The Commission has no statistical data on the number of representatives of regional governments currently representing their Member State on the committees in question. It notes that regional representatives do not necessarily represent their Member State on a permanent basis; they may vary from meeting to meeting. This is true of the Socrates Committee and its subcommittees, on which Germany is represented by a representative of the Federal Republic and a representative of the Länder, internal responsibilities being divided between the two entities.

(1) OJC 38, 6.2.2001.

(2004/C 11 E/117)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0787/03
by Sérgio Marques (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(14 March 2003)

Subject: Second Commission report on the outermost regions

In June 2002 in Seville, the European Council called on the Commission and Council to 'press ahead with the implementation of Article 299(2) of the Treaty, which recognises the specific nature of the outermost regions, and to submit suitable proposals for their special needs to be taken into account'. It also noted the Commission's intention to 'submit a new report on those regions, built on a global, coherent approach to the special characteristics of their situation and to ways of addressing them'.

The need for fuller implementation of Article 299(2) of the Treaty, making use of its potential in view of the real and urgent needs of the outermost regions, has been brought to the Commission's attention from various quarters — the regions themselves, the Member States concerned, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee. The European Convention is now also an arena for the moves to consolidate Article 299(2).

This is also the moment for rethinking how the EU can best meet the real and pressing needs of the outermost regions. This should involve, for example: updating the existing priorities, notably those defined under the POSEI programmes and in the Commission's first report of 2000; adding new priorities, e.g. investment in human capital and access for those regions' citizens to the knowledge and information society; and finding suitable means of financing measures which the outermost regions clearly need but which are not being dealt with by or are not eligible under the Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund or other existing instruments.

Can the Commission answer the following:

1. Given that Article 299 of the Treaty permits the development of a policy for the outermost regions aimed at combating and removing the constraints arising from their outlying status, how does the Commission intend to implement such a policy?

2. Will the Commission consider drawing up a global sustainable development programme for the outermost regions, including a definition of fields of action, measures to be undertaken, and resources for implementing them?

3. How does the Commission intend to tackle the problem of the financing of measures in the outermost regions which are not eligible for funding under the Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund or other instruments?

4. When and in what form will the Commission submit the report announced in Seville?

Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission
(2 May 2003)

The Commission took note of the conclusions of the Seville European Council (21/22 June 2002) and set up the mechanisms for preparation of the comprehensive report that is awaited and whatever proposals may be appropriate.
As already mentioned in its report of 19 December 2002 (1) on implementation of Article 299(2), the Commission has maintained the partnership established with the ORs and taken steps to ensure continuing coordination of its initiatives within its own departments.

A policy and a comprehensive programme for sustainable development of the ORs as desired by the Seville Council can only be generated following consultation and discussion between the Commission and these regions and will involve consideration of the memoranda that the Member States in question will be sending the Commission in the first half of 2003.

The contribution of the Structural Funds to the ORs’ socio-economic development is highly important, not only because they benefit from Community assistance under Objective 1 as a cohesion policy priority but also in consideration of the recognition of their specific handicaps. It must however be noted that accession to the Union of ten new Member States containing many regions lagging behind in development by comparison with the Community average imposes a need to settle the questions this new situation presents. The second progress report adopted by the Commission on 30 January (2) provides an updated examination of these. The challenges of enlargement are the subject of a very extensive reflection exercise the proposed measures emerging from which will have to be geared to the specific situations of the ORs and furnish adequate responses as regards both the legal framework and Community resources.

Promoting sustainable development of the ORs is not merely a matter of Structural Fund and Cohesion Fund financing. It is an aim that must continue to feature in the whole range of Community policies, as indicated in Article 299(2).

The report on a comprehensive sustainable development programme for the ORs, as requested by the Seville Council, will be discussed and adopted at the same time as the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, at the end of 2003.

(2) COM(2003)34 final.

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(2004/C11E/118) WRITTEN QUESTION E-0789/03
by Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE-DE) and Alexander de Roo (Verts/ALE) to the Commission
(14 March 2003)

Subject: Interpretation of the RoHS Directive

Directive 2002/95/EC (1) on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment (RoHS), which recently came into force, stipulates that equipment placed on the market as of 1 July 2006 may not contain any hazardous substances, in the sense that Article 2(3) states that the directive does not apply to the reuse of electrical and electronic equipment put on the market before 1 July 2006. The RoHS Directive, unlike the Directive on waste from electric and electronic equipment (WEEE), does not give any definition of the term ‘reuse’. Both directives were introduced simultaneously by the ICE, and both came into force at the same time. The way in which the definition of ‘reuse’ is treated suggests that reuse of the components referred to here is authorised, even in new equipment.

The outcome of the conciliation process on this directive was, however, that the last part of Amendment 3 (including the reuse of these components in new electrical and electronic equipment put on the market) was not adopted. This suggests that reuse of the components in question in new equipment is not permitted. One important reason why this part of Amendment 3 was not adopted was that in this way any form of misuse was prevented from the outset.