Answer given by Mrs Reding on behalf of the Commission
(6 March 2003)

In general, each Member State is responsible for organising and financing its own education system.

Concerning Article 149 and Article 150: The Dutch authorities respond to the objective of encouraging mobility, described in Article 149 of the EC Treaty, by fully accepting and recognising periods of study in Belgium and Germany.

Concerning the free movement of services: Although the question mentions Article 49 EC, that provision is not at stake if, as it seems, it refers to training courses organised by public schools and/or universities. The Court ruled that such courses do not constitute services within the meaning of Article 49 EC.

Concerning the free movement of persons: The Commission will further examine this question in the light of the legislation and practice in the Netherlands and will, in due course, provide a supplementary reply to the Honourable Member.

(2003/C 161 E/163)
WRITTEN QUESTION E-3873/02
by Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(10 January 2003)

Subject: Petition to the European Parliament on silting at the Óbidos Lagoon (No 978/01)

The Residents' Association of Bom Sucesso-Vau, Óbidos (Portugal), which campaigns to protect the ecosystem of the Óbidos Lagoon, the rich natural heritage of the region and the quality of life of the inhabitants, has addressed a petition to the European Parliament in which it complains of pollution and silting at the lagoon and the placing of a wall of plastic bags containing sand in the area of the lagoon, allegedly to protect the dunes. Parliament's Committee on Petitions has asked the Commission to take a position on the matter.

Can the Commission state its position on the petition of the Residents' Association of Bom Sucesso-Vau on the Óbidos Lagoon?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission
(6 February 2003)

The Commission would like to inform the Honourable Member that it has responded on two occasions to petition No 978/01 presented by the Residents' Association of Bom Sucesso on the subject of pollution at the Óbidos Lagoon.

In its initial response, the Commission indicated that, having analysed the petition, it had found it necessary to obtain explanations from the Portuguese authorities regarding the discharge of waste water into the lagoon in the light of Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste water treatment (1).

In addition, the Commission also stated that, even if the lagoon were inside an area protected under national legislation, this did not mean that the area in question benefited from special protection in the Community context.

In its second response, the Commission pointed out that, following the explanations provided by the Portuguese authorities, it had emerged that the area of Bom Sucesso had 200 permanent residents and a fluctuating population of less than 2000. Consequently, the obligations deriving from Council Directive 91/271/EEC of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste water treatment, concerning in particular the collection and treatment of the water in question, were not applicable.

In this response, the Commission pinpointed the fact that, given the interest of the Óbidos Lagoon, the Portuguese authorities had stated that they were undertaking a series of actions for the lagoon’s recovery, involving in particular the construction of four large and ten small waste water treatment plants, 21 pumping stations, 80 km of outfalls and one under-sea outfall. According to the authorities, the abovementioned system, which will be completed at the end of 2004, would permit the tertiary treatment of the lagoon’s waste water, with the exception of that discharged into the sea through the under-sea outfall, which would be subjected to secondary treatment.

As concerns more specifically the district of Bom Sucesso, the Commission pointed out that the Portuguese authorities had informed it that they had speeded up the implementation of the actions required and that the works should be finished during the summer of 2003, that is to say a year in advance of the initial timetable.


(2003/C 161 E/164) WRITTEN QUESTION E-3875/02

by Salvador Garriga Polledo (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(10 January 2003)

Subject: Community criteria for the development of regional air transport

At present, regional air transport, thanks to its specific characteristics, is the part of the world air transport sector enjoying the most rapid growth: it may be considered the ‘elite’ means of transport of both present and future.

However, many airlines in this sector have moved away from serving regional routes only, and now also provide services on international routes, operating for large airlines. This has led to complaints from the large airlines, which are concerned over strong competition on routes that are now served, in many cases, by regional airlines.

In view of these complaints, can the Commission state whether a specific Community regulation exists on the development of regional air transport, in the interest of avoiding conflicts over competition with the established airlines on international routes, given also that the volume of the operations involved entails costly obligations?

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(6 February 2003)

Ever since the three Regulations comprising the third air transport liberalisation package (Regulations (EEC) No 2407/92 (1), No 2408/92 (2) and No 2409/92 (3)) entered into force on 1 January 1993, all Community air carriers have been free to establish whatever air routes they deem to be of commercial interest between Community airports (Article 3 of Regulation (EEC) No 2408/92). Accordingly, the choices airlines make in this liberalised, competitive market are dictated by their own commercial strategies and the need for profitability, irrespective of the route.