of Article 12 in the interest of public health and safety. However, they may only do so where there is no satisfactory alternative and the derogation is not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range, as stipulated in Article 16 of Directive 92/43/EEC.

The Commission does not have any information on the uncontrolled introduction of other, non-indigenous species. Article 22 of Directive 92/43/EEC gives Member States a broad margin of discretion in this regard. They must ensure that the deliberate introduction into the wild of any species which is not native to their territory is regulated so as not to prejudice natural habitats within their natural range or the wild native fauna and flora and, if they consider it necessary, prohibit such introduction. It should be noted that the specific environmental study prohibits the uncontrolled introduction of other, non-indigenous species.

3. No projects concerning the protection of Vipera schweizeri have been cofinanced by the LIFE financial instrument.

A Milos viper conservation project was cofinanced by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), under the ‘Environment 1994-1999’ operational programme, notably measure No 3.1 on the conservation of protected species.

The project, ‘Protection of the Milos viper’s biotope’ (code number 3.1.01), received 75% of a total budget initially set at ECU 221 641. At the end of 2000, ECU 127 253 had been spent. The funds were used for information/awareness-raising work, a study on measures to be taken to protect the Milos viper and a study on the construction of a Visitor Information Centre.


(2) Judgment of the Court of 30 January 2002, Commission v Hellenic Republic, case C-103/00, European Court Reports.

(2003/C 268 E/080) WRITTEN QUESTION E-0187/03

by Mario Borghezio (NI) to the Commission

(31 January 2003)

Subject: Attacks on Italian tourists in Nice

For some months, Italian tourists travelling along the Côte d’Azur by motorway have been met at the Nice motorway exit by organised gangs of robbers, probably of North African origin, who attack drivers, including women and old people, giving them a rather unpleasant welcome to France.

This situation, which has been widely reported by the press in France and Italy, has been taken up directly with the Prefecture of Nice by a number of mayors from the neighbouring Italian region of Liguria.

Does the European Union not intend to make representations to the French authorities in Nice, including the border authorities, to call for action to be taken to guarantee the safety and freedom of movement of tourists from other EU countries?

Answer given by Mr Vitorino on behalf of the Commission

(27 February 2003)

In the context of the Convention of 1990 implementing the Schengen Agreement, Member States have committed themselves in stepping up law enforcement co-operation across their internal borders for the purposes of preventing and detecting criminal offences. To this end, the Convention has provided Member States with new instruments, and also allows in Article 39 that arrangements are made and agreements concluded between Member States with a common border.

An example of such agreement is the one concluded between the governments of France and Italy pertaining to police and customs co-operation, signed on 3 October 1997 in Chambéry.
By virtue of this agreement, a joint French-Italian police and customs station (CCPD) has been set up in Ventimiglia. This joint station can not only gather and exchange all useful information to detect and prevent criminal offences, but can also — on request — give assistance to local police to address threats to public order and fight criminality more effectively.

The Commission is convinced that the French authorities will use the means at their disposal to protect citizens against the forms of crime that the Honourable Member has mentioned. Co-operation with Italian law enforcement authorities is an important means available to the French authorities in this context.

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(2003/C 268 E/081)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0190/03
by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(31 January 2003)

Subject: US dominance vis-à-vis the EU with regard to the extraction and transport of petroleum from the region to the south east of the current and future territory of the EU

1. Are countries such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan becoming very heavily dependent on cheap oil exports and the use of cheap labour in the wake of the virtual collapse of their economies during the period 1991-98?

2. What contacts does the EU have with the above states in connection with the extraction, purchase and transport of petroleum from this region?

3. Do such contacts based on economic interests mean closer links between the EU and non-democratic regimes? To what extent are these relations being used, or will they be used in the near future, in order to protect democracy, human rights and the environment?

4. Are conditions to be imposed — in connection with possible accession to the EU — on Turkey, which is participating in the US Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project, with regard to the supply of the oil concerned, or a proportion of it, for use in Europe?

5. Does the Commission anticipate that pressure from the USA on these oil-producing regions will increase if the USA does not quickly succeed in bringing the Iraqi oil fields under its control?

6. Have ideas already been formed on how to prevent the region to the south east of the future territory of the EU from becoming a US military and economic sphere of influence, which could operate in a way that is disadvantageous to Europe?

Source: Netherlands daily newspaper ‘De Volkskrant’ of 18 January 2003

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission
(14 March 2003)

The oil sector in the three countries mentioned by the Honourable Member is a very important part of their economies and a major source of foreign earnings. Azerbaijan, one of the world’s oldest oil-producing countries, has seen steady economic growth since 1995 fueled, to a large extent, by foreign investment in its oil and natural gas sectors. Of the 14 million tonnes of oil produced in the year 2000, some 53% was exported either as crude or refined products and these accounted for some 70% of Azerbaijan’s exports. Oil-related revenue accounts for nearly 50% of budget revenues. Wage rates in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan tend to be lower than in Europe. The Commission has no evidence that these countries are illegally exploiting their labour force in the oil and gas industries.

Kazakhstan is likewise heavily dependent upon oil revenues and its recent economic growth has been assisted by foreign investment in the oil and natural gas sectors. Of the 35 million tonnes of oil produced in the year 2000, net exports of crude and refined products accounted for some 79%. The oil industry currently accounts for approximately 30% of Kazakhstan’s budget revenues and half of it exports.