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.

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(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
listed in Annex II to the EIA Directive, Member States have to determine if the project is likely to have significant effects on the environment on a case-by-case basis or by using thresholds or criteria. Certain infrastructure projects are included in Annex II of the EIA Directive. On the basis of the information provided by the Honourable Member it appears that the planned construction of the road falls under Annex II point 10 e) and that the canalisation falls under Annex II point 10 f) of the Directive. As regards the industrial bottling plant it is not clear from the information provided if this is already constructed or not. In any case during the determination of the likely significant effects on the environment, Member States should apply the selection criteria found in Annex III and examine, inter alia, the cumulative effects of the project with other projects.

Community water protection legislation sets clear objectives on the protection of waters in general (rivers, lakes, groundwaters and coastal waters) and those used for drinking water abstraction. It does however not provide for a general ban on any water abstractions from rivers, be it for bottling or for other purposes. Directive 75/440/EEC (3) has since 1975 set requirements for quality standards for surface waters used for drinking water abstraction, requirements which have to be met also in case of water abstracted for other purposes upstreams from the point(s) of drinking water abstraction. Further, Directive 2000/60/EC (4) sets the objective of achieving/maintaining good quality (’good status’) for all waters — to be achieved by 2015 at the latest, plus an obligation for no deterioration of water status below existing status.

The Commission is making representations before the Spanish authorities to ensure that applicable community environmental law is complied with in respect of this project.


(2004/C 51 E/102) WRITTEN QUESTION E-1434/03
by Theodorus Bouwman (Verts/ALE) and Rijk van Dam (EDD) to the Council
(24 April 2003)

Subject: European driver attestation and suspected improper use of ECMT permits in road transport

On 26 March 2003 the German authorities raided branches of the Willi Betz transport company on the grounds of suspected misuse of ECMT permits and the inadmissible employment of drivers from third countries.

Does the Council agree that companies and drivers from third countries that use the ECMT permits for transport within the EU, in which they are operating virtually without restriction (in terms of time) throughout the EU’s territory, are making improper use of the permit?

Is the Council prepared to place the problem of improper use of the permits on the agenda for the next meeting of ECMT ministers? And is the Council further prepared to make proposals for putting an end to this distortion of competitive relations that is undermining employment conditions in the EU and also creating a road safety risk?

Does the Council agree that it is undesirable for drivers from ‘third countries’ to hire themselves out to European transport companies as ‘independent drivers’, thus evading the requirement to hold a European driver attestation? What steps can and will the Council take to put an end to such practices?