of December 2001. Bulgarian environmental organisations are highly critical of this EIA report, in which the alternatives are not properly considered and virtually no attention is devoted to the principles of the directives on wild birds and habitats.

2. What is the Commission's assessment of the quality of this EIA report?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission

(20 June 2002)

The original terms of reference of the PHARE contract for the feasibility study and design project of the E-79 Sofia — Kulata Motorway had not required SPEA to look for alternatives outside the existing E-79 alignment and roadbed in studying the section of the Struma Motorway between Kresna and Kulata, but to take account that the presence of protected flora in the Struma river gorge was reported. It was understood at this time that this gorge, through which passes the existing road, was not a protected area, except a part of it (Tisata reserve) registered as a Corine sub-site.

The draft feasibility study for the Struma Motorway, including the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), was submitted to the Commission in December 2000. The submitted EIA report was not accepted by the Commission, as it was considered not to be complete. The Ministry of Environment and Water of Bulgaria also decided to reject the proposed EIA report on a similar basis.

The draft feasibility report also included a very preliminary assessment, at pre-feasibility level, of alternative corridors avoiding the Kresna Gorge. This preliminary assessment, as noted in the draft feasibility report, was undertaken by SPEA on their own initiative and apparently following a verbal request from the Bulgarian Road Administration. In any case, the Commission did not accept this as being an adequate examination of alternatives. Both SPEA and the Bulgarian Road Administration confirm that there was no additional contract or disbursement involved in the production of this very preliminary assessment.

There has not been any complementary study financed by PHARE to identify alternative routes outside the E-79 existing corridor, nor has any project of this kind yet been proposed for financing by a Community instrument. In the case where such proposals were made, the Commission would certainly be ready to consider them.

The preliminary EIA for the Struma Motorway was finalised by SPEA in November 2001 and submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Water. The subsequent public meetings required by the Bulgarian legislation were held in March 2002 with the participation of the interested public and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The Ministry of Environment and Water is still reviewing the EIA following the public meeting and the Commission is not aware that any decision has yet been taken.

It is only after the completion of the Bulgarian internal procedure that the Commission becomes involved in the process.

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1353/02

by Freddy Blak (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(6 May 2002)

Subject: Cost-effectiveness of the EU-US fellowship programme

An EU-US fellowship programme was set up 20 years ago, whereby EU officials may be sent on long-term missions to American academic institutes while keeping their Commission salary. In the 1999 discharge resolution (A5-0113/2001), the Commission was asked by Parliament to carry out an evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of the programme, as there were serious doubts concerning the added value of this programme.
Would the Commission please forward the requested evaluation?

According to the ‘European Voice’ (18-24 April 2002), a member of Pascal Lamy's private office has been chosen for a year-long fellowship at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Would the Commission please indicate the added value of this fellowship as well as the selection criteria?

**Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission**

(11 June 2002)

The report on the cost-effectiveness of the American fellowship programme requested in the 1999 discharge resolution (A5-0113/2001) was part of the ‘Follow-up Report on the EP 1999 Discharge Resolution for the Commission’ sent to Parliament on 30 October 2001. For ease of reference, the Commission will send it again directly to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat.

On the second question of the Honourable Member, the Center for International Studies of the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California provides the fellow with the opportunity to attend and participate in seminars, conduct research and write and present an analytical paper. Issues currently of prime concern within the Center include global and regional governance; economic security and development; democratisation and economic transition; conflict resolution; issues of ethnicity, identity and comparative international migration; international bargaining and negotiation strategies.

These issues are also of interest in the future development of the Union and the selected fellow will have the opportunity to increase his knowledge in these fields and to discuss these topics with senior scholars from all over the world, which will provide an opportunity for the fellow to defend, at the same time, the Union point of view in these matters.

The fact that the selected fellow has worked closely with the Member of the Commission responsible for Trade, (though not as a Member of the Commissioner’s private office), and has a strong educational background in international relations, clearly increases the evident probability of generating added-value for the Commission in its international and trade roles and duties.

The main selection criterion for the fellowship is the overall calibre of the candidate, taking account of his/her intellectual vigour, analytical capacity, degree of personal initiative, originality in writing and discussion, and general knowledge of Union policies.

The required qualifications are:

- a minimum of five years’ experience as a permanent official of one of the Union’s Institutions,
- excellent command of the English language, both written and oral,
- high degree of personal initiative and organisational talent,
- very good knowledge of Union policies and United States-EU relations in general, as well as trade questions in particular,
- ability to contribute to teaching and discussion on the Union, in the areas requested by the particular universities,
- excellent communication skills and a ‘public relations-oriented’ approach,
- excellent knowledge of a particular policy of the Union, which will be the subject of special study,
- ability to do research,

Excellent mid-career experience and performance, with the perspective of substantially higher levels of service in the Union Institutions in the future are also factors which are given significant consideration.

Schemes of this nature are, of course, quite commonly used by public administrations in many democracies.