The Commission considers that the European spatial development perspective and the framework for action on sustainable URBAN development should inform in the preparation of Interreg and URBAN programmes respectively. This is clearly stated in paragraph 14 of the draft Interreg guidelines and paragraph 6 of the draft URBAN guidelines.

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the types of measures and projects to be supported are for the local partnership to decide. However, in the indicative list of eligible measures set out in Annex 1 of the draft URBAN guidelines, there is specific mention of the creation of car-free areas and urban renewal activities.


WRITTEN QUESTION E-1977/99
by Ursula Schleicher (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(5 November 1999)

Subject: Regional planning and building projects in the Sintra-Cascais natural park in Portugal

Is the Commission aware that efforts are being made to build on parts of the Sintra-Cascais natural park, e.g. in the Cabo Raso and Abano areas, which would cause lasting damage to the park? Is the Commission prepared to bring pressure to bear on the competent bodies in Portugal to uphold Community efforts at nature conservation and to protect the Natura 2000 network?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission
(6 December 1999)

The Commission has taken note of the case set out by the Honourable Member, and will be registering it. The Sintra-Cascais natural park does coincide in part with the site of Community importance (SCI) of the same name which Portugal put forward for inclusion in the Natura 2000 network in accordance with Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (1).

The Commission will therefore make sure that the Portuguese authorities comply with Community law on nature protection. To that end, a letter will be sent to them drawing their attention to the case in question and reminding them of their obligations under Community law, in particular those imposed by Article 6 of Directive 92/43/EEC, which stipulates that any project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site but likely to have a significant effect thereon must be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives.


WRITTEN QUESTION E-1978/99
by Ursula Schleicher (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(5 November 1999)

Subject: Draft Commission communication on the application of Articles 92 and 93 of the EC Treaty to state aid in the form of loan guarantees

The draft communication forwarded to the Member States in January 1999 has created widespread uncertainty in the credit sector. Publication of this communication has substantially undermined the sector’s confidence in a guarantee instrument with legal certainty. It would result in savings banks and other banks granting credits being unable to take up such credit guarantees, with the result that retroactively they would have to assume — without any prior warning — the insolvency risk of businesses in receipt of loans.
1. Does the Commission really intend to issue this communication?

2. In what way will the legitimate expectations of credit institutions be guaranteed?

3. What action will the Commission take to counter the considerable uncertainty experienced by actors on the financial market?

4. Is the Commission aware that in critical instances the credit institutions would dispense with a state guarantee for their loans, with the result that the state would have to directly finance loans eligible for aid and hence the fiscally beneficial effect of simply proving a loan guarantee would no longer apply?

5. Given the confusing plethora of ‘communications’, ‘guidelines’ and ad hoc decisions concerning subsidies, does the Commission intend to create greater transparency and legal certainty by publishing a comprehensive and systematic overview of the law on European subsidies?

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(6 December 1999)

1. On 24 November 1999 the Commission adopted the notice on the application of Articles 87 and 88 (formerly Articles 92 and 93) of the EC Treaty to state aid in the form of guarantees.

2. The communication should not undermine the confidence of credit institutions, it is intended solely to clarify the rules applicable to aid in the form of guarantees.

3. The precise objective of the communication is to increase transparency and, in so doing, help mitigate the uncertainty felt by actors on the financial markets.

4. The Commission is not seeking to prohibit guarantees but simply to ensure their conformity with the aid rules.

5. The notice is designed to achieve greater transparency of rules hitherto contained in various texts.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1984/99
by Cristiana Muscardini (NI) to the Commission

(5 November 1999)

Subject: Alleged illegal discharges of waste material

European law lays down precise rules for the recycling and discharge of solid urban waste and similar material, which is supposed to end up in rubbish tips. It transpires that in Lombardy, between Milan and Varese, some firms have engaged in recycling activities using new technologies. They rent entire hangars for their recycling activities, take plastic waste, process it and send it to cement works to be used as fuel. In practice, however, these hangars are soon abandoned and used simply as depositories for solid waste, plastics, tarpaulins and PVC, in other words as unauthorised waste-tips.

As the turnover of such firms seems to have reached spectacular levels, but more particularly in view of the serious threat to public health and the environment: Is the Commission aware of this practice? If so, will it take action to draw up a directive laying down precise conditions for the storage and disposal of refuse and plastic waste to ensure that the use of such hangars does not become a full-scale activity, usurping the role which is currently played by waste tips?