detail the question of the markets concerned, particularly that for natural gas tankers, and could contain the facts needed for an early decision.

For some years there have been clear indications that the Republic of Korea (South Korea) is distorting international competition in shipbuilding by granting subsidies which contravene WTO rules. In addition to initiating a WTO procedure, the Commission has considered adopting temporary protective measures to safeguard the position of European shipbuilding, which is currently extremely precarious. The Commission now has at its disposal a study dealing with competition in various types of shipbuilding, particularly the building of natural gas tankers.

1. Has the recently completed study been forwarded to the Council?
2. When will the study be published?
3. Is it true that there are strong differences of opinion within the Commission regarding the interpretation of the study, which are delaying the procedure? Are there any differences of opinion as to whether competition is being distorted?
4. When will the Commission initiate a WTO procedure?

Tabled: 16.05.2002

Forwarded: 20.05.2002

Deadline for reply: 27.05.2002

¹ OJ C 304 E 30.10.2001, p. 208

² Texts adopted, 14.12.2000