The aims of strand C of the Community Interreg II initiative on transnational cooperation were: to help restore the balance between different areas of the Community; to foster transnational cooperation and partnership within a common framework; to help Member States and their regions to take a preventive and cooperative approach to common problems; and, lastly, to improve the impact of Community policies on spatial development. The latter aim was closely linked to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

To date, only a few programmes covered by Interreg II C have undergone an interim assessment. Since others are currently being assessed, it would be premature to draw conclusions from the few completed interim assessments and hence to provide only partial results.

Also, in accordance with the EC Treaty, the second report on economic and social cohesion will examine how disparities between Member States and regions (including peripheral maritime regions) have changed and how Community policies (including structural policies and particularly Interreg) have helped to reduce those disparities. By focusing on the situation facing a Union of 27 members, the second report will be able to set out guidelines for future cohesion policy. The report will be published at the beginning of 2001 and will be submitted at a forum on cohesion which will be held in Brussels on 21 May.

(2001/C 174 E/141)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3765/00
by Nelly Maes (Verts/ALE) to the Commission
(4 December 2000)

Subject: Transport of live animals over long distances

In recent years the transport of animals in Europe has increased because the EU always used to regard living animals as products. This had to be changed thanks to the legally binding protocol of 1997 which came into force in 1999, and which acknowledged that living animals are sentient beings. However, this has not resulted in living animals being spared long journeys. All kinds of provisions in the protocol mean that animals can still be transported from Aberdeen to Athens for slaughter.

1. Can the Commission explain why animals which are recognised as sentient beings still have to suffer distress during their long transport journeys?

2. Is the Commission aware of the serious animal welfare problems and infringements of the law which have been noted by animal welfare organisations and have shocked public opinion?

3. What concrete initiatives has the Commission taken as a result of the discussion of this issue at the Agriculture Council in June, at which several Member States expressed their grave concern about animal welfare during long-distance transport and called for a fundamental review of policy in this area, particularly the replacement of long-distance live animal transport by trading in meat and carcasses? Does the Commission consider that long-distance live animal transport should be replaced by the trading in meat and carcasses?

(a) If so, when will the Commission introduce a ban on the transport of live animals?

(b) If not, what additional measures will the Commission take to make the legal protection of animals as sentient beings effective?

4. In how many cases are export subsidies withdrawn or not paid on the grounds of failure to comply with the provisions of Regulation (EC) 1254/1999 (*) on the common organisation of the market in beef and veal with regard to animal welfare?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(19 February 2001)

The Commission is aware that journeys in breach of Directive 91/628/EC (1) as amended (2) are still taking place within the Community. Day-to-day enforcement of Community legislation is the responsibility of Member States. The Food and Veterinary Office of the Commission undertakes on-the-spot checks in Member States to ensure that authorities apply Community legislation in an effective and uniform manner.

It should be mentioned that the Commission has opened infringement proceedings against some Member States in relation to their failure to implement Community legislation in this field.

In addition, the Commission adopted on 5 December 2000 a report (3) on the implementation by the Member States of rules on animal transport. The Council and the Parliament will discuss this report. It finds major shortcomings in enforcement of the legislation by national authorities. The Commission intends to review the current legislation as a follow-up to this report.

Measures to encourage the slaughter of animals closer to the places where they are raised will be examined in that context, taking account of the fact that economies of scale and higher meat hygiene standards lead towards a concentration of and reduction in the number of slaughterhouses.

An overview of the cases where export subsidies are withdrawn or not paid on the grounds of failure to comply with the provisions of Council Regulation 1254/1999 of 17 May 1999 on the common organisation of the market in beef and veal (4) is being sent direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-3769/00
by Emmanouil Bakopoulos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(4 December 2000)

Subject: Accidents in the EU

In reaction to the tragic accident in Kaprun in Austria, where over 150 people lost their lives in tragic circumstances, and given that accidents of this kind are occurring more and more frequently, what specific steps does the Commission intend to take to protect, within the shortest possible space of time, those travelling through European road and rail tunnels?

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Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(9 January 2001)

Since the cable train fire at Kaprun on 11 November 2000, the Commission has been reassessing the measures the Community could take to improve the safety of road and rail tunnels. It is already apparent that safety levels in tunnels can vary considerably depending on the length and design of the tunnel, its equipment, the way it is operated and the volume and nature of the traffic using it. It falls primarily to the authorities directly in charge of tunnels to reassess their safety on a regular basis and to take steps to maintain that safety at a high level.