WRITTEN QUESTION E-1838/02
by Martin Schulz (PSE) to the Commission
(27 June 2002)

Subject: Compatibility of the action taken by the Italian Government with the Growth and Stability Pact

What does the Commission think of the financial operation which has been announced by the Italian Government and which involves the setting up of a company legally entitled to take over Italy's state-owned portfolio of buildings, monuments and land, and the setting up of a second company to which part of that portfolio could be ceded in order to provide guarantees (in the form of mortgages) for loans taken out by the Italian Government for the purpose of financing public works, and which might possibly put such items up for sale?

In view of the risks involved in selling much of that portfolio, the unusual procedures which would be called for and the constraints which would have to be observed should insolvency require certain monuments of historical importance to be sold, it may legitimately be feared that such 'creative financing' would in practice lead to an increase in public debt in a country which is already one of the most indebted of the EU Member States. Hence it should be determined in good time whether or not the proposed action is compatible with adherence to the Growth and Stability Pact.

Answer given by Mr Solbes Mira on behalf of the Commission
(26 July 2002)

Under the Stability and Growth Pact, all Member States are committed 'to adhere to the medium-term objective of budgetary positions close to balance or in surplus'.


The question refers to legislation recently adopted by the Italian parliament, setting up two institutions, 'Patrimonio SpA' and of 'Infrastrutture SpA'. Eurostat is currently scrutinising the nature of the operations to be carried out by these institutions and will pass judgement on their treatment in the government accounts once the institutions start operating.

(1) OJ L 310, 30.11.1996.

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1839/02
by Herbert Bösch (PSE) to the Commission
(24 June 2002)

Subject: Closure of the 2001 Community budget

Under Article 20 of the measures for the implementation of the financial regulation, it is the task of the Commission's accounting officer to draw up a balance sheet for the past financial year and a consolidated revenue and expenditure account. The accounting officer vouches for the correctness and authenticity of the figures and is responsible for any losses that may occur.

The balance sheet for the 2001 financial year was submitted to the Commission and the European Parliament on 30 April 2002.
It emerges from a paper forwarded to Parliament by the Commission (Factual responses to allegations and claims made by Mrs Andreasen in her letter to MEPs on 24 May 2002 and elsewhere) that the balance sheet for the 2001 financial year was not signed by the accounting officer who had been in office since 1 January 2002, because the official transfer of office from her predecessor to herself as provided for in Article 18 of the implementing measures had not yet taken place and because, in addition, she obviously had doubts as to the correctness of the closing accounts.

Her predecessor, also, did not sign the balance sheet until 17 May 2002, that is to say after it had already been adopted by the Commission.

Can the Commission say on whose responsibility the balance sheet was drawn up and presented to the Commission for adoption?

Can the Commission say when and by whom the balance sheet was submitted to the Commission's accounting officer for audit pursuant to Article 18 of the implementing measures and what the outcome of that audit was?

**Answer given by Ms Schreyer on behalf of the Commission**

(12 August 2002)

1. Under Article 20 of the Commission Regulation laying down detailed rules for the implementation of certain provisions of the Financial Regulation, the Commission's accounting officer centralises all the information he needs and draws up the consolidated revenue and expenditure account and balance sheet of the European Communities so that the Commission can adopt them and send them to Parliament, the Council and the Court of Auditors by 1 May.

Pursuant to this provision, the accounts for 2001 were prepared by the relevant departments in the Budget Directorate-General and were presented under the responsibility of the accounting officer in office on 31 December to the Director-General of DG Budget and then to the Commissioner for the Budget, who adopted them on behalf of the Commission on 30 April, as empowered to do so by the Members of the Commission.

2. The second question relates to when and by whom the balance sheet was submitted to the Commission's Financial Controller for audit.

Such submission is required by Article 18 of the Commission Regulation laying down detailed rules for the implementation of certain provisions of the Financial Regulation.

Under this procedure, the Financial Controller gives an opinion, but not approval. Only the German version of Article 18 refers to approval (zwecks Erteilung des Sichtvermerks), which is not mentioned in the other language versions.

Given the deadlines for the closure of the annual accounts, the accounts for 2001 were not submitted by the accounting officer to the Financial Controller prior to adoption.

(2003/C 137 E/036)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-1859/02**

by Bart Staes (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(28 June 2002)

**Subject:** European regions’ responsibilities as regards compliance with the Stability Pact

The Stability Pact of December 1996 imposes strict budgetary discipline on the Member States. Some Member States find it hard to operate within such financial constraints, and this is certainly true of Member States’ regions and federal states.