Under the Regulation finally adopted by the co-legislators, the Prestige would have been phased out by 15 March 2005 at the latest. If the timetable proposed by the Commission had been retained, the Prestige would have had to be decommissioned on 1 September 2002 (date of application of the final Regulation) as it was 26 years old on the date of the accident.

In this context, the Commission welcomes the unanimous support of the Member States, as expressed in the conclusions of both the Transport Council of 6 December 2002 and the European Council in Copenhagen, for the measures it presented in its Communication of 3 December 2002.

On 20 December 2002, the Commission presented a proposal for a Regulation (1) to Parliament and the Council on the accelerated phase-out of single-hull tankers and return to the originally proposed timetable. The Commission hopes that the proposal will be adopted during the Greek presidency.


(2003/C 242 E/069) WRITTEN QUESTION E-3605/02

by Helle Thorning-Schmidt (PSE) and Torben Lund (PSE) to the Commission

(16 December 2002)

Subject: The euro and nickel allergy

The one and two euro coins contain a high level of nickel and the two-tone design consisting of two alloys makes the coins galvanic elements which corrode heavily when they become electricity conductors on contact with perspiration. This has proven to trigger allergic reactions in people who are allergic to nickel.

Bank employees, shop staff etc., who have a great deal of daily contact with the coins, are a particularly vulnerable group who may run the risk of developing an allergy to nickel in the long term. Moreover, anyone who is allergic to nickel may suffer a worsening condition.

What does the Commission intend to do to remedy the above complaints associated with the use of euro coins? Has the Commission launched an investigation into the effects on health of the use of the current euro coins? Does the Commission intend to withdraw the current coins and replace them with coins which do not produce allergic reactions?

Answer given by Mr Solbes Mira on behalf of the Commission

(28 January 2003)

The question of the Honourable Members refers to a study published in the magazine ‘Nature’ in September 2002, where the release of nickel from euro coins in a galvanic environment was tested. The conclusion drawn by the authors of this study is misleading, as the results were generated by sticking EUR1 and EUR2 coins to the skin of patients with a known nickel allergy for 48-72 hours. After this period they showed an allergic reaction. As these conditions clearly do not at all reflect the normal use of the euro coins, the Commission does not see the need to revise its opinion, that the normal use of euro coins does not represent any risk for European citizens. Even citizens who frequently touch coins (e.g. bank employees and cashiers) are by far not exposed to the conditions simulated in the test, as a galvanic environment of a coin could only be created by permanent contact with the human skin.

The introduction of the euro coins reduced the share of coins in circulation containing nickel from 75% to 15%. The Commission is not aware of any particular cases of patients suffering from nickel allergy which can be traced back to the handling or use of EUR1 and EUR2 coins. Neither is there evidence of a recent increase in nickel allergies among European citizens.
A recent independent study, conducted under the authority of Professor Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, winner of the Nobel Prize of Physics showed that the amount of nickel released from the EUR 1 and EUR 2 coins is significantly lower than from the national coins used prior to the introduction of the euro.

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3620/02
by Wolfgang Ilgenfritz (NI) to the Commission
(9 December 2002)

Subject: Position of Jersey in the EU

Is Jersey a member of the European Union?

Do businesspeople in Jersey have a sales tax identification number for tax-free purchases in the European Union?

If Jersey has a special status in the EU, the Commission is asked to forward the relevant provisions.

Answer given by Mr Prodi on behalf of the Commission
(14 January 2003)

Jersey, a British Crown dependency, is part of the Union in so far as the United Kingdom is responsible for its external relations. It does, however, have a special status. Pursuant to Article 26(3) and Article 27(d) of the Act concerning the conditions of accession to the Communities of the Kingdom of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a new paragraph was added to Article 299 of the EC Treaty and Article 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community. The paragraph reads as follows:

This Treaty shall apply to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man only to the extent necessary to ensure the implementation of the arrangements for those islands set out in the Treaty concerning the accession of new Member States to the European Economic Community and the to European Atomic Energy Community signed on 22 January 1972.

The special arrangements laid down for the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are set out in Protocol No 3 attached to the Act of Accession, of which, under Article 158 of the Act, they form an integral part.

As regards VAT, Jersey does not belong to the tax territory as defined in Article 3(2) of the Sixth VAT Directive (\(^1\)). Firms in Jersey do not therefore have an individual Union VAT identification number. However, deliveries of goods from or to the Channel Islands are treated as exports and are exempt from VAT as set out in Article 33a of that Directive.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3661/02
by Rosa Miguélez Ramos (PSE) to the Commission
(18 December 2002)

Subject: Black tide in Galicia: Natura 2000 network

The pollution caused by the accident involving the Prestige and its subsequent sinking has already seriously affected ten natural sites put forward as 'sites of Community interest' by the Galician administration and is threatening a further six. All of them form part of the Natura 2000 European network.