When checking a consignment of 'Prosecco del Veneto' sparkling wine for compliance with the information on the label and the accompanying documentation, the German authorities found pressure levels due to carbon dioxide above 2.5 bar and also exogenous carbon dioxide. Its description as 'a semi-sparkling wine' did not tally with the definition laid down in point 17 of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 1493/1999 of 17 May 1999 on the common organisation of the market in wine (1), so permission was not granted to place the wine in question on the market. The German authorities informed the Italian and Commission control authorities in accordance with Article 8 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 2729/2000 of 14 December 2000 laying down detailed implementing rules on controls in the wine sector (2). The maximum permitted carbon dioxide pressure of 2.5 bar laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1493/1999 for semi-sparkling wines is not contested by the Italian authorities and this parameter, like the other parameters for this type of wine, continues to be checked, where appropriate, by the competent control authorities.

Adding gold leaf to sparkling wines is not one of the oenological practices listed in Annex V to Regulation (EC) No 1493/1999, and so is not permitted.

In accordance with Article 41 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1622/2000 of 24 July 2000 laying down certain detailed rules for implementing Regulation (EC) No 1493/1999 and establishing a Community code of oenological practices and processes (3), the Austrian authorities informed the Commission of the experimental use of this new oenological practice. The authorisation covers 7,000 hectolitres a year, the intention being to develop this product and gauge the market response to it. The Commission will be informed of the results. These wines cannot be sent outside Austria. The terms of this experiment on a sparkling wine as notified by Austria thus comply with Regulation (EC) No 1622/2000.

Furthermore, another drink containing gold particles is produced in Austria as an 'aromatized sparkling wine-based drink'. This product, which differs from sparkling wine, satisfies Community legislation and in particular the rules laid down in Council Regulation (EEC) No 1601/91 of 10 June 1991 laying down general rules on the definition, description and presentation of aromatized wines, aromatized wine-based drinks and aromatized wine-product cocktails (4).


WRITTEN QUESTION E-0169/02
by Raffaele Costa (PPE-DE) to the Council
(5 February 2002)

Subject: Executions in China

China holds the unenviable world record in executions, of which there were more than 2,000 in 2001 alone. Chinese law provides for the death sentence for a wide range of offences, including, in some cases, embezzlement, the establishment of illegal sects, which are subject to widespread political manipulation, thereby depriving citizens of their right to freedom.

Would the Council, which stands as guarantor of human rights as upheld by the European Union, not agree that the participation of European countries in the 2008 Olympics in China should be reconsidered?

Would it not agree that European countries should withdraw their support from the 2008 Olympics in China unless appropriate institutional reforms are immediately introduced?
Reply

(21 May 2002)

The Council shares the Honourable Member's concern at the apparent scope and scale of the use of the death penalty in China. It is a concern that the European Union has frequently expressed to the Chinese authorities. The Council has also sought to obtain clear statistics from the Chinese government on the number of people condemned to death and those executed, so far, sadly, without success.

The Council has not considered urging Member States not to participate in the 2008 Olympics as a useful means of pursuing its objective of ending capital punishment in China.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0173/02

by Bart Staes (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(6 February 2002)

Subject: Use of languages for receiving visitors to the European institutions

In a written reply to former Member of Parliament André Monteyne, the Protocol and Security Service of the Directorate-General for Personnel and Administration acknowledged that Brussels had bilingual status. Its reply also indicated that most reception desks at the Commission had been closed for budgetary and practical reasons, as most visitors had made appointments. The Commission has, however, invested in security services.

1. What are the practical reasons for reducing the number of reception desks, and what are the budgetary reasons?

2. Does the Commission acknowledge that it cannot now ensure that visitors to institutions in Brussels can be addressed in Dutch or in French?

3. Does it intend at least to make knowledge of Dutch and French compulsory for staff whose job it is to welcome visitors, whether or not such staff are located at reception desks? If not, what arguments are there for not ensuring such bilingualism?

4. Will the Commission also urge security firms to ensure that their staff working as security guards at EU institutions in Brussels have a command of Dutch and French? If not, why not? If so, how will it ensure such bilingualism?

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(8 April 2002)

The Honourable Member will be aware that the Commission is a European Institution working with 15 Member States and 11 official languages. The Honourable Member will also be aware that the Commission is hosted, as an Institution, by Belgium (and in other locations by other Member States), and that Belgium has three official languages: French, Dutch and German.

Over the last two years only four reception desks were closed or merged. The practical reason for reducing the number of reception desks was that the vast majority of visitors are received in buildings that house Members of the European Commission and, working under clear budgetary constraints and pressures of costs, the Commission had to find effective ways of ensuring sustained security and appropriate reception of visitors. In addition, as the Honourable Member will know, the Commission has reviewed all its activities with a view to outsourcing those tasks that do not necessarily need to be performed by officials.