Maritime safety was included on the agenda of the European Council in Copenhagen, the conclusions of which emphasise that 'The Union is determined to take all necessary measures to avoid a repetition of similar catastrophes and welcomes the rapid responses by the Council and the Commission' and that 'The European Council welcomes the action undertaken by the Commission to confront the economic, social and environmental consequences derived from the wreck of the "Prestige", in the framework of the present financial perspectives and its intention to examine the need for further specific measures. Amongst these measures, questions relating to liability and the corresponding sanctions will also be examined.'

The Commission is aware of certain weaknesses in the procedures implemented by maritime authorities in the Member States. With regard to port State control (1), the Commission has reminded Member States of their obligations. The Commission has demanded the immediate recruitment of sufficient inspectors to check at least 25% of ships, as required under current European legislation.

In this context, the Commission has already had occasion to question the low percentage of checks carried out by certain Member States or certain ports. It has also brought cases against France and Ireland before the Court of Justice, for failure to attain the threshold of 25%.

The Commission considers that, in the light of recent events, there is a legitimate argument for creating a fleet of European coastguard ships as a means of effectively countering the risks of pollution and ensuring maritime safety.

The principal task of the European Maritime Safety Agency, established under Regulation (EC) No 1406/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2002 (2), which is due to become operational in the next few months, will be the technical coordination of the application of Community law. The aim is for the Agency's mandate to be extended as circumstances require.

In particular, the organisation will have to play a major role in strengthening cooperation between coastguard authorities in Member States on maritime safety and the prevention of pollution. The question whether the creation of a fleet of European coastguard ships should be the next step must be examined in the light of experience gained by the Agency, and assessed by all the parties concerned.


(2003/C 268 E/045)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3617/02

by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(16 December 2002)

Subject: Promoting alternatives on a European scale to poor integration between population groups and the emergence of mutually exclusive social environments

1. Is the Commission aware that, as a consequence of decolonisation and the requirements of the labour market, large numbers of persons of non-European origin have, over the last few decades, settled in particular in the inner-city areas of Member States like Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Belgium? Is it aware that those new-arrivals have grown up with languages, cultures or religions other than those that had been prevalent before they settled into their new living and working environment, and that the need for such new-arrivals to become integrated had long failed to receive the attention it deserved because governments, businesses, educational institutions and landlords had alike assumed that their presence would only be temporary?

2. Is the Commission further aware that the state of affairs referred to in question 1 above has meanwhile led to the emergence of schools attended and residential areas inhabited by a very high percentage of new-arrivals, alongside schools and residential areas where new-arrivals are almost unknown, as well as to inadequate knowledge of the local language and customs on the part of first-generation new-arrivals, to high unemployment among the groups of new-arrivals concerned at a time when the economy
is on the downturn, to failure to establish significant mutual contact between the different population
groups, and to the emergence of conflicts and the rise of movements seeking to exclude the new-arrivals
from society?

3. Is the Commission aware that movements have meanwhile arisen among second- and third-
generation new-arrivals that have concluded, from the experience of second-class status and enforced
isolation, that they cannot and will not integrate, but must rather defend their interests by forming their
own political parties and interest groups and establishing their own language rights, residential areas and
schools, and that such views are being proselytised by the Arab-European League, based in the Belgian city
of Antwerp, to other European cities where the situation had hitherto been less polarised and embittered?

4. What options are open to the Commission for helping to remove the underlying causes of the
emergence of separate residential areas, second-class status in society, a divided labour market and ethnic
conflicts? How can it contribute to exchanges of ideas and experience drawing on successful and failed
attempts at integration between different population groups in the different Member States?

5. To what extent can current and future URBAN-financed projects help more effectively to eradicate
the breeding-grounds for influences that obstruct the joint efforts of long-standing local communities and
new-arrivals to live together in equality, peace and harmony?

Answer given by Mr Vitorino on behalf of the Commission

(19 February 2003)

Responsibility for the integration of migrants rests mainly with the Member States and usually involves
cooperation between national, regional, and local authorities often in conjunction with other organisations.
The Tampere Council called for the adoption of more vigorous integration policies for third country
nationals as one of the principle elements of the common immigration policy which is now being
developed emphasising the need for them to be granted rights and obligations comparable to those of
Union citizens. Major efforts have been made by Member States to improve and develop their national
policies. The Commission’s role is limited to action in a number of areas where there is Union
competence, including the provision of financial support for integration measures and to promote the
exchange of experience and, in accordance with the Amsterdam Treaty, to setting out the common legal
framework for the admission and stay of third country nationals which will provide a minimum level of
rights which they should enjoy. In this context the Commission has put forward draft directives on family
reunification, the status of long term resident third country nationals, admission for employment and of
students and volunteers each of which includes the granting of basic social and economic rights. These
directives are, however, still under consideration in the Council.

With respect to supporting measures, the Commission already finances projects in the Member States to
integrate refugees under the European Refugee Fund and will shortly be launching a programme of
preparatory actions to promote the exchange of experience and good practice with respect to the
integration of immigrants. The Commission is also preparing a Communication which will examine a wide
range of issues concerning the integration process including those specifically related to 2nd and 3rd
generations, and propose further action at Community level to promote the successful integration of
migrants both in the labour market and within society in general. Given the growing contribution of
migrants to employment and economic growth the need to ensure their integration into the labour market
will be reflected in the 2003 Employment Guidelines.

In addition, the Community Action Plan to combat Social Exclusion which entered into force in January
2002 explicitly targets the social situation of and policies to integrate immigrants and ethnic minorities.
Policies to combat discrimination, racism and xenophobia are also important elements in the
comprehensive approach which is needed to tackle the underlying causes of conflict between population
groups. Here the Council adopted in 2000 two Directives put forward by the Commission which are based
on Article 13 of the EC Treaty which prohibits discrimination based on ethnic or racial origin, religion or
beliefs, sex, disability, age and sexual orientation (one\(^\text{1}\)) implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin in employment, education, social protection, social advantages and access to goods and services which is due to be transposed into national legislation by July 2003 and a second\(^\text{2}\) promoting equal treatment in employment which should come into force in December 2003). Some projects supported by the accompanying Action Programme specifically concern migrants.

Within the areas to which the URBAN Community Initiative programmes apply, it is open to programme authorities to promote the social and economic inclusion of immigrants and refugees where this is considered a priority, provided that this is compatible with the text of the programmes and the associated programme complements, and that it contributes to the sustainable economic and social regeneration of the areas concerned. The Commission's Guidelines for the implementation of the URBAN II Community Initiative made it clear that one of the priorities for the URBAN II programmes might be 'the development of an anti-exclusion and anti-discrimination strategy through actions furthering equal opportunities and targeting notably groups such as women, immigrants and refugees'. The initial assessment of the URBAN Community Initiative, as detailed in the Communication of 14 June 2002 from the Commission to the Council, the Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions\(^\text{3}\), explained that ethnic minorities, immigrants and refugees accounted for nearly 14% of the population of the URBAN areas, about four times the figure for the Union as a whole. The Communication also indicated that social inclusion accounted for 21% of planned spending in the URBAN II programmes.

---


---

(2003/C 268 E/046)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3664/02

by Olivier Dupuis (NI) to the Commission

(18 December 2002)

Subject: Webjacking used by the Chinese authorities to block unwelcome sites

According to reports from Dynamic Internet Technology Inc (DIT) — the technological partner of Voice of America, Radio Free Asia and Epoch Times — a few months ago the authorities in the People's Republic of China adopted a new strategy for blocking sites of which they do not approve. The technical name for the method used is 'webjacking', in which an Internet address is hijacked so as to divert the user to another site. This is done at Chinese ISP (Internet Service Provider) level by tampering with the domain name system (DNS), the Internet registry which converts each address (which is unique throughout the world) from an alphanumeric to a numeric format (for example, the address www.bbc.co.uk corresponds to IP 212.58.240.31). What happens in practice is that, throughout China, the DNS 'wrongly resolves' the address of the site to be blocked, sending the user (who is unaware of what is happening) to a false IP address. This system enables users wishing to access a whole range of Internet sites to be diverted to a single address which is then blocked at the main Chinese firewall.

Does the Commission intend to ask the Chinese authorities for clarifications about the use of such practices in China? If they are used, does it intend to go about ensuring that the Chinese Government stops using them, given the economic and political damage the widespread use of such censure tools can cause? If it does not already have such means at its disposal, does it intend to acquire means of safeguarding the interests of EU citizens and associations against such interference by the People's Republic of China?

Answer given by Mr Chris Patten on behalf of the Commission

(4 February 2003)

The Commission shares the Honourable Member's concerns about Internet access and use in China. It has repeatedly made representations to the Chinese authorities on this matter, in particular through the