Subject: Smoking as a cause of ill-health in the world and EU policy

Apart from causing cancer, fatal heart disease and a host of other illnesses, smoking is now being blamed for male impotence in smokers between the ages of 21 and 75, according to studies by the BMA. At the same time, research by the Athens Medical School has revealed that medical students are unaware of the harmful effects of smoking and that one in two smokes regularly. It should be pointed out that in Greece alone the number of young smokers increases by some 50 000 a year. In the EU the tobacco industry spends as much in one day alone on advertising its products as is spent in one year on information campaigns against smoking.

In view of the above, will the Council say: What action is it taking, what resources does it have available and what policy is it pursuing in order to address the prime cause of ill-health that can be tackled and protect the health of European citizens and young people in particular?

Reply

(13 March 2000)

Community action in this field complements the action taken by Member States. Within the framework of the powers granted to it, the Community pays particular attention to combating smoking and treats it as a priority.

Since 1986, various measures to combat cancer, and more recently the action plan to combat cancer adopted in 1996 and currently underway, have provided for specific steps to combat smoking. Similarly, the action programme on health promotion, information, education and training also targets tobacco abuse. It is planned to incorporate all vertical programmes in the field of health into the framework programme on health to be proposed to the European Parliament and the Council in the first quarter of the year.

Moreover, the Council, acting on proposals from the Commission, has already adopted, in 1989 and 1990, internal market Directives on labelling and tar yield, which do much to further that objective. Furthermore, a proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council was forwarded to those bodies on 7 January 2000. That Directive concerning the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States regarding the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco products is currently being examined.
More recently, on 6 July 1998, the Council, jointly with the European Parliament, adopted Directive 98/43/EC relating to the advertising and sponsorship of tobacco products, which is due to enter into force on 30 July 2001 at the latest. This Directive should have a particular impact on the young.

Since 1994, the Council has established, in the context of the Regulation on the common organisation of the market in raw tobacco, a Community fund financing tobacco research and information, half the resources of which are assigned to information projects on the dangers of smoking, aimed primarily at young people.

Finally, further to the Commission's communication of December 1996 on the present and proposed Community role in combating tobacco consumption and the Commission's September 1999 report to the Council and the European Parliament on progress achieved in relation to public health protection from the harmful effects of tobacco consumption, the Council at its meeting on 18 November 1999, adopted conclusions on combating tobacco consumption and held a policy debate focusing particularly on protecting young people from the harmful effects of tobacco consumption and on the European Union's action in the international context.

This was an open debate.

Regarding the external angle, on 22 October 1999 the Council adopted a Decision authorising the Commission, for matters falling within the sphere of Community competence, to open negotiations, in the context of the World Health Organisation, on an International Framework Convention for Tobacco Control and related protocols.

(2000/C 280 E/002)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1912/99
by Konstantinos Hatzidakis (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(29 October 1999)

Subject: Substandard road construction funded by the 2nd Community Support Framework for Greece

In reply to my previous question (P-3016/98) (1), the Commission acknowledged that there were widespread problems with substandard road-building in Greece funded by the 2nd Community Support Framework and assured me that it would monitor the question closely and would not fail to apply the relevant Community rules, if necessary.

Will the Commission say whether it has any further information concerning the extent of substandard workmanship in all the projects funded in Greece by the 2nd CSF? Does that information show that the proportion of substandard work has fallen and that Greece has taken the necessary measures to remedy it? If not, will the Commission say what steps it will take to ensure that this tremendously important issue is now dealt with seriously and that those responsible are held to account?


Supplementary answer
given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(18 February 2000)

According to the information received from the Greek authorities, an independent quality control mechanism (ESPEL) has checked 1 025 of the projects part-financed in Greece under the second Community support framework for the 1994-99 programming period, including road projects. From its beginning work in January 1998 up to June 1999, half its 1 189 site visits resulted in the projects being checked by sampling while the others were checked systematically between October 1998 and June 1999.