

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(12 June 2001)

The Commission is collecting the information it needs to answer the question. It will communicate its findings as soon as possible.

(2001/C 261 E/266)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1250/01**by Regina Bastos (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(10 April 2001)

Subject: Simplified procedure for the construction of the new bridge at Entre-os-Rios, Portugal

On 4 March 2001 a tragic accident occurred on a bridge over the Douro river in Portugal, causing the deaths of 53 people who were crossing Hintze Ribeiro bridge in a bus and three cars when one of its pillars collapsed and the central sections plunged into the river.

Over and above the human drama, this accident is having extremely serious social and economic repercussions:

1. Hintze Ribeiro bridge was built 116 years ago and linked Castelo de Paiva and Entre-os-Rios;
2. Castelo de Paiva is a poor rural municipality in inland Portugal;
3. The old bridge was part of the sole route available to make the population of Castelo de Paiva less isolated and enable them to travel to neighbouring towns and villages on the other side of the river;
4. After the accident Castelo de Paiva became even more isolated, and the population is now forced to travel for more than two hours along winding, poorly maintained roads to cover 70 or 80 km in order to obtain hospital care, visit schools and colleges, reach their places of work in the Porto area, etc.;
5. The Portuguese government has announced that it is to launch the tendering procedure for the construction of the new bridge over the Douro river in April;
6. The project has a budget of more than €17,5 million and is to be financed under the third Community support framework;
7. It will require an international invitation to tender, which will be subject to national and Community rules;
8. The foundations for the new bridge will have to be laid very soon, i.e. during summer 2001, otherwise work will have to be postponed until May/June 2002 because the strong current in the Douro river will prevent the work from being undertaken in the winter;
9. The Portuguese government, aware of the seriousness of the situation and the urgent need for the project to be completed, has already put forward internal legislation to reduce the time limits for the tendering procedure.

Is the Commission prepared, in cooperation with the Portuguese authorities, to find simplified financing and tendering procedures for the construction of the new bridge at Entre-os-Rios, in line with the urgency of the project?

Answer given by Mr Bolkestein on behalf of the Commission

(5 June 2001)

The Commission is aware of the painful social and economic consequences that the populations of the neighboring region must endure as a result of the tragic accident that occurred with the Entre-os-Rios bridge and is available to discuss with the national authorities ways to address the problem within the scope of its responsibility and in accordance with Community legislation.

For the current Structural Funds programming period, the timing for the submission, evaluation and financing decisions for individual projects are under the responsibility of the managing national authorities of the individual Programs at the national level, who must decide on the schedules regarding financing decisions concerning the projects and of course ways to speed up the procedures if needed. Nevertheless these procedures and decisions must remain compatible with the applicable Community regulations and programming instruments.

The Commission would also like to inform the Honorable Member that the Community directives concerning public tenders such as Council Directive 93/37/CEE of 14 June 1993 concerning the coordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts⁽¹⁾ foresees simplified procedures for awarding public contracts. Within this legal framework, the Commission is available to respond to any request from the Portuguese authorities so as to find the most appropriate solution for this case.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 199, 9.8.1993.

(2001/C 261 E/267)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1278/01**by António Seguro (PSE) to the Commission**

(2 May 2001)

Subject: Prepayment at filling stations

Prepayment facilities are increasingly available at petrol pumps. Will the Commission state whether it is legal for prepayment to be the only possible form of payment at filling stations?

Answer given by Mr Prodi on behalf of the Commission

(15 June 2001)

The matter in question does not come within its jurisdiction of the Commission.

(2001/C 261 E/268)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1301/01**by Nuala Ahern (Verts/ALE) to the Commission**

(19 April 2001)

Subject: Plans to support the Russian plutonium management and disposition and MOX plutonium fuel programmes

What communications and collaboration has the Commission had with Member State Governments and the governments of the G-8 group of leading industrial nations, concerning plans to support the Russian plutonium management and disposition and MOX plutonium fuel programmes? Are there any plans to provide financial support from Community funds for these Russian plutonium programmes?