WRITTEN QUESTION E-2099/02
by Eija-Riitta Korhola (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(16 July 2002)

Subject: Giving to developing countries longline vessels scheduled for scrapping

Within the EU, fishermen are being offered incentives to cease using vessels in the form of scrapping premiums. These vessels could be put to use in the least developed countries to promote local food production and employment. It would be possible to select those eligible in such a way as to avoid creating any problems for the objectives of the EU’s common fisheries policy or the EU market.

Does the Commission consider that it might be possible for longline vessels whose use is to be halted in Member States to be passed on to developing countries for use in projects to foster food production and employment? What measures could be taken to this end?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission
(22 August 2002)

The proposal of the Honourable Member to use decommissioned longline fishing vessels for projects in developing countries is attractive at first sight.

Under the proposed reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, however, aid for the export of fishing vessels or establishment of joint enterprises with third countries would no longer be granted. The objective of this modification is to halt the exportation of Community fleet’s overcapacity to other countries, in particular to under-developed countries. Deficiencies in control and enforcement measures, which are essential to protect the local resources in such countries, could put them at risk of over-exploitation in the short-term.

The introduction of highly productive fishing vessels at low or no cost could also have a negative impact on the development of local industries and therefore on the creation of employment. In fact, such a measure could have exactly the opposite effect on a developing country than the expected outcome.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2100/02
by Mario Borghezio (NI) to the Commission
(16 July 2002)

Subject: Call for the European Union to save the glaciers in the Alps

The startling news of the enormous accumulation of water in the Alps caused by the melting of the Monterosaglaciers is a serious emergency and symptomatic of dangers which the European Union will have to tackle in the future.

The glaciers of the Alps make up a natural landscape unique in Europe and constitute the shared heritage of all the Alpine peoples. It is now under threat of destruction, not least because inadequate steps have been taken to safeguard the equilibrium of the climate.

Does not the Commission intend to take appropriate protection measures, monitor the situation and use its influence in international politics to ensure the adoption of the necessary provisions to avert or at least reduce the imminent danger of the glaciers disappearing from the Alps?
Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission

(4 September 2002)

The Commission is very aware of the serious situations that could result from changes in our climate, including the melting of the glaciers.

The Commission considers climate change as an environmental problem that requires a global solution to which we are actively contributing. The Community and all its Member States are Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and they all ratified the Kyoto Protocol on 31 May 2002. The Kyoto Protocol requires that all the Member States develop and implement national climate change strategies. They are being complemented by actions at Union level.

The European Climate Change Programme (ECCP) is the basis for a range of cost-effective emission reductions measures, including the Commission's proposal on emissions trading and other measures in the areas of energy, transport, industry and agriculture.

Other measures foreseen include legislation on fluorinated gases, on minimum efficiency requirements for end-use equipment, on energy demand management, on the promotion of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and two 'transport' packages on shifting the balance between modes of transport and improvements in transport infrastructure use and charging.

The Commission believes that the Union is showing leadership in the fight against climate change so as to participate in the limitation of damages.

(2003/C 28 E/210)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2101/02
by Toine Manders (ELDR) to the Commission
(16 July 2002)

Subject: Obesity

Research carried out in a number of EU Member States, including the Netherlands, shows that the average European eats, drinks and smokes too much and takes too little exercise, leading to excess weight. Heart and vascular disease (including thrombosis) have become public enemy No 1. The increasing prominence given to the importance of an active, healthy lifestyle is proving to have little effect. The various policy initiatives adopted are often targeted at combating the symptoms of obesity and of being overweight, instead of taking a structural approach to tackling the causes of the problem (namely too little sport and not enough exercise). A good example is the European tobacco directive, which has been implemented in part in the Netherlands, witness the new labelling on packets of cigarettes. Success in achieving the intended effect, namely curbing smoking, is so far belied by the facts.

This is a worrying situation, bearing in mind that the spin-off from so-called Western diseases goes beyond the implications for the health of European citizens. The high health costs associated with such diseases hold down economic growth and prevent the higher labour market participation rates considered necessary with a view to achieving further growth. These trends consequently have the potential to frustrate the Lisbon process.

Given that these problems are not confined to the Netherlands, it is appropriate to speak of a European problem calling for a corresponding approach. European policy measures could promote sport and exercise within society. This would mean tackling causes, rather than symptoms, on a Europe-wide basis, leading to a structural solution.

1. Is the Commission aware of the above trends?

2. Does the Commission intend to take steps to propose a policy to promote sport and exercise in the Member States and, where possible, to require, for example in connection with educational curricula or employment, or wherever possible, that they be linked — as a requirement — to European financial assistance?