

Brussels, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1999

## **Commission : POLFIN may sail forth**

***The European Commission has decided not to oppose exemption to the POLFIN Liner Conference. Under the arrangement, Finn carriers Oy Ab, EuroAfrica Shipping Lines Limited and Poseidon Schiffahrt AG pool resources, revenues and expenses arising from their respective liner services between ports in Finland and ports in Poland. The parties operate three sailings a week between Helsinki and Gdynia, one sailing a week between Helsinki and Szczecin and one sailing a week between Kotka and Gdynia.***

The Commission published a summary of the application for exemption in the Official Journal on 19 December 1998 inviting third party comment. Comments were received from the UK Office of Fair Trading. Under the procedure for granting exemptions in the maritime transport sector, if the Commission wishes to oppose exemption, it must do so by sending a letter of serious doubts to the parties within a period of ninety days following publication of the summary.

In deciding not to oppose exemption, the Commission took into account the importance of maintaining and developing Finnish maritime links due to Finland's geographical location and prevailing climatic conditions. The arrangements will be exempted for a period of six years from 19 December 1998.

### **Background**

Since notification, Poseidon Schiffahrt AG was transferred into the ownership of Finnlines Ltd, the owner of Finn carriers.

In Case No IV/35.680 - Baltic Liner Conference Agreement, the Commission in deciding not to oppose exemption expressly took account of the fact that the co-operation in question had increased the efficiency of the parties' operations and had enabled them to undertake significant investment in equipment particularly suited to the climatic conditions in the Gulfs of Bothnia and Finland and to the special needs of Finnish shippers.