Given the above, would the Council state:

1. what steps it intends to take with a view to ensuring effective judicial cooperation with Poland in custody and international child abduction matters in the run-up to the country’s now imminent accession to the European Union as a full Member State;

2. how it intends to go about ensuring that existing international agreements on the custody of children are fully complied with by the relevant judicial authorities, both in Poland and in the Member States;

3. whether it would not agree that it should exert some pressure on the Polish Government with a view to rapidly resolving this distressing and regrettable family problem?

---

**Reply**

(29 September 2003)

The Council does not comment on specific cases before the courts in the Member States or in the acceding countries. However, the Council is able to tell the Honourable Member that its subsidiary bodies are currently examining a proposal for a Council Regulation concerning jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in matrimonial matters and in matters of parental responsibility.

One of the salient features of the Regulation concerns the wrongful removal of children in a Community context. Provisions are to be laid down to determine the court which will have jurisdiction in a case where a child has been wrongfully removed from one Member State and taken to another, as are measures relating to the return of the child to its habitual residence. As has been stated on a number of occasions, the Council considers that this Regulation should be approved as swiftly as possible.

As far as the international conventions referred to by the Honourable Member are concerned, it is not for the Council to ensure that they are applied by national courts.

---

(2004/C 51 E/100)  
**WRITTEN QUESTION E-1427/03**  
by Laura González Álvarez (GUE/NGL) to the Commission  
(23 April 2003)

**Subject:** Transport difficulties on the Balearic Islands

One of the declarations annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam recognises that island regions suffer from structural handicaps which impair their economic and social development, and acknowledges that Community legislation must take account of these handicaps so that specific measures can be adopted in favour of these regions to integrate them better into the internal market on fair conditions.

Furthermore, paragraph 13 of the European Parliament's Resolution of 12 February 2003 on the Commission White Paper 'European transport policy for 2010: time to decide' highlights ‘... the need for transport policy to contribute to economic and social cohesion, and take into account the specific nature of most remote, island and mountain regions and regions with low population density, through measures designed to offset as much as possible their disadvantaged situation and to ensure territorial continuity', while paragraph 14 calls for ‘... the growing liberalisation of the transport sector to be accompanied by guarantees, investment, mobility, subsidies, price support and maintenance of services for remote and island regions'.

Bearing in mind that Spain's Balearic Islands suffer from a series of handicaps primarily affecting transport and, consequently, the supply conditions for essential products, that they also suffer from a lack of water
and energy resources and from difficulties regarding the elimination of waste, and that above all the handicaps referred to limit the possibility of residents of the islands being able to travel at low prices:

- what measures could the Commission take to offset these handicaps?
- does it see a need for the declaration of a public service obligation as provided for in Regulation (EEC) No 2408/92 (1)?


Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(10 June 2003)

The Commission has taken several measures to offset the handicaps the Balearic Islands suffer in terms of both transport and energy.

A number of ports (Palma, Ibiza, Alcudia) and airports (Palma de Mallorca — Son Sant Joan, Minorca and Ibiza) are eligible for financial assistance from the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) budget. One objective of the current Community guidelines (1) is to connect island regions to the mainland.

The Commission is currently working on a revision of the Community guidelines. This may be the occasion for presenting detailed arrangements for ‘motorways of the sea’, the principle unveiled in the ‘European transport policy for 2010’ White Paper and in the new Commission communication ‘Programme for the promotion of short sea shipping’ (2). Once the TEN-T frame is in place, a contribution towards investment in the infrastructure needed for the motorways of the sea (port infrastructure and links to the hinterland) could be envisaged.

Under the Marco Polo programme currently being adopted, islands will be able to take part in all three types of action: modal shift actions, catalyst actions and common learning actions.

With regard to trans-European energy networks (TEN-E), the revised Community guidelines could classify projects to improve electricity and gas connections between the Spanish mainland and the Balearic Islands as projects of common interest (PCI) (3). The creation of these gas and electricity networks will make for better energy distribution, greater security of supply and improved environmental protection. Given their solar and wind-power potential, regions such as the Balearic Islands are well placed to use the latest technology to produce green electricity. Connecting wind farms to the main electricity transmission grids would, for instance, be a project eligible for TEN-E support.

Regarding the second question, relating to the air sector, Article 4(1)(a) of Regulation (EEC) No 2408/92 (4) allows Member States to impose public service obligations (PSO) on scheduled air services. The Commission does not have the power to impose PSO: only Member States are authorised to employ that aid mechanism (5).

Member States also have the option of using another system of financial support to ensure good air service and facilitate travellers’ mobility: social aid. Once approved by the Commission, such aid can be used to reduce the cost of plane tickets for certain categories of passenger (students, pensioners, island residents, etc.).

In addition, areas which suffer serious geographical or natural handicaps (islands, outermost regions, mountainous areas, sparsely populated areas) are among the priorities identified by the second report on economic and social cohesion (2001) for the future cohesion policy.
The Commission ordered a study on the island regions of the Union which can now be consulted on the Inforegio site at the following address: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/study_fr.htm.

(3) The amendment of Decision 1254/96 is in the process of being adopted by Parliament and the Council and a decision should be reached in 2003. ‘PCI’ status is one of the conditions to be met before a project can qualify for available funding.
(5) N.B. The PSO system also operates in the maritime sector, where Regulation No 3577/92 (maritime cabotage) authorises Member States to impose public service obligations in order to ensure adequate services to and between islands.

(2004/C 51 E/101)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1429/03
by Laura González Álvarez (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(24 April 2003)

Subject: Environmental threats to the River Cambrones (Segovia Province, Spain)

The River Cambrones supplies a number of villages in Segovia Province (Palazuelos de Eresma, Lastrilla, Trescasas, Sonsoto, Tabanera and San Cristóbal) as well as the Pontón reservoir. Plans for the water company ‘Aguas Minerales Siete Villas S.A.’ to draw off and market some of the river water will involve canalising a substantial section of the watercourse through an industrial bottling plant and building a road from the river’s source, 12 km long and 4 metres wide. The fact that all these works are to be completed without an environmental impact study has caused enormous concern among those living along the River Cambrones, as they fear they will lose a resource, a river ecosystem and a nature area of considerable ecological value.

What action will the Commission be taking to ensure that in this worrying instance Community law on the environment is properly applied, and specifically Directive 85/337/EEC (1), as amended by 97/11/EC (2), on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment?

(2) OJ L 73, 14.3.1997, p. 5.

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission
(18 June 2003)

Applicable Community legislation on the issue of water quality and protection of water resources raised by the Honourable Member is on the one hand legislation on environmental impact assessment, and on the other hand on protection of water quality.

With a view to the Environment Impact Assessment Directive (EIA) (Council Directive 85/337/EEC (1)) as amended by Directive 97/11/EC (2), the Honourable Member asks what the Commission intends to do to ensure its correct application to the project in question. The project comprises works related to the canalisation of a substantial section of the watercourse through an industrial bottling plant and building of a road from the River Cambrones’s source, 12 km long and 4 metres wide.

According to the EIA Directive, Member States are obliged to ensure that, before development consent is given, projects likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue, inter alia, of their nature, size or location are made subject to an assessment of the environmental effects. In the case of projects