The Commission plans to take action on two fronts:

- reconstruction aid to the state of Vargas, € 10 million. It will essentially focus on social issues (health, drinking water, housing and education);

- risk prevention. A package of € 20 million for the definition and implementation of natural risk management programmes over a large area adjacent to the region affected by the 1999 floods, encompassing the states of Falcon, Miranda and Yaracuy. These initiatives will include a detailed risk map, the implementation of early warning systems, the production of land use plans, support for the application of the necessary legislation, as well as the construction of flood-control and other risk-prevention structures.

The Commission has already done an expert mission to identify specific projects. It is presently evaluating these findings and will shortly launch the list of projects.

The Parliament secured an extra budget of € 25 million for 2001 for which projects will be identified this year.

ECHO's technical assistant based in Lima was provisionally transferred to Caracas on 21 December 1999 in order to assess the emergency operation and co-ordinate the first humanitarian actions. During the emergency phase, the Commission Delegation and ECHO's technical assistant actively participated in various co-ordination meetings, although the Venezuelan government did not set up any formal co-ordination forum.

At this moment, the Commission is having contacts with other donors (such as United Nations Development Programme UNDP) to study the possibility of co-ordinating projects.


(2001/C 340 E/219)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1181/01

by Glyn Ford (PSE) to the Commission

(19 April 2001)

Subject: The Single European Authorisation Project

The Single European Authorisation project is a pilot project currently being run by UK Customs and its partners on the continent. The aim of this project is to enable a trader to make all customs declarations from one country.

However, there is, as yet, no common implementation plan, and this has resulted in each country in the EU negotiating separate agreements with its partners and thus creating multiple standards across Europe.

What plans has the Commission to encourage/implement a greater degree of cooperation and coordination in this project.

Answer given by Mr Bolkestein on behalf of the Commission

(7 June 2001)

The Commission is very conscious of traders' desire for simplification and harmonization, and in particular of their desire, where they have operations in more than one Member State (and a central place of main accounting) to be able to deal with just one customs administration for customs matters, instead of up to 15 (single authorizations).

Single authorizations are in the logic of the internal market and the Commission supports them. It is indeed already several years since the Commission first made proposals in this area. Indeed, the rules on end-use and customs procedures with economic impact already make explicit reference to single authorizations.
Nevertheless, the situation as regards release for free circulation (using the so-called ‘simplified procedures’) is more complex, since it raises issues such as the customs debt, VAT, statistics and the sharing of collection costs (the amount of money Member States are allowed to keep to cover their administration expenses).

While there is a general legal basis for single authorizations in the Community Customs Code, practical experience is needed. It has been agreed with the Member States that those which receive applications for single authorizations, can (with the agreement of the other administrations concerned) grant them. For its part, the Commission monitors progress and ensures a regular exchange of information within the framework of the Customs Code Committee. These projects are termed ‘pilot projects’ and it is in this context that the project being operated by the United Kingdom is situated.

Unfortunately, progress on the pilot projects generally has been much slower than expected. Nevertheless, those that are now operating do seem to be operating smoothly and the Commission is hopeful that in future they will become more routine.

The Commission will continue to lend general support to the pilot projects and will continue to have exchanges of information in the Customs Code Committee. In addition, this issue will be promoted in the framework of a Customs-Trade seminar in Sweden planned for June 2001.

The Commission would be prepared to propose legislation within the limits of its powers should it prove necessary either to overcome a legal problem, or else to ensure uniformity.

(2001/C 340 E/220)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1182/01
by Laura González Álvarez (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(19 April 2001)

Subject: Construction of the El Pical wind farm

The El Pical wind farm project which has been developed by Corporación Eólica SA in the districts of Barruelo de Santullán and Brañosera (Palencia, Spain) and which is currently under construction is causing much concern amongst local people on account of the fact that it is located on the boundary of the Fuentes Carrionas-Fuente del Cobre, Montaña Palentina National Park which is home to the brown bear, a listed species threatened with extinction. It will also affect broad swathes of vegetation including beech and holly trees.

It is somewhat inconsistent that the relevant authorities in the Castilla-León region should seek Unesco World Heritage status for the Romanesque architecture of Palencia (which is located in the area concerned) and at the same time allow the installation of hundreds of windmills that spoil the surroundings of monuments which are of exceptional historical and cultural significance.

Although the use of renewable energy sources should indeed be increased, places should be found for wind farms which do not affect the natural and cultural environment.

In the case under consideration there could be infringement of, at the very least, the following Directives:

- 85/337/EEC (1) on environmental impact studies;
- 92/43/EEC (2) on natural habitats;
- 79/409/EEC (3) on the protection of birds.

What action is the Commission intending to take in order to ensure that Community law is properly applied and to prevent irreversible damage to the areas concerned?