When monitoring and supervision become too tight, instances of maladministration are eliminated, but at the same time it is made more difficult for local actors to participate in the implementation of programmes. The execution of programmes is then concentrated solely on those which have ready-made know-how and sufficient human and economic resources.

What does the Commission propose to do to simplify the administration of EU programmes and clarify them so as to facilitate work under the programmes in practice and to ensure that the citizens’ dimension and other objectives set for the programmes are attained under the best possible conditions?

Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(24 January 2002)

All Community programmes supported by the Structural Funds must be administered in conformity with the Council Regulations and other rules in force regarding the sound and efficient management of public funds.

Responsibility for the day to day management of the programmes is decentralised to the authorities in the Member States and regions in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. The Commission has consistently urged these authorities to respect both the letter and the spirit of the regulations and other rules in ways that help to involve all of the relevant actors in the eligible regions. Thus, these authorities are encouraged, firstly, to ensure that decisions relating to the programmes are taken as close to the ground as possible in the context of a widely drawn partnership, and, secondly, to use Technical Assistance resources in an effort to ensure that as wide a public as possible is able to bring forward project proposals. Experience has demonstrated that there are wide variations in the degree to which the authorities in the different Member States and regions approach this task, with the result that in some cases the application process for aid under the Structural Funds is comparatively complicated while in others it is comparatively simple.

The Commission will continue to promote exchanges of experience and best practice in this field.

The Honourable Member is also asked to note that while it is true that payments undertaken under Community programmes are subsequently reimbursed by the Commission, the Commission also makes an advance payment equivalent to 7% of the contribution of the Union to the programme. This advance payment is subject to topping up throughout the life of the programme, so that it can remain at a level equivalent to 7% of the programme. Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999(1) also insists that ‘The paying authority shall ensure that final beneficiaries receive payment of their contribution from the Funds as quickly as possible and in full.’


WRITTEN QUESTION E-3475/01

by Charles Tannock (PPE-DE) and Theresa Villiers (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(8 January 2002)

Subject: The use of of swap-mechanisms by the last Italian government to camouflage the true size of Italy’s budgetary deficit

Is the Commission aware of attempts in 1997 by the previous Italian government to use interest swap transactions (as detailed in an International Securities Market Association (ISMA) report without naming the country) in order to camouflage the true size of Italy’s budget deficit prior to Italy’s entry to the Single Currency? If so, does the Commission regard this as bona fide or as contrary to Italy’s obligations in this area?
Answer given by Mr Solbes Mira on behalf of the Commission

(11 February 2002)

The Commission looked into swap transactions carried out by Member States. These transactions involved management of debt and it was decided that debt had to be valued after swap transactions. For measurement of the impact of swap transactions on the deficit in 1997, the European System of National and Regional Accounts in the Community (ESA) 79 was the manual of reference. However, the ESA 79 dealt only with swap on foreign exchange and not with swaps on interest which could have a potential effect on the deficit. In the absence of a clear regulation of the ESA 79 on interest rate swap, Eurostat would have treated such transactions by using the ESA 95 as a reference manual. ESA 95, at that date, treated interest rate swaps as transactions which would have had an effect (positive or negative) on the deficit.

This principle has been recently reaffirmed in a special Regulation concerning the treatment of swaps in the framework of the Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP), Regulation (EC) No 2558/2001 of the Parliament and of the Council of 3 December 2001 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2223/96 as regards the reclassification of settlements under swaps arrangements and under forward rate agreements (1).

If the Member State in question has used the swap facilities for reducing its deficit, this would not be objectable from a statistical point of view because of the treatment foreseen by ESA 79 and ESA 95.


WRITTEN QUESTION P-3476/01

by Charles Tannock (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(10 December 2001)

Subject: Patients' rights to medical appliances in other Member States

It has been reported in the British press that British citizens have recently travelled to Denmark to be fitted-out at their own expense with digital-technology hearing aids which are not widely available on the British state-funded National Health Service.

Is it the Commission's understanding that following the Decker and Kohll judgements at the European Court of Justice, which gave two Luxembourg nationals the right to claim the costs of spectacles and false teeth from their government after receiving treatment in Germany and France, that citizens of a Member State, if unable to acquire a medical appliance such as a hearing aid within a reasonable time through their own national healthcare delivery system, would be entitled to purchase that medical appliance in another Member State and present the bill to their own government, and that this would apply equally to citizens of a state such as the U. K. where the national healthcare delivery system does not involve a national insurance component?

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3533/01

by Charles Tannock (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(8 January 2002)

Subject: Patients' rights to seek treatment (including operations) in other EU Member States

Does the Commission believe that the judgment in the case of B. S. M. Geraets-Smits v Stichting Ziekenfonds and H. T. M. Peerbooms v Stichting CZ Groep Zorgverzekeringen (Case C-157/99) before the