In addition, farmers, and family farms in particular, can take advantage of Community measures to improve their structural efficiency. This aid, which includes aid for investments, is at present granted under the agriculture part of the Objective 1 programme for Galicia. In 1998 the Guidance Section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) spent ESP 4 153 million on such measures, which represents 19% of the Fund’s expenditure for Objective 1 regions in Spain.

In the future the new rural development policy, the second pillar of the common agricultural policy, will ensure that family farms continue to be supported. Furthermore, the new framework gives the regional authorities even more scope to adapt measures to the specific needs and conditions in their regions. So individual problems, like that raised by the Honourable Member, can be dealt with appropriately.

(2000/C 170 E/018)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1452/99
by Daniela Raschhofer (NI) to the Commission
(1 September 1999)

Subject: Harmonisation in the field of transport safety

The European Commission devotes considerable attention to transport, not least because transport involves not only covering the distance from A to B as fast and in as environmentally-friendly manner as possible, but also increasing the safety of European roads and railways.

Concerning road safety:
– does the Commission have any thoughts, or are there any legislative provisions, on the following questions?
– if so, please provide precise details of the stage reached in the discussions or of the legislative standard, and any transitional periods.

1. How many legislative standards has the EU adopted on the safety of drivers of vehicles?
2. As a result of national legislative provisions being adopted after a time-lag is it possible for European citizens to be able to drive a vehicle without a driving licence?
3. Are there standard rules in Europe on the size and appearance of vehicle registration plates?
4. Are there standard rules in Europe on turning right when traffic lights are on red?
5. Is it possible that different traffic lights mean different things in different Member States (e.g. a flashing amber light)?
6. Are there European rules on road signs and on the appearance (colours) of traffic signs?
7. Are there uniform exhaust gas standards in the Union for lorries and cars? If not, how great is the margin between the most stringent and the most generous limit value?
8. Is there a general obligation to wear a seat belt and is there a standard speed limit on European roads?

Answer given by Mme de Palacio on behalf of the Commission
(15 October 1999)

1. The Community has been very active in the field of legislative standards for vehicle construction, known as type approval. To date, over 50 directives have been adopted, many of which have been
subsequently amended by additional legislation to reflect technical developments in vehicle design. Most of
these can be considered to have a direct or indirect effect on the safety of drivers. A list of the directives is
forwarded to the Honourable Member as well as the Secretariat of the Parliament.

In addition to type approval legislation, other European legislation that affects the safety of drivers of
vehicles includes Council Regulation (EEC) 3820/85 of 20 December 1985 on the harmonization of
certain social legislation relating to road transport (1) and Regulation (EEC) 3821/85 of 20 December 1985
on recording equipment in road transport (1) dealing with drivers’ rest hours, Directive 91/0439/EEC of
29 July 1991 on driving licences (1), Directive 96/0096/EC of 20 December 1996 on the approximation of
the laws of the Member States relating to roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles and their trailers (1),
on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to compulsory use of safety belts in
vehicles of less than 3,5 tonnes (1) and a large package of legislation in the field of transport of dangerous
goods (Directive 94/0055/EC of 21 November 1994 (1)).

2. Directive 91/0439/EEC on driving licences does not apply to motor vehicles with a maximum design
speed of 50 kilometres an hour (km/h) or less, or with an engine of 50 cubic centimetre (cm³) or less.
Agricultural or forestry vehicles are also exempt from the scope of the directive. This means that individual
Member States may choose to allow people to drive such vehicles on public roads on their territory
without any form of driving licence. In addition, there will exist citizens in Member States who have
driving licences but who have never taken a driving test, since they acquired them prior to the
introduction of driving tests in their Member States.

3. There are no standard rules for registration plates but there is a standard concerning where these
plates must be fitted on the vehicle. Moreover, there is Council Regulation (EC) 2411/98 of 3 November
1998 on the recognition in intra-Community traffic of the distinguishing sign of the Member State in
which motor vehicles and their trailers are registered (1).

4. and 5. There is no Community legislation on the rules applying to traffic lights. The 1968 Economic
commission for Europe of the United Nations (UN-ECE) convention on road signs does lay down rules on
traffic lights (in Articles 23 and 24). It states that a red light signifies that a vehicle may not pass, whilst an
amber flashing light means that a vehicle may pass whilst exercising caution. However, it should be noted
that not all Member States are signatories to the convention, or apply it fully. The Commission has no
mandate to ensure the full application of this convention by all Member States. Thus individual Member
States may choose to allow traffic to turn right on red lights or have flashing amber lights if they do not
apply the convention.

5. There is no Community legislation on the rules applying to traffic signs. Each Member State decides
the colour of traffic signs. The UN-ECE convention on road signs does set harmonised designs for those
traffic signs giving warning information to motorists. However, it does not harmonise the colour of
direction signs. Again, it should be noted that not all Member States are signatories to the convention.

6. There is a large package of legislation laid down on exhaust gas standards in the Community in the
of the laws of the Member States relating to measures to be taken against air pollution by gases from
positive-ignition engines of motor vehicles (1) as last amended by Directive 98/0077/EC (1). This series of
directives lays down mandatory uniform emission standards.

Member States relating to roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles and their trailers (1) requires that
vehicles must have regular inspections at which the emission standards will be checked.


(2000/C 170 E/019)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1463/99

by Daniel Varela Suanzes-Carpegna (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(1 September 1999)

Subject: Canadian Fisheries Act C-27

The Commission has acknowledged that the Canadian Fisheries Act C-27 is inconsistent with international law. It has not been amended during its passage through Parliament, as called for by the EU on many occasions, and the recent EU-Canada Summit in June 1999 failed to make any progress on this serious issue, with the result that the extraterritorial aspects of Canadian fisheries legislation, which were described by the Commission in its answer to my previous question, prior to the Summit (E-0942/99) (1) as being 'a matter of grave concern for the Community', remain.

Can the Commission say what fresh action it will take in response to Canada's lack of will to resolve this serious dispute which will hinder the smooth progress of EU-Canada relations until it is settled?


Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(26 October 1999)

Community concerns about the Canadian legislation enabling Canada to implement the 1995 United Nations (UN) agreement on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks (Bill C-27) have made this one of the most important topics between the Community and Canada. This led to increased contacts with the Canadian side at both expert and political levels in the wake of the Community-Canada summit in June 1999. In the course of this process, substantial progress has been made. Canada submitted written statements which clarify the respective scopes of the extra-territorial legislation of 1994 and the newly enacted legislation and which confirm that the terms of the new legislation are intended to be fully consistent with the terms of the UN agreement and will be applied accordingly. As these statements meet Community concerns in a satisfactory manner, the most sensitive political issues can be brought to a close.

The Commission, therefore, issued Canada with a note verbale on 30 September 1999 setting out the Community's understanding of these political issues and reserving the Community's position on certain other extra-territorial aspects of Canadian fisheries legislation. In the latter context, it may be necessary to address some outstanding legal matters of a more technical nature once the Commission's analysis of the subordinate Canadian implementing regulations has been completed. To this end, Commission and Canadian experts will meet soon.