

Brussels, 27th March 2006

Mergers: Commission approves Aker Yards' acquisition of Chantiers de l'Atlantique

The European Commission has cleared under the EU Merger Regulation the proposed acquisition of the French shipyard Chantiers de l'Atlantique (CAT), by Aker Yards ASA. The Commission found that the proposed transaction would not significantly impede effective competition in the European Economic Area (EEA) or any substantial part of it.

Aker Yards is an international shipbuilding group focusing on sophisticated commercial vessels including cruise vessels and ferries. Aker Yards operates 13 shipyards in Norway, Finland, Germany, Romania and Brazil. Aker Yards is part of the Norwegian Aker ASA group.

Chantiers de l'Atlantique (CAT) is a French shipyard, located in Saint Nazaire. Its activities focus on high added value naval and commercial ships, including cruise ships and ferries. CAT is part of the Alstom SA group (France).

The main impact of the proposed take-over would be in the market for the construction of large cruise ships (above 30,000 gross tonnes). The market for the construction of such cruise ships is global in scope with the main suppliers situated in Europe. Customers for these large cruise ships are the largest cruise operators.

The takeover would make Aker Yards the second largest producer of cruise ships world-wide. The Commission has concluded that the proposed transaction, although it would bring about a further concentration in a market with few suppliers, would not lead to competition concerns. In particular, the merged entity would continue to face competition from existing competitors in the market. Furthermore, there is strong concentration on the buyer side (the large cruise operators), which means that a single customer represents an important part of the overall turnover in this market for the shipyards.

The proposed transaction also leads to minor overlaps in the parties activities in other areas such as for the construction of ferries. However, in these areas the merging parties are faced with a large number of strong competitors. The Commission has concluded that no concerns would arise in the ferry or any other market.