WRITTEN QUESTION E-3170/00
by Adriana Poli Bortone (UEN) to the Commission
(10 October 2000)

Subject: Setting up of an immigration monitoring centre

Following the debate on the report submitted to the European Parliament on 30 March 2000 by Jorge Salvador Hernandez Mollar on the action plans drawn up by the High-Level Working Group on the main countries of origin and transit of asylum-seekers and migrants, will the Commission not propose the setting up of an immigration monitoring centre in Italy, and specifically in Puglia, which is a habitual region of transit for illegal immigration?

Answer given by Mr Vitorino on behalf of the Commission
(10 November 2000)

On 24 March 2000 the Commission presented to the Council and Parliament a scoreboard to chart progress on the creation of an area of 'freedom, security and justice in the European Union' (1), stressing how important it was to improve the exchange of statistics and information on asylum and immigration, with a view to managing migration flows more efficiently.

In that context, it referred to the setting-up of a (virtual) European centre for monitoring migration flows, calling to mind the preparatory measures financed by the Odysseus programme on the basis of a prior feasibility study.

Following its communication of 23 February 1994 on immigration and asylum policy (2), the Commission had requested University College London to carry out a study analysing in detail all the information collected by the institutions relating to international migration in Europe, with a view to identifying shortcomings, suggesting the best means to remedy these shortcomings and outlining the options open to the Commission to attain that end, including the setting up of a new body.

The results of that study led to two pilot projects under the Odysseus programme. In 1998, as part of the first project, the Free University of Brussels developed a European university network to find and exchange information on asylum and immigration. In 1999, the second project led University College London to develop a network and website known as the 'European migration information network' (EMIN).

Bearing in mind these attainments and the work of the 'Centre for information and exchange on asylum' (CIREA) and the 'Centre for information and exchange on external border crossing' (Cirefi) in the Council, together with the statistical action plan adopted by the Council in 1998 and implemented by Eurostat, the Commission is currently examining with the Member States how to develop these initiatives further in keeping with the objectives which have been reaffirmed on a number of occasions, and by Parliament in particular.

(2) COM(94) 23 final.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3177/00
by Luis Berenguer Fuster (PSE) to the Commission
(10 October 2000)

Subject: Transparency

Since it took office, the Prodi Commission has made repeated promises regarding transparency. Transparency in the management of public affairs would require that no meetings be held in secret and that, in any case, the substance of all meetings be made public.
It has emerged from Spanish press reports that the Spanish Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Rato, travelled incognito to Brussels on 14 September 2000 to hold a meeting with Mr Monti.

In the interests of transparency, will the Commission answer the following questions:

1. Was a meeting held between Mr Monti and Mr Rato on 14 September 2000?
2. Was the meeting a normal scheduled appointment for Mr Monti or was secrecy requested by the Spanish side?
3. Did Mr Rato bring pressure to bear regarding any matters currently being dealt with by the Commission?
4. If so, what were the matters concerned and what was he seeking to achieve?

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

(15 November 2000)

1. The Member of the Commission with responsibility for competition met Mr Rato, second Vice-President of the Spanish Government on 14 September 2000.

2. The meeting had been planned for quite some time. As Mr Rato was in Brussels on that day and the Member of the Commission with responsibility for competition had no prior engagements that evening, the meeting was organised quickly. The Spanish authorities certainly did not request the meeting to be kept secret.

3. and 4. The meeting discussed the costs of transition to competition in the Spanish electricity sector (CTC) and was part of normal contacts between the Commission and the Member States for handling state aid cases. No pressure was brought to bear, it was simply a matter of exchanges of information and discussions on various points of view. The Honourable Member must be aware that any such pressure would have been unacceptable.

(2001/C 136 E/231)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3178/00**

by Luis Berenguer Fuster (PSE) to the Commission

(10 October 2000)

Subject: Independence of the Commission in the case involving the Kingdom of Spain concerning the costs of transition to competition for electricity companies

In the past the Commission has maintained that, in its view, it was not inappropriate for Commission Vice-President Mrs de Palacio to act in the case relating to the costs of transition to competition (CTCs) for the electricity companies, despite having been a member of the government which adopted this measure.

New developments have now occurred which may alter that situation. On the one hand, it has been announced that the Commission is to open formal proceedings and, on the other, the Spanish Government (essentially the same as the one of which Mrs de Palacio was a member) has stepped up its pressure, while the statements made by the Vice-President show a great deal of understanding and sympathy for the government’s position.

In the light of the above:

- Does the Commission still believe that it is in no way inappropriate for Mrs de Palacio to be involved in the CTCs case?