WRITTEN QUESTION E-1284/02
by Emmanouil Bakopoulos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(7 May 2002)

Subject: Capital of Europe

Following the Council Summit meeting at Nice, Mr Prodi and Mr Verhofstadt decided to instruct a team of experts to examine the conditions under which Brussels might be designated the capital of Europe.

On what criteria was this choice based and were other European capitals taken into account in the process?

Reply given by Mr Prodi on behalf of the Commission
(20 June 2002)

To avoid any misunderstandings, the Commission would like to point out that the measures taken by Mr Prodi and Mr Verhofstadt must be seen in the context of Declaration No 22 on the venue for European Councils, annexed to the Final Act of the Conference of Representatives of the Member State Governments which adopted the Treaty of Nice:

As from 2002, one European Council meeting per Presidency will be held in Brussels. When the Union comprises 18 members, all European Council meetings will be held in Brussels.

It was in this context that the Commission President and the Belgian Prime Minister called on a group of intellectuals to discuss, at two meetings, the needs and functions of a European capital and how Brussels might best fulfil them. The final report, presented to the press on 26 April 2002 by Mr Prodi and Mr Verhofstadt, summarises the main ideas and proposals resulting from these meetings.

There were thus no criteria for the choice of city to be discussed, as this was not the group’s remit.

This means that the second question is not applicable.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1295/02
by Mario Mauro (PPE-DE) to the Council
(7 May 2002)

Subject: Siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

On 2 April about 230 armed Palestinians, including 30 militiamen, entered the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem to take shelter from the advancing Israeli troops. Scores of Palestinian civilians, as well as Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian priests and nuns, are currently inside the complex.

The people trapped in the Church of the Nativity have repeatedly complained about the sanitary conditions now prevailing in the buildings. The bodies of two Palestinians shot dead by Israeli army snipers were left in the complex for more than a week.

How does the Council intend to tackle the extremely serious matter of the military siege of the Church of the Nativity?

Does the Council not believe that impartial international guarantees should be provided to facilitate a channel or safe conduct for delivery of the most urgent relief supplies (such as food and medicines) to those under siege?
Reply

(30 September 2002)

As the Honourable Member of the EP knows, the siege has been lifted in the meantime. The EU, in particular HR Solana, has played a key role in defusing the crisis. One of the major challenges was to find places where 13 Palestinians, who had been in the church could be brought to. A Council ‘Common Position on the temporary reception by Member States of the EU of certain Palestinians’ was adopted on 21 May 2002. Twelve Palestinians of the group of thirteen Palestinians were subsequently received on a temporary basis by a number of Member States on humanitarian grounds. The thirteenth has been received by a third Country.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1298/02
by Christopher Heaton-Harris (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(7 May 2002)

Subject: UK’s budget rebate

The method of calculating the UK correction has been modified in order to neutralise the net gains (the ‘windfall gains’) of the UK that result from the increase in the percentage of TOR retained by Member States.

When, and by what process, did this change occur?

What was the UK’s total contribution to the Community’s budget in each of the past five years both before and after the annual rebate?

How will the enlargement of the EU affect the UK’s rebate?

Answer given by Mrs Schreyer on behalf of the Commission

(6 June 2002)

The traditional own resources (TOR) ‘windfall gains’ correction to the United Kingdom rebate was introduced by Article 4(e) of Council Decision 2000/597/EC, Euratom of 29 September 2000 on the system of the European Communities' own resources (1). This correction applies retroactively as from 1 January 2001 since the percentage of TOR retained by Member States was increased as from that date. This was agreed between the Member States at the Berlin European Council of March 1999 and is reflected in point 72 of the Presidency Conclusions.

The United Kingdom’s total payments to the Community budget in the last five years were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Before the rebate (1)</th>
<th>Rebate (2)</th>
<th>After the rebate (1) − (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>11 386,9</td>
<td>2 458,8</td>
<td>8 928,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>15 706,8</td>
<td>3 169,5</td>
<td>12 537,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>14 651,3</td>
<td>3 567,8</td>
<td>11 083,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>17 291,5</td>
<td>3 424,6</td>
<td>13 867,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 (1)</td>
<td>15 085,9</td>
<td>7 342,5</td>
<td>7 743,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) The substantial amount of the United Kingdom rebate in 2001 was due to the combined effect of the budgeting of the final calculation of the 1997 rebate (+ EUR 1 580.1 million), of the updating of the 1999 amount (+ EUR 1 299.5 million), the updated total amount of the 2000 rebate (EUR 4 426.6 million) as well as a minor amount due to, notably, exchange rate differences.