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Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas
on behalf of the European Commission
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The EU can meet its climate and zero pollution goals successfully only if all sectors of the economy, including shipping, make significant emission reductions. For instance, to mitigate potential cost increases, the maritime related Fit for 55 regulations require only gradual emission cuts over time, support is given to the industry through EU funding programmes, and Member States can provide certain temporary exemptions e.g. for connections to small islands.

The liberalisation of maritime cabotage under Regulation (EEC) No 3577/92¹ allows EU operators to provide services freely, while enabling Member States to impose public service obligations to ensure connectivity, especially to islands. These may include requirements on fares, frequency, or vessel standards, and may be compensated under EU State aid rules, provided the aid is proportionate and transparent.

The Commission does not regulate domestic fares, ticket categories, or the deployment of specific vessels. These matters fall entirely under national competence. It is for each Member State to decide whether to impose public service obligations or introduce social pricing schemes for groups such as students, pensioners, or persons with disabilities.

Concerns about pricing, service levels or fleet conditions should therefore be addressed to the national authorities responsible.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/1992/3577/oj/eng>.