WRITTEN QUESTION E-3149/02

by Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(4 November 2002)

Subject: Community programme to combat poverty and social exclusion

The Community programme to combat poverty and social exclusion provides for a network of national monitoring centres to back up the statistical mechanism and supply more detailed information on poverty and social exclusion.

Moreover, the European Parliament’s resolution of 11 June 2002 on social inclusion calls on the Commission to launch an in-depth study of the extent of economic independence or autonomy of women in the European Union, especially those with family responsibilities.

Given the above, will the Commission answer the following:

1. What experience is available on the operation of the national monitoring centres?

2. How much progress has been made on the study of the extent of economic independence or autonomy of women in the European Union?

3. Could it provide a list of the projects submitted under this Community programme, specifying which one have been approved?

Answer given by Ms Diamantopoulou on behalf of the Commission

(18 December 2002)

1. In promoting the Community action programme against social exclusion during 2002, the Commission has taken into account the involvement of national observatories or similar recognised bodies. In this first year of the programme, the Commission launched an exchange programme to encourage the exchange of learning and best practice (VP/2002/010) and specifically included in the guidelines for the programme reference to exchanges between national observatories or other similar recognised bodies. Several of the 65 applications that have just been selected to participate in this exchange programme involve such bodies. The Commission is also giving thought to how such bodies might be further involved in the context of the social inclusion process. One possibility that will be discussed in the context of work programme for the Community action programme for 2003 is to undertake a study on the identification of national and regional observatories and similar bodies in Member States and their specific areas of competence. This is necessary to give a more complete picture of the range and role of such bodies.

2. The Commission is aware of the importance of looking at data on gender in the field of poverty and social exclusion. It plans to investigate the issues in this connection in more depth both in the programme to combat poverty and social exclusion and with the Social Protection Committee Indicators Subgroup, as more weight should be given to this aspect in the indicators. Finally, the Commission would like to draw the Honourable Member’s attention to the recent study ‘Labour market transitions in the context of social exclusion’ available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2002/nov/labmarket_trans_-en.html, and to Eurostat’s recent publication: ‘The life of women and men in Europe: a statistical portrait’, which gives a statistical description of men and women at different points of their lives.

3. During the first year of the programme’s implementation, special attention has been devoted to developing transnational exchange of information and best practice. Implementation of the exchange programme was staggered to allow proposals to focus on the planning and preparation phase. The initial phase, which will be fully operational by the end of 2002, seeks to support promoters’ efforts to form solid partnerships, establish links with the policy shaping process and ensure wide dissemination of the projects’ results. In the project selection phase, priority was given to proposals addressing problems arising in the context of the national action plans and the Joint Report on Social Inclusion. The complete list of projects presented and that of the projects recommended for support will be published on the
Employment and Social Affairs DG website in the coming weeks. A second phase, to commence in 2003, will support the most deserving projects developed during phase one, following a restricted call for proposals.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-3154/02

by Avril Doyle (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(5 November 2002)

Subject: Arsenic in animal nutrition

Does the Commission recognise that pure seaweed has been used as an animal feed and feed additive for generations?

While awaiting the evaluation of the Scientific Committee for Animal Nutrition (SCAN) (due in December 2002), the Arramara Teo Factory at Kilkieran, Connemara, Ireland, is being seriously affected by the new legislation due to come into effect in August 2003, and there will be many full-time job losses and a serious loss of income for 700 seaweed cutters.

Can the Commission distinguish between naturally occurring organic arsenic and inorganic arsenic, and can we make a case for measuring arsenic as an additive over the basal rate and make a special case for seaweed meal?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(12 December 2002)

Council Directive 96/25/EC of 29 April 1996 on the circulation and use of feed materials (1) lays down a non-exclusive list of the main feed materials which may be used and marketed for the preparation of compound feedingstuffs. This list contains the feed material seaweed meal obtained by drying and crushing seaweed, in particular brown seaweed.

Council Directive 1999/29/EC of 22 April 1999 on the undesirable substances and products in animal nutrition (2) establishes a maximum level for arsenic of 2 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) in feed materials including seaweed meal and in compound feedingstuffs and a level of 4 mg/kg in complementary feedingstuffs. The maximum level applies to total arsenic as there is no method of analysis available for use in official control which distinguishes routinely the more toxic inorganic arsenic from the less toxic organic arsenic.

Seaweed not complying with the maximum level for arsenic can, in accordance with the provisions of Council Directive 1999/29/EC, still be used under strict conditions for the production of compound feedingstuffs. The produced compound feedingstuff has in any case to comply with the maximum level.


With respect to Council Directive 2002/32/EC, the Commission declared in Council to undertake, insofar as possible before 1 August 2003, a review of the maximum levels on the basis of updated scientific risk assessments and taking into account the prohibition of any dilution of contaminated non-complying product intended for animal feed.

Information concerning the presence of arsenic in seaweed meal has been provided by the Irish authorities to the Commission and this information will be taken into account when considering the revision of the current maximum levels for arsenic in feed materials including seaweed meal and in compound feed.

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(1) OJ L 125, 23.5.1996.