In consequence, no incompatibility with Article 12 of the Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 (5) could be seen and therefore no payment interruption or repayment of funds is foreseen.


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WRITTEN QUESTION P-0532/04

by Nelly Maes (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(17 February 2004)

Subject: Nuclear submarines docked at Santo Stefano Island, Sardinia

US Navy nuclear submarines are docked at the base on Santo Stefano Island, in the La Maddalena archipelago, in Sardinia. Recently, an incident with potential radioactive effects was recorded. In Sardinia and Corsica, several movements have been alerting the authorities to the potential danger of nuclear pollution in the area.

Has the Italian Government informed the European Commission about the presence of nuclear submarines at Santo Stefano Island, as required by Article 37 of the Euratom Directive on Crossborder Effects? If not, what measures will the Commission take?

Does the Commission consider that Santo Stefano Island fulfils all the conditions required for the accommodation of nuclear submarines?

Under Directive 89/618/Euratom (1), Member States are required to ensure that the population likely to be affected in the event of a radiological emergency is given information about the health-protection measures applicable to it and about the action it should take in the event of such an emergency. Can the Commission indicate where this obligation is being fulfilled by the Member State involved?


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Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(12 March 2004)

The Commission has received no information from the Italian government on the presence of nuclear submarines at Santo Stefano Island.

Under Article 37 of the Euratom Treaty, each Member State must inform the Commission of any plan for the disposal of radioactive waste which could result in the radioactive contamination of the water, soil or airspace of another Member State.

Discharges under normal conditions due to the operation of the propulsion reactor of the military nuclear submarine in question are the responsibility of the United States which is the State responsible for the authorisation and operation of the submarine and its components, but is not subject to the provisions in Article 37.

As regards emergency measures within the meaning of Council Directive 89/618/Euratom of 27 November 1989 on informing the general public about health protection measures to be applied and steps to
be taken in the event of a radiological emergency, the Commission takes the view that the Directive applies equally to ionising radiation arising from the use of nuclear energy for military purposes, including submarine propulsion reactors.

Italy has adopted measures transposing the abovementioned Directive which provide for ‘external emergency’ plans for military port installations, the implementation and diffusion of which is the responsibility of the provincial authority.

The Commission is currently assessing the conformity of the national legislation with the provisions in Directive 89/618/Euratom, particularly with regard to public access to information on emergency measures.

The Commission has received no complaints following the incident in question, and according to information provided by the Italian environmental protection authority (APAT), no indication of radioactive contamination was found when monitoring the water and the air following the incident described by the Honourable Member.

(2004/C 84 E/0496) WRITTEN QUESTION E-0535/04
by Avril Doyle (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(24 February 2004)

Subject: Recognition of disability status across the European Union

In the interests of promoting the free movement of persons with disabilities such as blindness, can the Commission advise on the current situation regarding the recognition of blindness and other disability certification from one Member State in other parts of the Community?

What steps are being taken towards harmonising criteria, certification and categorisation of disability to allow citizens moving between Member States to qualify for the same health and social welfare status across the EU without undergoing further testing?

Answer given by Mr Dimas on behalf of the Commission
(1 April 2004)

The decision concerning the definition of disability as well as the modalities for assessment and certification (disability cards) are taken at national level. The situation is complicated by the fact that often several definitions exist at national level, depending in which context the definition is used. There is no general mutual recognition of certification/disability cards or a certain disability status entitling holders to the various concessions available in Member States other than the one that issued the card.

It should nevertheless be mentioned that for individual purposes (access to special services, reductions for travel or entry to cultural sites, etc.) a document issued in another Member State might be recognised. Moreover, through the voluntary system of blue parking cards initiated by the Commission, which gives entitlement to special parking concessions for those entitled under national rules, there is — in this particular case — general mutual recognition of the blue parking cards issued in one Member State and used in another.

The Commission has recently commissioned and published a study, ‘Definitions of Disability in Europe: A comparative Analysis’ (1), that will be presented for discussion to the Member States at one of the next meetings of the High Level Group Disability.

(1) The study can be downloaded from the following Website:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index/7002_en.html