European country? What will happen in the case of passengers who do not have internet access or who decide to make an international train journey only at the last minute? Will such passengers have to travel without a valid ticket?

4. Are there other EU Member States where rail tickets to foreign destinations can no longer be purchased at stations? Is the Commission aware of Member States where railway companies are considering phasing out such sales?

5. Does the Commission think it acceptable that, running against the trend forwards of European integration, the rail network is increasingly being divided into national entities, which, because of restrictions on ticket sales and connections, are becoming less accessible to passengers from other Member States?

6. What action can the Commission take against Member States and rail companies to prevent a situation where the rail network is accessible in a normal way only to passengers in their own Member State?

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(4 March 2004)

The Commission has noted the information supplied by the Honourable Member.

It is hard for the Commission to assess the consequences of this decision. The fact remains, however, that the rules of international rail transport require all passengers to be in possession of a valid ticket before boarding an international service.

The Commission does not know of any initiatives in other Member States to end the sale of international tickets at ticket offices and replace it with other forms of distribution. However, it is aware of the initiative by the International Union of Railways (UIC) to introduce a system containing information on all the rail services of its members (1). The UIC has also begun developing a reservation and sales system for international tickets issued by its members (Prifs (2)). These two systems should make it easier to obtain information on international services and to buy international tickets.

The Commission is continuing to work to create an integrated European rail area and on 3 March 2004 it adopted the third railway package, a set of measures to open up the market in international passenger services and establish the rights and duties of passengers in international rail traffic. These proposals include provisions requiring railway undertakings to cooperate with a view to offering passengers integrated tickets for journeys involving several railway undertakings.

(1) Merits: Multiple European Railway Integrated Timetable Storage.
(2) Prifs: Price and Fare Information System.

(2004/C 84 E/0369) WRITTEN QUESTION P-0156/04
by Christopher Heaton-Harris (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(22 January 2004)

Subject: Commission’s accounting systems

I understand that the Internal Audit Service, in a report entitled ‘IAS Review of the Commission’s Accounting Framework — Final Report’ dated 15 April 2003, made a number of recommendations to the Commission regarding the accounting systems.
Has the Commission carried out an independent feasibility study on the re-engineering of the Commission processes and the 'off-the-shelf' software solutions available on the market?

Has the Commission made available a project manager and an independent external consultant?

Could the Commission guarantee that there now exists an integrated accounting system fully compliant with the Financial Regulations?

(2004/C 84 E/0370)  
WRITTEN QUESTION E-0161/04  
by Christopher Heaton-Harris (PPE-DE) to the Commission  
(29 January 2004)

Subject: Commission's accounting systems

I understand the Internal Audit Service, in a report entitled 'IAS Review of the Commission's Accounting Framework — Final Report' dated 15 April 2003, made a number of recommendations to the Commission regarding the accounting systems.

Has the Commission established a central accounting department independent from the authority responsible for budget activities?

Has the Commission ensured that each DG has a separate accounting entity to analyse and evaluate the accounting aspects of the DG's activities? Do these entities liaise with the central accounting department?

(2004/C 84 E/0371)  
WRITTEN QUESTION E-0162/04  
by Christopher Heaton-Harris (PPE-DE) to the Commission  
(29 January 2004)

Subject: Commission's accounting systems

I understand the Internal Audit Service, in a report entitled 'IAS Review of the Commission's Accounting Framework — Final Report' dated 15 April 2003, made a number of recommendations to the Commission regarding the accounting systems.

Can the Commission verify that that the substantive quality assurance of its financial reporting practices has been improved? How has this improvement been implemented in the DGs?

(2004/C 84 E/0372)  
WRITTEN QUESTION E-0163/04  
by Christopher Heaton-Harris (PPE-DE) to the Commission  
(29 January 2004)

Subject: Commission's accounting systems

I understand the Internal Audit Service, in a report entitled 'IAS Review of the Commission's Accounting Framework — Final Report' dated 15 April 2003, made a number of recommendations to the Commission regarding the accounting systems.