The Centre's budget has been rising quite substantially. Since 1995, the year in which it was launched, its budget has risen by over 60%, from € 5,35 million to € 8,75 million in 2001. Implementation of the reform must not result in increased requirements in terms of resources but must enable the Centre to carry out its tasks (especially those entrusted to it by the action plan for 2000-2004), by becoming more efficient and concentrating on its priority tasks.

As regards the support which the Centre receives from the Commission in institutional terms, the Commission ensures that appropriate proposals are presented to the Council. Thus, following a Commission proposal (1), the Regulation establishing the Centre was amended so that it could provide technical assistance to applicant countries and undertake an assistance project worth € 2 million under the PHARE programme.

Lastly, the Commission stays closely in touch with the Emcdda and is particularly anxious to foster synergies between the Centre's work and the activities carried out under Community programmes to combat drugs.


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(2001/C 163 E/199)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3601/00**

by Luciano Caveri (ELDR) to the Commission

(22 November 2000)

Subject: Protection of typical products outside the EU

Nowadays the European Union's typical products are protected by labels, such as PDO (protected designation of origin) and PGI (protected geographical indication), which have at last made it possible to put an end to imitation products that confuse consumers and create uncertainty on the market. Unfortunately, however, such product protection systems are confined to the Union and so — as in the case of 'fontina', the typical cheese of the Valle d'Aosta region — do not prevent the placing on the United States market of imitation or counterfeit products, even if they originate in Europe, or the manufacture and sale of such products under the same name as typical products in South America.

What steps has the Commission taken to enable the system for the protection of PDO and PGI products to be extended beyond the Union by means of appropriate international agreements, thus protecting both the products in question and consumers? Can the Commission take action at European level against those who manufacture imitation DOP and IGP products for sale outside Europe?

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

(14 December 2000)

Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92 of 14 July 1992 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs ensures the development of protection for designations of origin and geographical indications on the Community market (1). The protection is designed to promote product quality, ensure proper information for the consumer about products and prevent substitutes or imitations from undermining the reputation of these products.

At international level, the adoption, within the World Trade Organisation (WTO), of the Agreement on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPs) marked real progress in the protection of designations of origin and geographical indications. It must nevertheless be recognised that the TRIPs Agreement includes a number of restrictions on the legal protection of quality products and that progress still needs to be made, in particular as regards products other than wines and spirits.
On the basis of this Agreement, the Commission is continuing a policy of protecting European designations against misuse on foreign markets. Improvement of market access for Community quality products is also part of the Communities' comprehensive negotiating proposal under the WTO negotiations on agriculture. The Commission has asked the Member States to provide it with information on European products protected by geographical indications or designations of origin which are being counterfeited on the export markets. On this basis, the Commission is playing an active part in the discussions currently being held on the multilateral register for wines and spirits and extension of the protection of geographical indications to products other than wines and spirits under the TRIPS Council integrated programme.


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(2001/C 163 E/200) WRITTEN QUESTION E-3604/00 by Roberto Bigliardo (TDI) to the Commission

(22 November 2000)

Subject: Air travel: 'economy-class syndrome'

Does the President of the Commission intend to adopt any binding measures, and if so which, in relation to airline companies after the recent death of Miss Emma Christoffersen, a British citizen, who was taken ill shortly after landing in London after a 20-hour flight on a Quantas Jumbo 747 from Sidney?

Miss Christoffersen suffered an embolism brought on by sitting still for a long time in cramped conditions. Her sad death highlights the problems for passengers travelling long distances in economy class. The limited space (70 to 85 cm) between rows of seats is a genuine hazard for many people, who run the risk of suffering a fatal attack of thrombosis. At the very least, the airline companies could inform travellers of the risks they incur by remaining seated throughout long flights.

Will more passengers have to die before any action is taken?

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(8 January 2001)

The Commission takes most seriously the question of links between immobility during long flights and problems of blood circulation, and other potential health risks, such as those linked to air quality.

It therefore intends to set up groups of experts to scrutinise existing research and draw conclusions on health risks and the need for further research. This will enable the Commission and all interested parties to consider the case for further measures, whether the responsibility of the Community, national governments, airlines, airports or passengers themselves.

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(2001/C 163 E/201) WRITTEN QUESTION E-3605/00 by Sebastiano Musumeci (UEN) to the Commission

(22 November 2000)

Subject: Replanting vineyards in PDO and PGI areas

Some wine-growers in Italy grubbed up their vineyards in accordance with the scheme for the permanent abandonment of areas under vines introduced by Regulation (EEC) No 1442/88 (1).