channels for supermarkets on the one hand and small retailers on the other. As a result, small businesses in
the sector have been severely affected, since advertising and special offers for pet foods are being
provided only to supermarkets, so that small retailers are unable to pass on these benefits to their
customers.

This discrimination is exacerbated by the fact that manufacturers are offering supermarkets generally lower
purchase prices for pet foods than small shops. This can be seen from the fact that small retailers are not
properly informed of special offers, which means that the prices they charge are higher than those charged
by supermarkets. As a result, consumers are choosing to shop at supermarkets and neglecting the small
shops in their neighbourhood, causing many of them to close down.

Complaints have been made to the Spanish authorities about this unfair competition, since Spanish law
does not allow goods to be sold at below cost price in the way that is occurring in the pet food sector.

Will the Commission examine, within the sphere of its responsibilities, whether the case in question also
involves breaches of Community legislation on trade and competition?

Does it not consider that this situation in Spain undermines consumer rights, since it encourages people to
shop for these products at supermarkets?

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(15 March 2000)

At the present time, the Commission does not have any information which would justify the initiation of
proceedings against petfood manufacturers in Spain, nor has it received any complaint regarding the
practices objected to by the Honourable Member.

It should be pointed out that the differences in petfood prices between supermarkets and small retailers are
not in themselves proof that there has been a breach of the Community rules on competition. In a market
economy the prices in question may simply reflect differences in the negotiating power of the parties
concerned.

In any case, the Spanish competition authorities, and in particular the ‘Servicio de Defensa de la
Competencia’, would seem better placed to look into this matter, given that any distortions of competition
are essentially occurring in Spain.

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WRITTEN QUESTION P-0240/00

by Hans Modrow (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(31 January 2000)

Subject: CDU funding scandal

The preamble and Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union lay down the imperative of upholding
democracy and abiding by the rule of law. The Tampere European Council charted the goal of developing
the Union as an area of freedom, security, and justice.

Current political and economic developments in Germany are placing a question mark over observance of
these principles. Manifest infringements of the principles recognised by all Member States are likely to fuel
misgivings in the new German Länder and central and eastern European countries about adoption of the
acquis communautaire, especially where compliance with democratic rules of conduct is concerned.

1. What does the Commission know about the sale of Leuna to the Elf Aquitaine company and what
steps will it take in view of the fact that DM 30 m may have found its way into the CDU party coffers to
be used as election campaign funds?
2. How does it propose to investigate the suspicion that money is being laundered in European banks, especially in Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Luxembourg, and enlighten the European public as to the facts of the matter?

3. Does it know of any other cases of subsidy fraud and distortion of competition connected with privatisation of State-owned businesses in the former GDR? If so, what further investigations does it intend to carry out?

4. Have persons implicated in the German funding scandal attempted to influence political decisions of the Commission or other EU bodies in favour of particular firms?

5. Will the Commission investigate whether money from the illicit accounts and other dubious channels was used for the CDU's European election campaigns in 1989, 1994, and 1999?

**Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission**

(23 February 2000)

In the framework of its responsibilities for state aid control, pursuant to Articles 87 and 88 (ex Articles 92 and 93) of the EC Treaty, the Commission is currently investigating whether the cost of the construction of the Leuna 2000 refinery by Elf was artificially inflated. Elf could have received aid payments which go beyond the 35% aid ceiling permitted in Eastern Germany. If this were to be the case, the Commission would request the reimbursement of part of the aid. As regards the investigation of possible fraud in relation to the granting of state aid, it should be noted that such investigations are the responsibility of the national authorities in Member States. The Commission will study with interest any conclusions such investigations may lead to in order to see whether it has to draw any consequences. However, it is only if the fraud is allegedly connected with the use of direct Community subsidies that the European antifraud office (OLAF) could intervene pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999 of the Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 1999 concerning investigations conducted by the European antifraud office (OLAF).\(^{(1)}\)

\(^{(1)}\) OJ L 136, 31.5.1999.

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(2000/C 280 E/239)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0256/00**

by Daniel Hannan (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(7 February 2000)

Subject: European Union publicity material

In the answer given by Commissioner Oreja to Written Question E-3488/98 \(^{(1)}\) he indicated that it was Commission policy not to issue publications in the UK except upon request.

The Commissioner also indicated that one million copies of the publication 'Euroquest’ were published, targeted at schools.

Will the Commission indicate who requested so many copies?

\(^{(1)}\) OJ C 297, 15.10.1999, p. 75.

**Answer given by Mr Prodi on behalf of the Commission**

(3 March 2000)

'Euroquest’, an 18-page illustrated booklet and map suitable for 7 to 11-year-old school children (Key Stage 2), was written by British teachers and published in 1998 by the Commission’s Representation in the United Kingdom. A copy is sent direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament’s Secretariat.