3. Does the parallel use of airspace by military aviation pose any safety risk to flights?

4. What are its proposals and those of Eurocontrol on this matter, and specifically on the reduction of the amount of airspace set aside for military flights, so as to increase the airspace for civil aviation flights, thereby increasing their safety?

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(22 May 2000)

1. and 2. The percentage of airspace used for military purposes varies between Member States, but is also not constant over time or even over airspace altitude. In addition some 'military' airspace can be used flexibly and will be open to civil use as military operations allow.

It is, however, clear that the percentage of airspace used for military purposes is significant and imposes a constraint on civil flights.

The Commission’s communication of 1st December 1999 (1) on the creation of the European single sky sets out some further information on this subject in its fourth annex.

3. and 4. Each Member State should possess a well-regulated air-traffic control sector, with access to all necessary information, in particular strategic planning data, flight plan data and air picture. Mutually coherent management of airspace by civil and military controllers is essential for smooth air-traffic control, which in turn maximises safety. If this is the case, there should be no safety issues arising from use of airspace by military and civilian flights and other activities affecting airspace.

The Commission has established a high level group constituted of representatives of Member States’ civil and military air management authorities, which is currently preparing a report to assist the Commission to prepare proposals on the integrated management of airspace and on the development of new concepts, procedures and practices for air traffic management. The group will report in June 2000. The issue of a more efficient use of the available airspace, including current military restrictions, is closely examined in this context.


WRITTEN QUESTION E-0954/00

by Giles Chichester (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(29 March 2000)

Subject: MCI Worldcom/Sprint telecoms merger

The European Commission now has before it a competition case of exceptional importance to the development of the Internet, information technology, and communications in the European common market — the proposed merger of MCI WorldCom and Sprint.

1. The merger of MCI WorldCom and Sprint threatens to create a stifling and unacceptable concentration of power over the Internet in the hands of one company. Estimates provided by outside parties, place MCI WorldCom-Sprint’s combined share of the Internet backbone market at between 43 and 70%. The proposed merger would enable MCI WorldCom-Sprint to use its dominant position to dictate the terms and pricing of critical Internet backbone connections to European backbones and, in turn, Internet service providers (ISPs), as well as content and portal sites.

How will the European Commission prevent the proposed merger of MCI WorldCom and Sprint from creating a damaging and anti-competitive concentration among top-level Internet backbone providers that would harm European Internet development and growth?
2. In 1998, when the European Commission moved to block the combination of the MCI and WorldCom backbones by requiring the divestiture of MCI Internet, acquired by Cable & Wireless, it recognised the immediate and significant competitive harm the combination posed. The history of the MCI's Internet backbone divestiture to Cable & Wireless shows that requiring the divestiture of Internet backbone assets is simply not enough. The integrated nature of MCI's Internet backbone; MCI WorldCom's apparent efforts to only partially satisfy the divestiture conditions and Cable & Wireless's lack of an established market presence, base of knowledge, and infrastructure in the Internet backbone market combined in to result in the significant erosion of an important Internet market force.

If the European Commission decides that a divestiture is required, how will it structure the divestiture of Sprint's Internet or MCI WorldCom's UUNet to ensure the preservation of the competitive balance among top-level Internet backbone providers?

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

(24 May 2000)

The proposed merger between MCI WorldCom and Sprint was notified to the Commission on 11 January 2000. On 21 February 2000, the Commission decided to open a second phase investigation of the effects of the proposed transaction on competition. The Commission has to conclude its investigation by 12 July 2000.

One of the areas of focus for this second phase investigation is the provision of Internet connectivity where there are serious concerns that the combined entity would be able to exercise market power independently of competitors and customers. As the investigation has not yet been concluded it is too early to conclude on the effect on competition in the top level Internet connectivity market and even more so on possible remedies to be proposed by the notifying parties to solve any competition issue.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0955/00**

by Gorka Knörr Borràs (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(29 March 2000)

Subject: Production of nuts in Catalonia

In 1989 the COM in fruits and vegetables was reformed, and a plan was instituted for improving the quality and marketing of the nut producers' organisations, to be implemented over a 10-year period. The measures adopted in support of this sector will, therefore, come to an end in May 2000.

Catalonia dedicates a large proportion of its cultivated land to the production of nuts and carobs: these account for 12.3% of all cultivated land in the region, but as much as 40-50% in Tarragona province, while Lleida (Lérida) province is also characterised by a high degree of specialisation in these products. Nonetheless, this sector has had to face considerable competition in the form of cheap imports from Turkey, the US and the countries of northern Africa, which are benefiting from the reduction in customs duties on these products.

What action does the Commission intend to take to encourage and promote measures to guarantee the income levels of nut and carob producers?