WRITTEN QUESTION E-3422/00
by Ioannis Marinos (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(7 November 2000)

Subject: European Agency for Reconstruction

On 15 November 1999 the Council of Ministers issued Regulation No 2454/1999 (1), amending Regulation No 1628/96 (2), laying down the basis for the creation of a ‘European Agency for Reconstruction’. The first meeting of this agency’s governing board took place on 17 January 2000 at its headquarters, Thessaloniki, in the presence of Commissioner Chris Patten, who in his speech stressed the role which the agency could play in the reconstruction of Kosovo and in the return of the refugees who had been forced out of the area.

The recent change in the political landscape in Yugoslavia undoubtedly opens up new prospects for the country’s reincorporation into the European family and for the reduction of tensions between ethnic groups living in Kosovo, and this could make the work of the European Agency for Reconstruction even more valuable to all the region’s inhabitants.

Could the Commission carry out an assessment of the work of the European Agency for Reconstruction to date, and give information on the total amount of appropriations handled and allocated, on staff numbers, on the qualification levels and specialisations of the staff at its disposal and their nationalities, on the initiatives undertaken and completed by the administrative headquarters in Thessaloniki, on the destinations and objectives to which the relevant appropriations have been allocated, and on how many refugees (from all the ethnic groups in Kosovo) have returned and resettled in their homes?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission
(8 December 2000)

The European Agency for reconstruction started its operations in the field on February 2000. Since then, the Agency has moved swiftly to launch the necessary tenders and contract the funds for the crucial works required in Kosovo.

In 2000, the Agency has worked on energy, transport and water. After reconstruction of 3 500 houses in 1999 up to 8 000 seriously destroyed or completely destroyed housing units are being reconstructed in 2000. This has been complemented by further assistance for economic development and agriculture, and for health reform.

In terms of refugee returns, the estimates provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) on the number of refugees who returned from the refugee camps in the region as of 1 October 2000 is 785 000. The number of voluntary and forced returns from asylum countries is 200 000 since July 1999. The estimates do not specify the number of these refugees re-settled in their homes.

When the Agency for reconstruction was established in February 2000 it inherited the implementation of the 1998/1999 and 2000 programmes for Kosovo for a total amount of € 394.5 million. Today, 100 % of the budget has been committed, over 80 % of these funds are contracted and 40 % of the contracted funds already paid.

The Agency currently consists of 47 international staff (temporary agents) of whom six are based in Thessaloniki and 41 in Pristina. Three more international staff are expected to take up their posts in Thessaloniki within the next two months. Of the 47 expatriates, 34 are in category A (university degree), 12 are assistants in category B, and there is one secretary in category C. In addition, the Agency employs at present 45 local staff, of whom 34 are in the operational centre in Pristina, nine in Thessaloniki and two in the Skopje back-up office.

The general services of the Agency are located in the headquarters in Thessaloniki and are responsible for the overall administration of the Agency including the preparation of monthly meetings of the Agency’s governing board. The general services also handle the Agency’s legal service, information and communication as well as personnel management.
In accordance with Article 18(5) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1628 of 25 July 1996 relating to aid for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as last amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 2454/1999 of 15 November 1999, the Parliament receives a quarterly report providing detailed operational and administrative information on the activities of the Agency. The first quarterly report to the Parliament was sent on 17 May 2000 and the second report was sent on 27 September 2000.

(2001/C 163 E/122)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3424/00
by Ioannis Souladakis (PSE) to the Council
(8 November 2000)

Subject: Funding of European Union island regions

Further to the Commission’s reply to my question on funding of European Union island regions (E-1738/00) (1) and on the basis of the provisions of the Amsterdam agreements and the guidelines for the 2001 budget that Parliament has already voted on:

1. How does the Council explain the Commission’s refusal to create a legal basis for the funding of EU island regions?

2. What initiatives does the Council intend to take to ensure that the provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam on this subject are applied?


Reply
(26 February 2001)

1. Regarding the first question, the Council would like to remind the Honourable Member that it has no power to reply on the Commission’s behalf.

However, the Council would refer the Honourable Member to its reply to Question E-2975/00 on the funding of the European Union island regions in which it stated that in the context of economic and social cohesion, the Structural Funds — and in particular the ERDF — are, in this connection, an important instrument for action, having a positive effect on the growth and convergence of the island regions of the European Union.

2. As to the second question, the Council is unable to give a precise answer to the Honourable Member as it has not received any proposal from the Commission along the lines indicated.

(2001/C 163 E/123)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3425/00
by Ioannis Souladakis (PSE) to the Commission
(7 November 2000)

Subject: Funding of European Union island regions

Further to the Commission’s reply to my question on funding of European Union island regions (E-1738/00) (1) and on the basis of the provisions of the Amsterdam agreements and the guidelines for the 2001 budget that Parliament has already voted on:

1. How does the Commission explain its refusal to create a legal basis for the funding of EU island regions?

2. What initiatives does it intend to take to ensure that the provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam on this subject are applied?