The City of Perugia participates as one of in all six contractors in this successfully evaluated proposal APPEEL. The contract number will be 4.1031/Z/02-025. The total budget for the contract is EUR 484,406 and the total Community support is EUR 242,203. The city of Perugia’s share of the budget is EUR 42,000 and the Community support for the city of Perugia is EUR 21,000. The contract is currently being prepared.

(2003/C 268 E/192)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0975/03
by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(26 March 2003)

Subject: Consequences of privatisation for the continued existence of the comprehensive European rail booking system and European rail season tickets

1. Is the Commission aware that the reservation system used in Europe for rail journeys to, through and within other states is threatened as a result of the emergence of separate privatised railway companies, so that even when reservation is compulsory it is no longer possible for passengers to book through tickets from abroad in the usual way? Will this change in 2004 as a result of the introduction of a technical specification for interoperability (TSI) in the field of passenger telematics?

2. What is the explanation for the fact that, since the new service regulations came into force on 15 December 2002, booking staff at railway stations can search for such trains in their computers, but are surprised to find themselves unable to sell reservations on them, and cannot even supply the information as to whether reservations can be sold separately from travel tickets and whether regional rail season tickets such as Eurodomino, Interrail, Scanrail or Railplus are valid on such lines, leading to the passenger having to buy tickets at full price with no right to cancel?

3. Are reservations of seats, couchettes and sleeper berths from abroad now only possible if the rail companies in question have concluded a separate contract with each other? In which cases have such contracts not been concluded, and why? How many private firms are now outside the European reservation system?

4. Does the Commission consider it acceptable that the Swedish Tågkompaniet, which from January 2000 until the transfer to Connex in July 2003, is operating the 1,543 km long cross-border line with a night connection between Stockholm and the Norwegian port of Narvik, gives travellers from other countries the choice between early payment with tickets sent by post and going to a separate booking office in Sweden, which makes reservation by travellers in a hurry practically impossible?

5. Does the Commission now propose to revise Regulation (EEC) 2299/89 (1) on a code of conduct for computerised reservation systems, partly in order to ensure that the comprehensive European reservation system and the sale of fully valid rail tickets from abroad will remain in place even after the possible separation into national rail companies?


Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission
(15 May 2003)

The Commission shares the view that information and reservation systems for international rail passenger transport can be improved and better integrated. At present a fragmentation into several non-integrated systems is taking place. The Commission believes this is not in the interest of passengers, as was also expressed at the hearing the Commission organised on rail passenger rights 15 November 2002 (1).
Railway undertakings are free to set up reservation systems for seats and beds in trains following Article 5 of Council Directive 91/440/EEC of 29 July 1991, on the development of the Community's railways (1) which sets out the principle that 'Railway undertakings shall be managed according to the principles which apply to commercial companies'.

The Commission has not been informed about the changes taken place after change of the timetable on 15 December 2002 and about the changes in reservation systems for trains between Stockholm and Narvik. The information given about these particular cases do not give any indication of violation of Community law.

The Commission is aware of present industry initiatives by the International Union of Railways (UIC) to integrate at European level (national) rail passenger information and ultimately ticketing/reservation systems. Those projects are called Merits and Prifis respectively and should be implemented over the next three or four years. At present more than 30 European railway undertakings are co-operating in these projects. Simultaneously, the Community of European Railways is working on establishing and implementing a Charter for Passenger Services, which contain clear commitments to passengers regarding the provision of travel information.

The recent industry initiatives are in line with the Commission's work. Within the framework of interoperability a Technical Specification for Interoperability (TSI) will be developed for passenger telematics which should facilitate the exchange of information by establishing standards in this respect. A TSI on this issue is expected in 2006. In parallel, the Commission is working on a proposal for rail passenger rights which may also address basic rules for integration of information and ticketing systems. At present, Council Regulation (EEC) No 2299/89 of 24 July 1989 on a code of conduct for computerised reservation systems applies first and foremost to airline reservation systems. It covers rail services' reservation only insofar as integrated in the principal unbiased displays of airline computer reservation systems. With a view to revising this regulation, in depth consultations with stakeholders have been conducted. These have inter alia indicated that once a common standard will have emerged out of the TSI exercise, it is likely that rail services be incorporated on a wide scale in the Computerised Reservation Systems commonly used in aviation. As the case may be, that may require a further revision of the said Regulation by 2006.

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(2003/C 268 E/193) WRITTEN QUESTION P-0976/03
by José Ribeiro e Castro (UEN) to the Commission
(20 March 2003)

Subject: The structural and cohesion funds in Portugal

In an interview published in the newspaper Diário Económico on 3 March this year, Commissioner Günther Verheugen, when asked about the future of structural and cohesion measures in Portugal, in view of the enlargement of the European Union and the accompanying rise in Portugal's GDP in relation to the Community average — above the ceiling of 75% — replied that the Commission had made it clear that the statistical effect of enlargement, whereby countries such as Portugal would be rich on paper but not in reality, must not mean the end of cohesion policy. Later on he said that if there were successful programmes which were helping Portugal to prepare itself and to create more growth, more jobs and more opportunities for people, it was in the EU's interest to continue with such programmes.

In conclusion he promised that the Commission would propose that the level of support for Portugal in the forthcoming financial package should remain more or less the same.