The Commission performed verifications under Article 35 of the Euratom Treaty at Sellafield in December 1993, and at Cap de la Hague in July 1996. At the time of the decision to reactivate the verifications (December 1989) it was envisaged that reprocessing plants would be visited once every three years. The effort is thus less than was originally considered sufficient. The Commission has started to make available the necessary resources in 1998. A communication to the Council and to the Parliament is being prepared which will provide an overview of the verifications carried out in the period 1990-1999, together with an estimate of the resources required to establish a systematic programme.

The Commission maintains a watching brief on the situation with regard to levels of radioactivity in the environment on the basis of the information received under Article 36 of the Euratom Treaty, site specific data provided by Member States authorities, which may include results of measurements carried out by the operators, and other sources of information brought to the Commission's attention. In this context, the Commission has had no specific representations about the work undertaken by the University of Wales.

The Commission is undertaking actions appropriate to the OSPAR strategy with regard to radioactive substances. It is, however, a matter for the OSPAR commission to coordinate and ensure implementation of the OSPAR strategy through the establishment of an action plan and the development of procedures for review of progress achieved through the strategy. The Commission is committed, along with other contracting parties, to continued involvement in the work of the OSPAR commission and is participating in the relevant fora established by that commission to ensure proper support and direction.

(2000/C 280 E/065)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2530/99

by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(4 January 2000)

Subject: Safety at European Union ports

The recent tragic accident involving the passenger vessel Superfast III in which 12 people were killed in a fire which broke out 14 nautical miles from the port of Patras highlights the inadequacy of Community directives and regulations which make provision for safety during sea passages, but fail to provide for the safety and health of passengers and workers at ports and controls on the embarkation and disembarkation of passengers and vehicles.

Will the Commission say:

1. Does safety at ports constitute part of the common policy on maritime safety?

2. Given the enormous annual movement of passengers through EU ports, has it taken any measures to protect the safety and health of passengers and workers at ports, and, if so, what measures?

3. Does it intend to take measures to ensure adequate controls on freight vehicles so that they do not constitute a threat to the safety of vessels while at sea?

4. As part of the follow-up to the Green paper on EU ports, does it intend to provide for mandatory minimum standards at community ports regarding the safety and health of passengers, bearing in mind that more than 1 million persons travel annually through EU ports?

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(8 February 2000)

1. Safety in ports has not been specifically addressed in the Commission communication on a common policy on safe seas (1), which primarily focused on identifying, based upon the international maritime safety conventions adopted within the International maritime organisation, possible Community measures to
enhance safety at sea. The Parliament, with its resolution of 11 March 1994 on a common policy on safe seas (1), approved the analysis contained in the Commission communication and called for a careful and speedy execution of the action programme contained therein.

In its green paper on sea ports and maritime infrastructure (2), the Commission further highlighted the importance of the role of Community ports in implementing and enforcing the Community’s maritime safety legislation and in ensuring a high level of port services that are intrinsically related to the safety of ships.


The safety of workers in ports is covered by a number of directives adopted in the social field in particular covering issues related to safety and health at work. A listing of this legislation is forwarded direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament’s Secretariat.

3. The control of lorries to be loaded on board is governed by the international conventions on maritime safety and marine pollution prevention, which include special requirements for the carriage of dangerous goods in packaged form or in solid form in bulk. These international requirements have been complemented by Community legislation which imposes reporting obligations on vessels bound for or leaving Community ports and carrying dangerous or polluting goods (7).

4. The Commission has no intention to table, in the framework of the follow-up to its green paper on seaports and maritime infrastructure, proposals for mandatory minimum standards in the Community with regard to the safety and hygiene of passengers. However, the Commission intends to issue a general communication on safety at sea, and responsibilities of flag states, port states and industry related more specifically to ship safety.

(1) COM(93) 66 final.
(3) COM(97) 678 final.


by Neil MacCormick (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(4 January 2000)

Subject: Free movement of doctors and patient safety

In its Explanatory Memorandum attached to the proposed ‘SLIM Directive’ simplifying and updating the EU sectoral Directives on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications (COM(97) 638 final) (1) the