municipalities in different parts of the country. Limited co-operation with other municipalities from the region, on a test basis, may also form part of the programme. Since the programme will be aimed at localities which are willing to co-operate with other European regions, it will certainly favour those Bosnian municipalities which have elected moderate and reformist administrations.

Since 1996 the Community has allocated approximately € 29 million to support the functioning and consolidation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state. In 2000 Bosnia's common institutions — the Presidency, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Ministers and the six line ministries — will continue to receive technical assistance. This will build on the previous programme of assistance to the state institutions. A specific objective of the new programme will be to increase co-ordination and co-operation between the state and the entities and to develop an independent and professional civil service. The latter, when established, will also contribute to improving relations between the centre and the entities/periphery.

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(2001/C 89 E/155)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2058/00

by Cristiana Muscardini (UEN) to the Commission

(27 June 2000)

Subject: Programmes to protect witnesses and persons assisting the course of justice

In various Member States of the Union, in line with practice in the US, there are statutory protection programmes for persons who have assisted the course of justice, be they members of criminal gangs who have 'turned state's evidence' ('pentiti') or key witnesses who require protection. It often happens that criminals who inform on their former associates provide the judicial authorities with vital information that enables the latter to bring charges and secure the conviction of those responsible for crimes. In Italy it can also happen that witnesses, after having assisted the course of justice, are not protected as they were promised, or as the economic circumstances of their families would require. It is not unusual to find that 'pentiti' who have committed a string of murders receive large cash awards, in addition to the monthly allowances regularly paid to their families, while the promises made to state witnesses are broken, or no proceedings are taken in respect of the crimes they report.

The Commission:

1. Does it know what rules apply in the Member States to the handling of prosecution witnesses and criminals who have turned state's evidence?

2. Does it consider that this specific sector could come under the heading of police and judicial cooperation and, in particular, within the scope of the new article K of the Treaty of Amsterdam?

3. If so, while bearing in mind the different situations which might arise in terms of crime in the various Member States, is the Commission prepared to submit proposals aimed at harmonising protection programmes for informants and prosecution witnesses with a view to bringing them all into line with those providing the most guarantees and protection for such persons and their families, but without granting total immunity to those who have committed heinous crimes, multiple murders or crimes against minors?

4. If not, why does the Commission not instruct the European Police Office to gather all the information necessary with a view to bringing the various systems into line and avoiding excessive divergence between them?

Answer given by Mr Vitorino on behalf of the Commission

(26 July 2000)

The Commission agrees with the Honourable Member on the important role played by witnesses and individuals who participate or have participated in criminal organisations to fight against these organisations by providing information on their composition and activities.
A Council resolution (1) on the protection of witnesses in the fight against international organised crime adopted on 23 November 1995 aimed to ensure the safety of witnesses who possesses intelligence or information which could be material to criminal proceedings and which would be liable to endanger them. A majority of Member States have laws under which witnesses are accorded special protection.

A second resolution (2) adopted on 20 December 1996 on individuals who cooperate with the judicial process aimed to achieve more efficient co-operation in combating international organised crime by using statements made to the authorities by members of criminal organisations who agree to cooperate with the judicial process. In this respect, some Member States apply general laws, which serve for implementing the provisions of the resolution. The approach and needs differ from one Member State to another.

The Council is currently considering how to implement Recommendation 25: ‘The prevention and control of organised crime: An European Union Strategy for the beginning of the new Millennium’ (3), which states that a proposal should be prepared for an instrument on the position and protection of witnesses and of persons who participate or have participated in criminal organisations.


(2001/C 89 E/156)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2068/00

by Rosemarie Müller (PSE) to the Commission

(27 June 2000)

Subject: Terrorism

On what understanding of terrorism does the Commission base its activity and, in particular, how does it distinguish between different forms of cross-border terrorism?

How does the Commission assess the possibility:

– that the European Union’s territory is becoming a reserve for foreign terrorists?

– that foreign terrorists are carrying out attacks on the European Union’s territory?

How does it assess the possibility that terrorists acting independently of states may come to possess weapons of mass destruction?

– If it regards this as a probable option, how does it assess the possibility that weapons of mass destruction might be used by terrorists acting independently of states?

What steps has the Commission taken to analyse and avert terrorist threats?

To what extent is it cooperating for this purpose with:

– the authorities of the Member States?

– other states?

– international organisations?