WRITTEN QUESTION P-2530/00
by Emmanouil Bakopoulos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(25 July 2000)

Subject: Fires in southern Europe

Will the Commission release emergency appropriations to cover the damage caused by the widespread fires which have raged across southern Europe and Greece, in particular, in recent days, in view of the need for exceptional funding to compensate those affected by the disaster and to restore the natural environment?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission
(12 September 2000)

The Commission is collecting the information it needs to answer the question. It will communicate its findings as soon as possible.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2545/00
by José Pomés Ruiz (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(28 July 2000)

Subject: Decentralised cooperation with Latin America

The Commission apparently intends to suspend or phase out the Community programmes for decentralised cooperation with Latin America.

These programmes are currently cornerstones of EU cooperation with Latin America and their ability to involve members of civil society and the results they have achieved have been recognised.

What are the Commission’s real reasons for suspending these programmes?

Does it perhaps want to include measures of this kind among its negative priorities?

Could it be that Latin America will in future be one of the Commission’s negative priorities?

What political effects does the Commission think that a decision of this kind will have, particularly as regards the European Union’s credibility in Latin America?

Does the Commission not consider that its position is inconsistent with the statements made by the Heads of State and Government meeting in Rio de Janeiro in June 1999?

Lastly, is the Commission not breaking the commitment to openness it gave to Parliament and which Mr Prodi endorsed on his appointment?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission
(8 September 2000)

The Commission has not taken any decision aimed at suspending or terminating the Latin America decentralised cooperation programmes (AL INVEST, ALURE, ALFA, URB-AL). Rumours to that effect are purely speculative.

It is of course the Commission’s duty to evaluate the external aid instruments for which it is responsible in the light of the objectives it is pursuing, the practical results achieved using those instruments and the means at its disposal.
Against that background, it is true that the Commission is now taking stock of the programmes and their prospects. But no conclusions can be drawn at this stage.

Whatever conclusions may be drawn, the Commission is aware of the key role the decentralised programmes play in Latin America as a channel for dialogue with civil society on both sides of the Atlantic.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2564/00
by Emmanouil Bakopoulos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(1 August 2000)

Subject: Abolition of visas for Bulgaria and Romania

On 26 January 2000 the Commission recommended the abolition of the requirement that Bulgarian and Romanian citizens be in possession of a visa in order to enter the fifteen EU Member States.

What practical measures have since been adopted in order to implement that proposal?

Answer given by Mr Vitorino on behalf of the Commission
(12 September 2000)

The Commission would refer the Honourable Member to its answer to written E-2061/00 by Mr Gahrton (1).

(1) See p. 174.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2575/00
by Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL) and Arlindo Cunha (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(1 August 2000)

Subject: Rules governing the application of agro-environmental measures in Portugal

It appears that there are considerable loopholes in the implementation of some agro-environmental measures in Portugal, particularly those relating to the preservation of extensive methods of cultivating cork oak and holm oak and organic farming.

These loopholes exist at three main levels:

- a lack of preparation among the technical teams carrying out checks at regional level;
- the lack of a regulatory framework as regards supervision;
- the lack of prior information for farmers on the technical requirements to be met under the various measures.

As a result of these loopholes, there are frequent disparities as regards the interpretation of the legal and technical requirements for the correct implementation of the various measures and, consequently, farmers benefiting from these measures suffer unjust treatment.