As the Honourable Member will be aware, the European Union has always taken a clear stand on human rights, whether through public pronouncements or representations to the Cuban authorities. Moreover, the EU Havana Human Rights Working Group maintains a useful dialogue with dissident groups and all those with a role in Cuban society.

The EU objective towards Cuba, as stated in the Common Position on Cuba adopted by the Council on 2 December 1996, remains to encourage a process of peaceful transition to pluralist democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as sustainable economic recovery and improved living standards for the Cuban people. Urging the Cuban regime to make Cuban legislation and the enforcement thereof fully compatible and consonant with accepted international standards also comes within that objective.

When carrying out its seventh evaluation of the Common Position in June 2000, the Council noted that although there continued to be mixed signals, there had not been any fundamental change of policy on the part of the Cuban government either towards the accomplishment of the aims of the Common Position or in the opposite direction.

The Council felt that despite the fact that the Cuban authorities had cancelled the EU Troika visit to Havana scheduled for the end of April and withdrawn their application for Cuban accession to the Cotonou Agreement, it was essential that the EU should deploy further efforts to engage the Cuban authorities in a constructive and frank dialogue on a variety of issues of common interest that might actually produce tangible results, particularly in the political, economic and civil rights spheres.

(2001/C 113 E/235)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2933/00

by Alexander de Roo (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(11 September 2000)

Subject: European energy tax involving 13 or 14 Member States?

At Parliament’s hearing of Commissioner-designate Bolkestein, I asked him on behalf of the Environment Committee whether — in view of Spain’s veto of the introduction of an energy/CO₂ tax throughout the EU — he was prepared to use the enhanced cooperation clause in the Treaty. I said that a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ would suffice.

Mr Bolkestein replied that he needed a year to give an answer. The year has now elapsed.

On the eve of the major climate conference in The Hague it is essential for the Commission to take the initiative in introducing a proper energy/CO₂ tax with the 12 to 14 Member States that are in favour. This will mean less disruption of the internal market, because a number of Member States are currently introducing their own modest national energy/CO₂ taxes. With the exception of Denmark, major consumers come away unscathed. If the tax were to be introduced EU-wide in 12 to 14 Member States the major consumers will also make efforts to save energy and to use more renewable sources of energy.

Spain — and two other Member States currently behaving obstructively — will soon change their mind, because they, too, will have to satisfy the Kyoto climate obligations; and an energy/CO₂ tax is an indispensable means of doing so.

Is the Commission prepared to take an initiative in proposing a European energy/CO₂ tax on the basis of the enhanced cooperation clause? A simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ will suffice.
Answer given by Mr Bolkestein on behalf of the Commission

(19 October 2000)

The adoption by the Council of the proposal for a directive restructuring the Community framework for
the taxation of energy products (1) is still a priority for the Commission, and at its meetings on economic
and financial affairs and the environment the Council has on a number of occasions expressed its support.

The general problem of enhanced cooperation is the subject of detailed discussions as part of the
intergovernmental conference and the Commission has made ambitious proposals. The French Presidency
presented a memo at the end of August stressing the need to make enhanced cooperation a means of
integration and pointing also to the question of the exclusion of a number of areas from the scope of
enhanced cooperation. Consequently, the Honourable Member can be given a precise answer to his
question only in the light of the conclusions of the intergovernmental conference (IGC).

(1) OJ C 139, 6.5.1997.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2942/00
by Generoso Andria (PPE-DE), Stefano Zappalà (PPE-DE)
and Francesco Fiori (PPE-DE) to the Council

(20 September 2000)

Subject: Crime in Italy

In Italy crime has risen, and continues to rise, inexorably and the measures implemented by the
government are still wholly inadequate.

Until recently, crime was particularly widespread in large metropolitan areas, while areas whose economy
was primarily agricultural, or those which had not undergone large-scale urbanisation, were considered to
be ‘havens of peace’. Now, however, no area is exempt from the rise in crime, which is increasingly caused
both by the growing numbers of local criminals and by those who migrate to Italy from non-EU countries.

Rural, agriculture-based areas have no established traditions in this respect and so the locals are finding
themselves unprepared to tackle such crime. Even the state machinery for preventing and curbing crime,
embodied by its police forces, though visibly present in towns and cities, in outlying areas offers at the
very most a simple, and often unequipped, carabinieri station with few police officers. Despite the
organisational incompetence of the government, in the person of the Minister for Home Affairs, police
officers on the whole do all they possibly can to protect the public, sometimes paying with their lives.

Defenceless citizens also pay the price by being robbed of their personal effects and having their daily lives
turned upside-down by both serious and petty crimes perpetrated by criminals who are often ignorant,
arrogant, savage and who will stop at nothing: such a case occurred recently in Giffoni, Salerno province,
where a defenceless jeweller was beaten on the head with a hammer in broad daylight and was left to
bleed to death, with nobody coming to his aid.

In the light of the above, what measures does the Council intend to take against the Italian Government to
ensure that a more effective crime prevention and punishment system is put in place, thereby enabling EU
citizens to live in peace?

Reply

(20 November 2000)

The Honourable Members of the European Parliament are informed that as the facts and events mentioned
in their written question are purely within the competence of the Italian State, the Council has no
competence to take action.