Does the Council not consider it necessary to draw the attention of the Heads of State or Government to:

1. The seriousness of the constant increase in paedophile Internet sites, the contents of which contravene the legislation of the Member States,
2. The need for regulations to prevent free access to such sites,
3. The need for regulations prohibiting such sites from using in their titles the names of persons without their knowledge or the names of institutions (Commission, European Union, etc.) as an underhand way of attracting users who do not normally visit such sites?

Joint answer to Written Questions E-3285/00 and P-3312/00

(20/21 December 2000)

As already stated in replies to previous questions on the subject (1), combating the sexual exploitation of children, and in particular child pornography on the Internet, is a matter of great importance to the Council, as confirmed by its adoption of a Decision on 29 May 2000 to combat child pornography on the Internet (2).

That Decision is the result of an initiative by Austria, and aims to combat the production, processing, distribution and possession of child pornography material and promote the effective investigation and prosecution of offences in this area.

The Honourable Member will note that when adopting that Decision, the Council made the following statement:

The Council welcomes the opinion of the European Parliament, published as Legislative Resolution on the initiative of the Republic of Austria with a view to adopting a Council Decision to combat child pornography on the Internet. In addition to the amendments which have been incorporated by the Council in the Decision, the opinion raises a number of important issues relating to substantive criminal law and criminal procedure. The Council, mindful of the urgency to take immediate measures against child pornography on the Internet, declares its willingness to examine such questions in the light of the Joint Action 97/154/JHA of 24 February 1997 and on the basis of proposals which are expected in the future.

(1) See in particular the reply to Oral Question No H-0654/00 on illicit use of the internet, put to the Council by Brian Crowley.

WRITTEN QUESTION P.3290/00

by Mary Banotti (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(17 October 2000)

Subject: Childcare and au pairs

A voluntary agreement was first put together in 1969 to establish basic rules and conditions for au pairs concerning the hours and type of work which an au pair should be doing. This was followed up by a European Parliament report (1-0797/83) (3) expressing further concern at the lack of regulation in this field. Since that time, nothing further has been done, and the situation for au pairs has become more and more precarious.

Young people aged between 16 and 20 years are expected to take on long hours of childcare and, more and more often, prepare meals and cope with household chores. This is clearly beyond the duties of an au pair, and more and more young people are becoming victims of the lack of European rules governing au pairs.

(2001/C 136 E/259)
Given that more and more families are seeking affordable childcare and that young au pairs are being more and more frequently used to fill the gap in childcare facilities, is the Commission prepared to look again at the situation of au pairs and prepare a regulatory framework or even a directive to protect young people from the worst excesses and abuses which take place at present so that there is a return to the original concept of the au pair which was one of helping with children while learning the language and culture of the country of placement?


Answer given by Mrs Diamantopoulou on behalf of the Commission

(15 November 2000)

The Commission would refer the Honourable Member to the Commission Recommendation (85/64/EEC) of 20 December 1984 concerning a European Agreement on au pair placement sponsored by the Council of Europe (1).

Through this act, the Commission recommended that the Member States sign and ratify, as soon as possible, the European agreement of the Council of Europe of 24 November 1969 on au pair placement. This agreement lays down rules governing living and working conditions, education, social security and the rights and duties of the host family, in addition to setting up national consultation and information facilities.

The Commission has, at present, no plans to make legislative proposals in this area.


\(2001/\text{C} \, \text{136 E/260}\)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3301/00
by Eryl McNally (PSE) to the Commission

(25 October 2000)

Subject: Light pollution

'Light pollution' is caused by stray light that escapes from residential and industrial developments, prevents city dwellers from seeing the night sky and increases global warming. The use of lower powered bulbs and shields to prevent this light from escaping would reduce CO₂ emissions and give a better view of the stars. Is the Commission planning to take any legislative measures to prevent light pollution?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission

(8 December 2000)

The Commission is conducting a detailed investigation of the problem raised by the Honourable Member and will inform her of the outcome as soon as possible.

\(2001/\text{C} \, \text{136 E/261}\)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3308/00
by Carlos Bautista Ojeda (Verts/ALE) to the Council

(20 October 2000)

Subject: Illegal immigration and the Andalusian coast

Is the Council aware of the full reverberations of the severe social problem of illegal immigration as it affects the coast of Andalusia?

Is it aware of the large numbers of deaths and disappearances among those trying to cross the Straits of Gibraltar illegally?