maltreated, beaten and tortured and are not transported according to EU animal welfare laws. Why is the ruling on sentiency not being used and enforced in these instances to prohibit such cruel and inhumane treatment of animals?

**Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission**

**(28 February 2003)**

Animals are recognised as sentient beings in the Protocol to the EC Treaty on the protection and welfare of animals and, furthermore, that text requires the Community and the Member States are to pay full regard to animal welfare in formulating and implementing the Community policies on agriculture, transport, the internal market and research.

The principal Community requirements for the protection of animals during transport are contained in Council Directive 91/628/EEC as amended by Directive 95/29/EC (1). This Directive applies only in the territory of the Union as presently constituted, although the candidate countries for membership are currently in the process of aligning their legislation with its requirements.

The Commission recognises that the transport of horses from Central and Eastern European countries for slaughter in the Community has, in the past, given rise for legitimate concerns in relation to animal welfare. The Commission's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) has highlighted these concerns in a number of its mission reports. Furthermore, animal welfare groups have frequently provided information concerning alleged breaches of the requirements of the Directive.

The Commission has intervened vigorously with the Member States concerned when these matters have been brought to its attention. More recent FVO mission reports have noted some improvement in the condition in which horses arrive in southern Italian slaughterhouses after long journeys from Central and Eastern Europe.

The Commission is currently completing the drafting of a proposal for a new Council Regulation on the protection of animals during transport which contains a number of provisions which aim directly to improve the situation of transported horses, for example requiring lorries transporting these animals to be divided into individual compartments.

More comprehensive and stringent requirements for the registration of transporters and the training of those handling animals should also help to improve standards of animal welfare during journeys.

Last but not least, the accession of the principal countries of origin and transit of horses imported into the Community for slaughter will mean that in the majority of cases, the whole journey will be in territory where the requirements of Community law can be fully enforced.

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WRITTEN QUESTION P-0158/03

**by Adeline Hazan (PSE) to the Commission**

**(22 January 2003)**

**Subject: Conditions for children in hospital in Europe**

European integration is having an ever increasing impact on health systems although health care is not a good that is traded and access to health care is a fundamental right, particularly for children who are the most vulnerable individuals in society.

- Does the European Commission intend to introduce measures to ensure that, throughout Europe, conditions in hospitals are of the highest possible standards, particularly for children, and that they meet a number of common criteria such as those set out in the 1988 European Charter for Children
in Hospital’ drawn up by associations in 12 European countries and which is in line with the 1989 'International Convention on the Rights of the Child? 

- Is the European Commission in a position to ensure that there is an end to the discrimination arising from variations in the quality of care provided by different public health services in Europe, in order to satisfy the principle of equal treatment?

- Does the Commission intend to take action to remedy the legal vacuum currently surrounding regulations on health care professionals in Europe owing to the absence of European coordination, in order to meet the health needs of Europe's population satisfactorily, particularly in terms of the hospitalisation of children?

**Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission**

*(18 February 2003)*

The Commission agrees with the Honourable Member that co-operation between health systems of Member States is growing in importance. At the same time, it draws attention to the provision in the EC Treaty that stipulates that Community action in the field of public health shall respect Member States' responsibilities for the organisation and financing of health services.

In order to address some of the issues raised around growing patient mobility and interaction between health systems, the Commission has launched a high level process of reflection with Health Ministers and key stakeholders to discuss possible perspectives for intensified co-operation and the Community's role. Moreover, the recently adopted action programme on public health *(1)* will provide an opportunity to launch some exploratory work in these areas.


**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0229/03**

*by Raffaele Costa (PPE-DE) to the Commission*

*(3 February 2003)*

Subject: Commission initiative on European patient mobility

At the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, the Commission presented an oral report on patient mobility between Member States.

Is a Commission study available on the development of an organisational framework in this sphere and does the Commission intend to present in the future proposals to implement a plan to promote patient mobility?

Is there also a study assessing the possible implications of the free movement of patients for public accounts in the Member States?

Finally, does the Commission intend to extend the positive experience of the Netlink project, launched in a number of European cities, to create an electronic health card which, while fully respecting privacy, makes the health records of every citizen of the Union immediately available in any European hospital?