citrus fruit sector. A general programme for improvement of agricultural production structures in non-Objective 1 areas (including those in the Autonomous Community of Catalonià) was approved on 15 September (Community contribution € 397 000 000) and the specific rural development programme for Catalonià was approved on 14 September (Community contribution € 207 000 000).

The Commission also expects to approve soon the Community support framework for the Objective 1 Spanish regions, under which the EAGGF Guidance Section will aid agriculture and rural development. For rural development the assistance embraces a multiregional operational programme (including the Autonomous Community of Valencia) financed by the EAGGF Guidance Section to improve agricultural production structures in the Objective 1 regions except Cantabria, and a multifund regional operational programme (European Regional Development Fund, EAGGF Guidance Section, European Social Fund) for the Autonomous Community of Valencia. Both are under examination by the Commission.

In parallel to its common agricultural policy work, the Community has just committed itself to a new sustainable water policy. The framework Directive (2) on water focuses on the quality of Europe's groundwater and surface water, setting an obligation for all water to achieve or maintain 'good status' within 15 years. One of its main purposes is also to promote sustainable water use based on long-term protection of available water resources, and good status as an objective also involves a quantitative element in the case of groundwater, namely a long-term balance between supply or natural recharge and abstraction. All abstraction from groundwater and surface water (except if of insignificant impact) will require a permit.


(2001/C 136 E/008)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1876/00

by Konstantinos Hatzidakis (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(9 June 2000)

Subject: Waste management in Greece

During 1999 264 571 tonnes of hazardous waste were produced in Greece. 76,1% of this waste was stored temporarily, 22,73% was recycled, 1,01% was processed and a mere 0,12% was destroyed at special plants abroad in the absence of a special waste disposal unit in Greece itself. According to allegations made in the press, a large area of the Gulf of Elefsina has been polluted by discharges into the sea of unprocessed waste, much of which is toxic; this has far-reaching consequences for the pollution of the marine environment.

Will the Commission say:

1. Is it aware of any cases of environmental pollution due to faulty waste management in Greece?

2. Has Greece complied with Community legislation on the management of both solid and liquid waste?
   If not, what steps does the Commission intend to take to rectify this state of affairs?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission

(11 October 2000)

1. The Commission only has limited information on the overall situation of waste management in Greece. Greece did not report on the implementation of waste management directives between 1989 and
1997(1). However, at the end of 1999, Greece answered four questionnaires regarding the implementation of four Community waste directives. The answers are rather succinct and do not give a general picture of waste management practice in Greece.

According to those answers, 280 000 tons of hazardous waste were generated in Greece (the year is not indicated), out of which 95 760 tons were recycled, though Greece indicated that it has no installation for the processing or disposal of hazardous waste. The hazardous wastes are reported to be either temporarily stored or exported for final disposal in other countries.

As the Commission has no means to inspect Greek waste management facilities or otherwise to verify the above-mentioned figures, it has no general information on cases of environmental pollution which are due to faulty waste management. It cannot confirm the number of some 3 000 unauthorised landfills operating in Greece which is sometimes quoted in scientific publications. There are some complaints on environmental impairment by waste, which the Commission examines. It is however not possible to verify to what extent such cases are representative.

2. The Commission is of the opinion that a number of Community requirements are not being met by Greece and has taken action under Article 226 (ex Article 169) of the EC Treaty. The most important aspects concern the absence of a management plan for hazardous waste, the absence of legislation to comply fully with the Directive on packaging and packaging waste and the absence of programmes for the management of batteries and for the disposal of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) waste.

(1) COM(97) 23 and COM(1999) 752.

(2001/C 136 E/009)  
WRITTEN QUESTION E-2089/00  
by Concepció Ferrer (PPE-DE) to the Commission  
(28 June 2000)

Subject: European Year of Languages

The April 2000 part-session saw the adoption of the report by Mr Graça Moura approving the Commission’s decision to declare 2001 the European Year of Languages.

This decision does not explicitly refer to those languages which are official only in part of the Union’s territory: it remains with the Member States to decide whether languages in this situation should be included in the actions proposed under the decision.

Given that these languages are part of the Union’s cultural heritage and that it is therefore essential to protect and promote them, what action does the Commission intend to take to guarantee the participation in the European Year of Languages of languages which are official in part of the Union’s territory?

Answer given by Mrs Reding on behalf of the Commission  
(27 September 2000)

The target languages mentioned in Article 1 of the proposal for a decision establishing the European year of languages (1) (EYL) are the official languages, together with Letzeburgesch and Irish and other languages identified by the Member States for the implementation of the decision. The Commission will respect the Member States’ decision on which languages additional to those explicitly mentioned should be covered.

However, a large part of the activities to be carried out in the context of the EYL should be neutral from the point of view of target languages. The European information campaign will have as a key theme the importance of linguistic diversity, as well as the promotion of language learning in general. The campaign will promote the learning of all languages.