WRITTEN QUESTION E-3481/00
by Konstantinos Hatzidakis (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(10 November 2000)

Subject: Substandard road construction funded by the second Community Support Framework

In reply to my question E-1912/99 (1), the Commission acknowledged that there were widespread problems with substandard road-building in Greece funded by the second Community Support Framework.

Will the Commission say whether it has any further information concerning the extent of substandard workmanship in all the projects funded in Greece by the second CSF? Is the Commission satisfied with the measures taken by Greece to remedy this? If not, what steps will the Commission take to ensure that this tremendously important issue is dealt with?


Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission
(22 December 2000)

The Commission would ask the Honourable Member to refer to the supplementary answer to Written Question 2783/99 of Mr Alavanos (1) regarding the substandard workmanship in work part-financed under the Community Support Framework for Greece during the 1994-1999 period.

Concerning specifically the Athens-Corinth and Athens-Yiliki sections of the PATHE motorway, where construction defects prevented the Ministry of Works from proceeding to the final acceptance of the projects, the Greek authorities have just informed the Commission that the contractors are obliged to repair the structural defects discovered in the work at their own expense before the end of the year 2000. The Ministry of Works will then proceed to the final acceptance of the projects, and will impose fines for irregularities in the layer of asphalt in the sections concerned.

Following the recommendations of a committee of experts and scientists created on the initiative of the Ministry of Works to assess this problem, the final repairs to the layer of asphalt in these sections will be carried out under a new contract for which the call for tender will be published at the beginning of 2001.

(1) See page 2.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3494/00
by Jonas Sjöstedt (GUE/NGL) to the Council
(13 November 2000)

Subject: Arrest and intimidation of Syriac Orthodox clerics in Turkey

Yusuf Akbulut, a Syriac Orthodox priest in Diyarbakir, is quoted in the 3 October 2000 edition of the Hürriyet newspaper as saying that he considered a US House of Representatives committee to have been right to recognise the Armenian genocide of 1915 and later years. Under the heading ‘The traitor within our midst’, the following day’s Hürriyet reported that Akbulut had promptly been arrested by the police and released after questioning. It was also reported that the State Security Court had decided to detain Akbulut, who was held and questioned for two days. According to Hürriyet, he is now awaiting prosecution for subversive activities and treason.

A plea for help has also been made by the two Syriac Orthodox bishops, Yusuf Cetin and Samuel Aktas, who say that the Turkish State is trying to force them to sign a document containing a denial of the fact that Assyrians and Syriacs were also murdered in 1915 and later years.
Intimidation and harassment of these clerics constitutes disregard for minority rights. Turkey is a candidate for EU membership.

Is the Council monitoring the minority rights situation in Turkey, and have the Member States reacted to the above-mentioned events in Turkey?

Reply
(26 February 2001)

The Council is monitoring the minority rights situation in Turkey. Minority rights are part of the priorities and objectives of the 2000 Accession Partnership which has been proposed by the Commission and which is being discussed in the Council. The Council recalls that respect for and protection of minorities is one of the Copenhagen political criteria for EU membership.

The Council has not reacted to the event referred to by the Honourable Member. Neither have Member States informed the Council about any reactions on their part.

(2001/C 174 E/063) WRITTEN QUESTION E-3499/00
by Stavros Xarchakos (PPE-DE) to the Council
(13 November 2000)

Subject: Provocative statements by Turkish Minister

Turkey's Minister for Internal Affairs, Mr Sukru Sina Gurel, stated on 11 October 2000, during the ceremony to re-open the 'University of the Aegean' ('Ege University') that 'Turkey does not consider its accession to the EU to be conditional upon either a solution to the Cyprus issue or the settlement of Greek-Turkish differences'. To reaffirm his position, the Turkish Minister also referred to the 'two letters which the Turkish Prime Minister sent to the EU immediately after the Helsinki European Council last December', in which Mr Ecevit stresses Turkey's reluctance to accept any preconditions or terms for its accession to the EU. The Turkish Interior Minister also added that 'everyone must accept the existence of two states in Cyprus' and called on the EU 'to resolve the problem of racism in its Member States before rushing to criticise Turkey'.

What is the Council's position on the statements which the Turkish Minister for Internal Affairs has aimed at the EU, given that they create an anti-European climate in a country applying for accession and fly in the face of the Helsinki Summit decisions which require Turkey to conduct itself in a manner befitting a European state and to consolidate good neighbourly relations with Greece? Furthermore, does the Council accept the Turkish Minister's accusations of racism in the EU when Turkey stands charged with the extermination and expulsion — in the 20th century — of Greek Cypriots, Asia Minor Greeks, Armenians, and recently, Kurds living on its territory?

Moreover, as the preamble to the Draft Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states: taking inspiration from its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal principles of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

Will the Council say what the European tradition in the above spheres has in common with the conduct of the current Turkish regime — a state classified as a 'candidate for accession' — which persecutes its citizens for their religious and political beliefs, and tortures and imprisons anyone who opposes its objectives?

Reply
(8 March 2001)

1. At its meeting in December 2000 the Council reached political agreement among the Fifteen on the text of the draft Framework Regulation and the draft Council Decision on the principles, priorities,