

**Question for written answer P-004386/2014
to the Commission
Rule 117
Knut Fleckenstein (S&D)**

Subject: Maritime transport policy / inland waterways

Maritime transport is crucial for the economy and for the EU's trade relations. Efficient waterways and the accessibility of sea ports are important preconditions for safeguarding connections to international trade flows. Moreover, one of the stated aims of the EU is to shift freight traffic from the roads to the railways and waterways, which are more environmentally-friendly. Like other transport infrastructures, waterways also need to be maintained (e.g. bank reinforcement, dredging, etc.) and made secure (e.g. flood protection).

The Commission's Legal Service has submitted an opinion to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) on the interpretation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) for the ongoing preliminary ruling (ECJ C-461/13). The Legal Service's interpretation and the ECJ's decision are vital for the future of maritime transport and inland waterway transport. There is a concern that the interpretation will mean that there will be little future maintenance of the waterways, as all projects would have to be prohibited if there were even a minor deterioration of the water status. This would affect or thwart numerous infrastructure projects in all the Member States.

Will the Commission state with which Directorate-General the Legal Service reached agreement regarding the drafting of the opinion? Will the Commission further explain the assessment by GD MOVE and GD ENTR with regard to the following questions?

1. Can the way that the WFD defines ecological status as 'the quality of the structure and functioning of aquatic ecosystems associated with surface waters, classified in accordance with Annex V' not be interpreted in such a way that the deterioration of such a status pursuant to Article 4(1) must also be evaluated in accordance with Annex V?
2. Can the WFD be interpreted in such a way that the prohibition of deterioration would represent a goal for the management planning of waters and not necessarily a binding ground for prohibiting individual projects?

If GD MOVE and GD ENTR agree with the interpretation of the Legal Service, I call on the Commission to state exactly how it intends to maintain the EU's waterways in future and face the new challenges (e.g. the size of container ships) in maritime transport.