

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3443/07
by Gitte Seeberg (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Findings of study on proportionality between ownership and control in EU listed companies

On 4 June 2007 the findings of the study on proportionality between ownership and control in EU listed companies were published. The study was carried out by International Shareholder Services, the European Corporate Governance Institute and the law firm Shearman & Sterling.

They conclude that there is no evidence that systems with differentiated voting rights, including the Danish A/B share system, are harmful for capital markets.

Differentiated voting rights in many cases support long-term value creation which is essential in knowledge-intensive sectors. The system provides companies with an opportunity to organise themselves in optimum fashion in relation to their future plans and gives a greater incentive to invest in areas such as research and innovation. Regulation in this area will, in addition to overriding freedom of contract, also deprive investors of the opportunity to purchase the class of share that best suits their interests in full knowledge of all the facts.

This prompts the following questions:

Can the Commission confirm that the plans to implement the 'one share, one vote' principle in the EU have been abandoned in the light of the study's findings?

Can it indicate how the study's findings will be used in the Commission's subsequent work, with particular reference to the ongoing impact assessment?

Can it indicate to what extent and in what manner the European Parliament will be involved in the subsequent process?