Ports and maritime infrastructures, multimodal trans-European network. Green paper

1997/2299(COS) - 27/10/1998

Reporting on this Green Paper, Mr JARZEMBOWSKI emphasizes the major importance of sea ports for Europe's competitiveness in a global economy. More than 90% of the EU's trade with third countries and approximately 30% of intra-EU traffic are handled by the port sector. The major European ports in particular have become commercial transport transport and service centers with largely standardised and rationalised freight handling services and thus active commercial players in the transport chain. Competition has become increasingly important for the port sector. The Green Paper focuses on the question of financing and charging for port and maritime infrastructure. At Community level, this subject has hitherto been viewed with some caution, given the variety of approaches at national level. The ownership, organisation and administration of ports differ. As one of the key issues from an aid and competition point of view, the Commission considers how the financial flows between the public authorities, the port authorities and the users of port facilities and services should be assessed and controlled. As a first step towards the development of a uniform approach at Community level, an inventory should be made of the various financial flows to enable objective comparisons of ports. The Commission proposes that a uniform concept should be established for charging for port and maritime infrastructure. This should be applied to sea ports by means of a directive on charging for port infrastructure. Another key element is the competitive situation of port services and market access to them. The various Member States continue to vary widely in these respects. Rapporteur JARZEMBOWSKI takes the view that the EU should gradually develop and implement no more than an objectively limited, but effective European sea port policy. The Green Paper formed a valuable basis for a Community-wide debate on ways of achieving greater transparency with regard to conditions of competition among and within sea ports and of rapidly reducing distortions of competition. On that basis, a full inventory of seaport structures and their funding should be drawn up as the starting point for further action.