How does the Commission think that the evidently irresponsible approach taken by non-member countries to fishing for blue whiting in the negotiations on the sharing out of blue whiting catch quotas can be remedied, so that Community fishermen are no longer being let down?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(3 December 2002)

The latest Coastal State meeting on blue whiting has taken place in Oslo on 7 and 8 November 2002. Blue whiting has also been discussed at the annual meeting of North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) in London 12 to 15 November 2002.

No progress has been made since the Coastal State meeting in December 2001. At that meeting a long-term management plan was agreed. The plan specifies how to set the total allowable catches (TAC). The Parties could, however, not agree on an allocation of the TAC.

Allocation is the most important outstanding question. The long-term management plan is worthless without an agreement on the distribution of the TAC and the Commission is giving the highest priority to this issue. The Commission is fully aware of the development in the catches by the Parties. The reduction in the Community’s share of the total international landings is not a consequence of the Community’s management of the blue whiting fishery but of the other Parties’ lack of responsible management.

The Commission does not agree that the Community’s negotiating position has been weakened by the fall in its share of the catch. The Commission will not accept that the irresponsible behaviour of some of the other Parties results in them obtaining larger shares of this fishery in any agreement on allocation. The Commission will in the coming negotiations continue to put pressure on the other Parties and will consider all possible measures, aiming for an overall agreement.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3034/02
by Daniela Raschhofer (NI) to the Commission

(24 October 2002)

Subject: EU aid for Objective 1 regions

It emerges from Jörg Beutel’s study for the Commission entitled ‘The economic impact of Objective 1 interventions for the period 2000-2006’ that 24.2% of EU aid for Objective 1 regions does not benefit those regions themselves, but other EU regions. The study also makes it clear that the lasting effects of EU funding in the region concerned are insufficient.

1. What reasons does the Commission see for the misdirected funding?

2. What steps has the Commission taken or does it propose to take to remedy this state of affairs?

3. Does the Commission intend to withdraw this funding?

4. How does the Commission view the study’s findings about EU funding’s lack of lasting effects?

5. What steps does the Commission suggest to enhance the effectiveness of EU aid?
Answer given by Mr. Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(10 December 2002)

The study cited by the Honourable Member examines the economic impact of the Structural Funds on the regions eligible under Objective 1. Contrary to the conclusion drawn by the Honourable member, the study does not call into the question the fact that the eligible regions benefit in full from the resources transferred under the Structural Funds. In terms of the economic impact of these resources, it is estimated that over the period 2000-2006 European support under the Structural Funds will contribute some 0.4% per year to income (GDP) growth in Greece and Portugal, the two major beneficiaries.

The study also examines the second-round effects of the Structural Funds. The second-round effects exist because some of the new plant, equipment and services made available to the eligible regions are imported from other parts of the Union. It is a reflection of patterns of trade between the Member States of the Union in the framework of the Single Market. On average, the study found that such imports equate to 24.2% of the direct expenditures in the eligible regions.

The improvement to the capital stock brought about by the intervention of the Structural Funds means that the long-term productive capacity of the regions is enhanced. In this way, the Structural Funds have lasting benefits. Investment as a percentage of GDP would be up to one fifth lower in the eligible regions in the absence of the Structural Funds.

The authorities in the Member States regions are currently in the process of carrying out a mid-term evaluation of what has been achieved in the first part of the programming period, 2000-2006. These evaluations will be finalised a the end of 2003 and will form the basis for possible adjustments to programmes in 2004. The purpose is to ensure that the interventions are as effective as possible and adapted to changing circumstances.

(2003/C 137 E/170) WRITTEN QUESTION E-3035/02

by Dorette Corbey (PSE) to the Council

(24 October 2002)

Subject: Nature conservation in Malta

On 31 March 1998 accession negotiations were started with six applicant countries — Hungary, Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Cyprus. On 13 October 1999 the Commission recommended Member States to open negotiations with Romania, the Slovak Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Malta. Nature conservation legislation, such as the Wild Birds and Habitats Directives, is included in the list of priority tasks. The EU has underlined from the very beginning of the negotiations that transitional measures will not be granted on nature conservation.

Recently the Times of Malta (22 August 2002) reported that Malta had managed to reach agreement with the Commission that would guarantee that the tradition of hunting and trapping of songbirds would remain alive and sustainable.

1. Can the Council confirm that no exemptions or transitional measures have been granted to the accession countries concerning the Wild Birds and Habitats Directives?

2. Can the Council confirm that an agreement has been reached with Malta allowing hunting and trapping of songbirds after accession?

3. If exemptions or transitional measures have been granted how, when and by whom was this decided and how and when did the Council inform the European Parliament about this agreement?

4. If they have, which provisions of the Wild Birds Directive are affected by the transitional measures concerned?

5. Can the Council confirm that it will closely monitor the situation in the accession countries as regards the correct implementation and effective enforcement of the Wild Birds and Habitats Directives?