WRITTEN QUESTION E-3856/00
by Daniel Varela Suáez-Carpegna (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(8 December 2000)

Subject: Enlargement and regional policy: economic, social and territorial cohesion of the outer maritime regions of the EU cohesion

After two years of negotiations with the applicant countries in the Luxembourg Group (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus) talks started last April on the application of the acquis of the structural funds (Chapter 21 of the negotiations) with the six countries in that group. In this context the European Parliament adopted a resolution in October this year (R5-0417/2000 (1) of 4 October 2000) on the enlargement of the European Union, setting out the EP’s requests with regard to the accession procedure and the negotiations being held on the subject. In paragraph 102 of the resolution the EP points out that:

… the European Union must respond appropriately to an enlargement which increase considerably the number of disadvantaged regions; draws attention to the risk of uneven growth in the various regions of the applicant countries in the wake of both certain applicant states’ internal policies and the effects of the market and of investment by the Member States and, therefore, calls on the Commission to revise the criteria governing the award of structural aid with the aim of ensuring that both the applicant countries and the current Member States receive appropriate support for their disadvantaged regions; calls on the European Union to retain the cohesion criteria as they apply to the EU 15, regardless of any statistical changes in average income in the EU brought about by the enlargement;

Can the Commission say to what extent it is taking this request into account in the accession procedure and its negotiations with the Luxembourg Group, particularly in the context of Chapter 21? Can the Council say what impact enlargement will have on the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the outer maritime regions under Objective 1 in the present EU 15?

What strategies, instruments and mechanisms does it consider appropriate and necessary to continue promoting the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Objective 1 peripheral maritime regions after the accession of countries with regions less developed than the current Objective 1 regions, which will tend to increase considerably the peripheral status of these regions and mean that they will cease, statistically although not actually, to fall into this category?


Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(1 March 2001)

All of the questions raised by the Honourable Member are dealt with in the second report on economic and social cohesion, which has been adopted by the Commission on 31 January 2001 (2). This report consider the future of regional policy in an enlarged Union. The aim is to launch a debate, including at a major Forum, which will take place in Brussels in May 2001.

Regarding the negotiations on chapter 21, the Commission would refer the Honourable Member to the reply it gave to his Written Question 3858/00 (3).