

Brussels, 26 March 2010

Antitrust: Commission closes investigation into "Baltic Max Feeder" scheme

The European Commission has closed an investigation into a potential breach of European Union competition rules in the planned "Baltic Max Feeder" scheme for "feeder" vessel owners since the scheme was abandoned.

The Commission opened an investigation in January this year (see [IP/10/21](#)) into the "Baltic Max Feeder" scheme whereby European "feeder" vessel owners agreed to jointly cover the costs of removing vessels from service. Feeder vessels are small container ships for short-sea transport and are in general the first and last link in the maritime transport chain. They transport or "feed" containers arriving at, or departing from, central container terminal ports (such as Hamburg or Rotterdam) served by large deep-sea container vessels, to smaller ports in the region. Feeder vessel operators own the vessels they operate or charter them from the vessel owners.

The investigation aimed to establish whether the scheme's purpose was to reduce capacity and, therefore, push up charter rates for such vessels. If confirmed this would likely have been tantamount to a breach of Art 101 of the Treaty, which bans agreements restrictive of competition.

In response to the opening of proceedings by the Commission, Anchor Steuerberatungsgesellschaft mbH, the company at the origin of the scheme, informed the Commission in February that the planned scheme had been abandoned. Under these circumstances, the Commission considered that there were no reasons to further investigate and decided to close the case.