Is the Commission considering taking steps to coordinate the French and Spanish governments in order to put a definitive end to any road development — since this solution would make a future rail route pointless, in particular for the transport of goods?

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(28 October 1999)

Crossing the Pyrenees raises the thorny problem of the choice between road and rail in sensitive areas. It is true that the Community has jointly financed a feasibility study of the railway route since it is important for all alternative options to be examined. However, that rail link does not at the moment form part of the trans-European transport network as adopted by Parliament and the Council in 1996 (1). It can therefore not lay claim to funding under the TEN budget heading.

The decision to resume work on roads is a matter for the Member States concerned themselves, and where there is no infringement of, more particularly, the Community’s environmental rules the Commission has no powers of intervention. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Spain and France have reached an agreement to set up a unit to monitor the trade and traffic flows across the Pyrenees which will enable a full analysis of and any shifts in trade per mode, of the service provided and of the adjustment of the transport infrastructure networks to traffic to be updated very year and be sent to elected representatives and collective and trade organisations, from the end of 1999 onwards.

The Commission intends to continue its dialogue with the Member States and regions concerned by this project in order to satisfy itself that the choices made will be able to take account of both the economic and the environmental constraints. That discussion will, in particular, be one of the challenges involved in revising the approaches towards the trans-European transport network.


(2000/C 219 E/032) WRITTEN QUESTION E-1783/99

by Mark Watts (PSE) to the Commission

(11 October 1999)

Subject: Road safety

Road crashes are the major cause of death for EU citizens aged 45 years and under, account for about twice the total EU budget and cost more than cancer, coronary heart disease, pollution or congestion. The most recent communication from the Commission to the Council and Parliament was published in April 1997.

Will the Commission now make road safety a priority for EU transport policy by:

1. setting the fatality reduction target proposed by the European Parliament (no more than 25 000 deaths by the year 2010);
2. ensuring that the lion’s share of the transport safety budget is spent on road safety;
3. devoting more staff resources to road safety policy;
4. ensuring that any EU measure or commitment of resources will lead to genuine road safety benefits;
5. doing all it can to expedite a comprehensive proposal for safer car fronts for pedestrians and cyclists, incorporating all the four crash tests proposed by the European Experimental Vehicles Committee, which was the top priority in the Parliament’s recent road safety report;
6. providing as much support as possible to the European New War Assessment Programme.
Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(24 November 1999)

The Commission shares the Honourable Member’s concern at the toll of death and injury from road accidents. The communication to which the Honourable Member refers contained an action programme for road safety for the period 1997-2001 (1). At the request of the Parliament the Commission is preparing a report on the operation of this programme to date and a list of priority actions for the future. Work on this report is well advanced, and the Commission hopes to submit it to Parliament early next year.

On the specific questions raised:

1. The Commission is of the opinion that setting targets, when it has little or no control over the means of achieving them, is not the best way of promoting road safety at Community level. If individual Member States wish to set targets, the Commission would offer whatever support it could in achieving them.

2. The Commission wishes to promote transport safety across all modes. In allocating its transport safety budget the Commission will be guided by both the need for action and the value added at a European level. Using these criteria, in recent years the proportion of the transport safety budget spent on road safety measures has been around 60%.

3. The Commission always seeks to maximise the benefits from its limited staff resources.

4. Where a measure or commitment of resource has a bearing on road safety the Commission will, as it has in the past, seek to ensure that maximum benefits accrue from the measure or commitment.

5. The Commission is currently developing a proposal for legislation on pedestrian friendly car fronts and that proposal will be based upon the recently completed work done by the international scientific committee on vehicle safety (EEVC).

6. The Commission will continue to give both its financial and practical support to the Euro new car assessment programme (NCAP). It believes that EuroNCAP has promoted a 'market for safety' culture amongst the general public and within the vehicle manufacturing industry.

(1) COM(97) 131 final.

(2000/C 219 E/26)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1792/99

by Winfried Menrad (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(11 October 1999)

Subject: Surveillance of bathing water pursuant to Directive 76/160/EEC

Various local authorities in my region have drawn my attention to problems with the surveillance of bathing water in accordance with Directive 76/160/EEC (1).

The criticisms centre on the current assessment system, based solely on samples, about twenty of which may have to be taken.

Can the Commission answer the following:

1. Can we expect any EU legislation to replace the current assessment system by a procedure for determining a quality profile to reflect the quality of bathing water over long periods?

2. When can we expect amendment of Directive 76/160/EEC, and what form will it take?