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

Union legislation concerning terrorism (such as the Convention relating to extradition between the Member States) refers to the criminal conduct specified in Articles 1 and 2 of the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism of 27 January 1977 (which cover the most serious offences, such as the taking of hostages, the use of firearms and explosives, acts of violence against the life of liberty of persons or which create a collective danger for persons).

Closer cooperation between Member States, including the improved exchange of operational information about terrorist groups, is essential to avoid the Union’s territory becoming a reserve for foreign terrorists or a target for terrorist attacks. In this respect it should be noted that Europol’s taking up responsibilities in the field of counter-terrorism is providing further impetus for the activities of the Member States through the exchange and development of information.

Despite some terrorist attacks, statistics generally show a decreasing trend in Member States over the last few years. The possibility that terrorist groups can get possession of weapons of mass destruction is, however, a serious challenge facing not only the Union, but the international community as a whole. In this respect, it is important that Member States adopt standard measures to investigate and avert acts of terrorism.

Article 29 of the Treaty on European Union mentions the fight against terrorism as a means to contribute towards achieving the Union’s objective of providing its citizens with a high level of safety within an area of freedom, security and justice. In this respect the Commission cooperates with the Member States in the relevant Council bodies, including the Council working group on terrorism as well as within Europol. The Commission believes that the fight against terrorism demands concerted international action. Therefore it is important for the Union to cooperate with relevant third countries, such as the United States. With this country there exists broad agreement on the fight against terrorism and cooperation takes place in the Transatlantic dialogue. The Union also plays an active role in the work carried out in the fight against terrorism by the United Nations, in the framework of which a number of important conventions have been and continue to be negotiated.

(2001/C 89 E/157)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2076/00  
by Chris Davies (ELDR) to the Commission  
(27 June 2000)

Subject: Ethnic Business

DG Enterprise has commissioned research into ethnic minority business.

What progress has been made to date on these research projects?

What information has been obtained, and what lessons have been learnt so far?

Will these reports be made public?

Answer given by Mr Liikanen on behalf of the Commission  
(20 July 2000)

In Council Decision 97/15/EC of 9 December 1996 on a third multiannual programme for small and medium-sized enterprises in the European Union (¹) the Commission is asked to promote entrepreneurship and support target groups, amongst which are entrepreneurs from ethnic minorities.