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The merger plan between two European stainless steel producers (the Finnish Outokumpu company and the German Inoxum) was intended to deliver benefits to the European industry with the structural change needed to preserve jobs on the two companies' main production sites: Terni in Italy, Tornio in Finland and Krefeld in Germany.

The merger is being investigated by the European Commission, which has identified possible competition problems relating to the joint market share, which would exceed 50%. In order to resolve these problems and approve the merger, the Commission has asked the parties to dispose of some assets. The sale of the Swedish production sites initially seemed to be enough, but on 9 October Outokumpu announced that it wanted to put the Terni site in Italy up for sale. In addition to the sale, the company has mentioned the possibility of splitting up the site, as it has said that the bright annealing production line (which would be transferred to an Outokumpu group site) and the Tubificio tubular unit at Terni would not be included in the transaction.

An operation of this kind would mean the loss to the European steel industry of a high-value integrated site, completely counter to the objectives of a strong European industrial policy. What is more, splitting up the site could also have a negative impact in terms of finding a potential purchaser.

The Commission is therefore asked to reply to the following questions:

1. What measures and safeguards does it intend to adopt, including under competition law, to protect the Terni industrial site and to avoid any risk of its sale to parties interested in speculative operations unrelated to the industrial sector in question?

2. Given that following the expiry of the ECSC Treaty, dealing with the economic and social consequences of developments in the steel industry is one of the Commission's tasks, what measures does it intend to take to protect the thousands of jobs now under threat in the EU?

3. What is the overall situation concerning the company changes and restructurings underway in the steel sector in the European Union?

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Question for written answer to the Commission

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