In the priority setting process, seven thematic priorities were defined. None of these priorities is the exclusive domain of a certain science sector. Agricultural Sciences are invited to contribute to all thematic priorities, where they can make a contribution, specifically, priorities five (Food Quality and Safety), six (Sustainable development, global change and ecosystems) and to Scientific Support to Policies. Inter-disciplinary research will be essential to fulfil the requirements. Agronomic research on tobacco was not retained as a specific priority.

The scientific community was invited to further sharpen the priorities in an invitation to submit expressions of interest. By the deadline in July 2002, more than 10,000 expressions of interest have been received and have been evaluated with the assistance of eminent scientists from Europe and outside Europe. This process has helped to set-up the workprogrammes and the subsequent call for proposals, which was published on the 17 December 2002.

The Commission can reassure the Honourable Member that all received research project proposals, which fall within the research priorities of the 6th Framework Programme as decided by the Parliament and Council will receive equitable treatment.

(2003/C 242 E/093)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0087/03
by Kathleen Van Brempt (PSE) to the Commission
(28 January 2003)

Subject: Trade in endangered species of animals

The general public in the EU is increasingly interested in rare and exotic protected species of animals. There is now a real international network of shrewd operators trading in such species. The continuing existence of an illegal market is undermining the efforts of those traders who comply with the law.

Has the Commission any knowledge of the smuggling of animals into the EU? If so, can it provide figures for the smuggling of animals into the EU during the past five years?

What proportion of this illegal trade in animals is accounted for by Belgium? Can the Commission provide figures for the smuggling of animals into or via Belgium during the past five years?

What is the Commission doing to combat the smuggling of animals and is it giving animal traders who want to find out about their obligations the means to do so? If so, what means and how often?

Is the Commission giving encouragement, imposing requirements and/or providing financial assistance to Member States to enable them to improve the implementation and enforcement of legislation?

Is the Commission encouraging Member States to cooperate in the implementation and enforcement of legislation through the exchange of information, knowledge and experience?

What is the Commission doing to help minimise the differences between Member States and harmonise criminal law provisions, for example?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission
(10 March 2003)


The Commission cannot provide information on the proportion of illegal trade accounted for by Belgium. However, there is information on confiscations and seizures in Belgium.
While combating the smuggling of animals is mainly the responsibility of Member States, the Commission provides assistance. It has contracted Traffic Europe, the wildlife trade monitoring programme of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), to monitor the implementation of the wildlife trade regulations in the Union and to assist the responsible authorities in Member States on questions related to enforcement. The Commission also chairs an ‘Enforcement Group’ in which Member States come together to examine technical questions related to enforcement.

The most obvious contacts for animal traders are the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Management Authorities in Member States. The Commission itself has a webpage concerning CITES and the Union wildlife trade regulations on Europa (http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/cites/home_en.htm). It is also currently planning an information campaign for wildlife trade controls in the Union which should make commercial operators, such as wildlife importers, wholesalers and retailers, more aware of the detailed provisions in the wildlife trade Regulations regarding commercial activities as well as the provisions regarding the proper care of live specimens. This campaign should start in spring 2003. This specifically targeted campaign will complement a previous information effort aimed at the general public.

The Commission works closely with Member States in the Committee on Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora, the Scientific Review Group and in the above-mentioned Enforcement Group. The meetings of these Groups provide the possibility of exchanging information, knowledge and experience. The improvement and harmonisation of implementation measures is one of the tasks of the Committee on Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora.

With regard to sanctions these are largely within the competence of Member States and Article 16 of Regulation 338/97 provides that Member States ‘take appropriate measures to ensure the imposition of sanctions’ for a number of infringements. The Commission has subsidized a ‘Workshop on the Enforcement of Wildlife Trade Controls in the Union’ in 2001, where the issue of sanctions was discussed.

At a broader level, it should be mentioned that, in 2001, the Commission proposed a Directive of the Parliament and the Council on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law which proposes criminal sanctions for offences against the environment. This also covers the trading of protected wild fauna and flora species or parts thereof. This proposal for a directive is limited to requiring that Member States impose criminal penalties for breaches of environmental law. It leaves Member States considerable freedom to decide what type of criminal penalties they wish to impose, provided they are effective, proportionate and dissuasive, in accordance with the rulings on penalties issued by the Court of Justice. The legislative procedure to adopt this proposal for a Directive is stopped for the moment. The Council adopted on 27 January 2003 a Framework-decision on the protection of the environment through criminal law in the context of judicial cooperation. It obliges Member States to punish intentional and negligent offences to the environment, including the trading of protected wild fauna and flora species or parts thereof.


(2003/C 242 E/094) WRITTEN QUESTION P-0091/03
by Fausto Bertinotti (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(20 January 2003)

Subject: Extension of the tourist port at San Felice Circeo (Latina, Italy)

The municipality of San Felice Circeo has decided to double the size of the local tourist port. It has not, however, heeded the counsels of the regional advisers, notably with regard to the planning, coastal erosion and urban development aspects. The project has not been subjected to an environmental impact assessment, nor has there been a proper study concerning current flows and erosion risks. Equally, no