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Ms. Margrethe Vestager,
Commissioner for Competition,

Strasbourg, 16th April 2019

Ref: Cruise ship "Atlântida"

Dear Commissioner,

In communications to the Portuguese Minister of Finance and President of the Eurogroup, which I attach herewith, I have reported the fraudulent sale and the tax evasion scheme involving the sale of the cruise ship "Atlântida" in the year of 2014.

That ship was built at the National Shipyards of Viana do Castelo (ENVC), which were the object of a questionable privatization/sub concession process, about which I have addressed a number of letters to the European Commission and lodged a complaint with the Portuguese Attorney General in 2013.

When I wrote to the Portuguese Minister of Finance in 2017 it was already clear that the public tender process for the sale of the cruise ship Atlântida was involved in corruption - the jury had chosen as only criterion the highest bid, no minimum price set, and adjudicated the sale to a murky Liberian-Greek company, Thesarco CO Shipping SA. This company deserted the procedure without providing any documentation or financial guarantees, suggesting it was just a fake runner to leave Mystic Cruises, the second company on the list, with a suspicious below-market adjudication.

This has all been confirmed through new documents that I have had access from EMPORDEF, the public holding company responsible for ENVC. As you will see in the annexed document "**Evaluation**", an independent evaluation company analysed the ship and concluded it was worth €29 million euros, and that just before the sale.

Ana Gomes
European Parliament
Bât. Altiero Spinelli, 14G201, rue Wiertz 60, B-1047 Brussels, Belgium
Tel. : +32 (0)2 284 58 24 Fax : +32 (0)2 284 98 24
anamaria.gomes@ep.europa.eu



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Strangely enough, according to the minutes of the board meetings of ENVC, several proposals had been made to buy the ship for over 30 million euros and were all rejected (please see the board meeting minute no. 5 from 2010 in annex) by the administration. In the end, Atlântida cruise ship was sold to Mystic Cruises for a pathetic sum around €8 million euros, following the convenient disappearance of Thesarco.

The company Mystic Cruises is owned by Mr. Mário Nuno dos Santos Ferreira, an individual involved in several negotiations with Banco Espírito Santo, the same bank that acted as intermediary between the jury and bidders in Atlântida's tender process, contributing to the fraudulent nature of the entire public procurement procedure. A few months later, Mr Mário Ferreira resold the ship to himself, through a company in Malta and, afterwards, to a Norwegian operator in a scheme that involved tax evasion, as I reported to the Portuguese Minister of Finance, to the Portuguese Tax Authorities and to the Portuguese Attorney General. Mr Mário Ferreira and his Mystic Cruises Group, including company "Douro Azul" have received EU funds, namely through the programme "Compete 2020"¹.

Considering these facts, I ask you to determine a full investigation on the fraudulent nature of the sale of cruise ship "Atlântida", on how EU public procurement rules were bent in order to sell the ship to a certain bidder for an outrageous low price and on how EU funds have been spent with a fraudster business Group owned and managed by Mr Mário Ferreira

Ana Gomes,

Member of the European Parliament

*Best regards,
Ana Gomes*

¹ <http://www.poci-compet2020.pt/newsletter/detalhe/Proj17108-Douro-Azul-diversifica-oferta-segmento-dos-cruzeiros-fluviais-Rio-Douro>

cc:

Pierre Moscovici, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs

Věra Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality

Ville Itälä, Director General of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)