

(2004/C 33 E/156)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1725/03**by Reimer Böge (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(23 May 2003)

Subject: Funding the VMS vessel monitoring system for fishing boats

Under Article 22 of Regulation (EC) 2371/2002⁽¹⁾ all fishing vessels over 18 metres in length must be equipped with a satellite-transceiver 'blue box' by 1 January 2004, and those over 15 metres in length by 1 January 2005.

In the case of fishing vessels over 24 metres long, for which VMS has been mandatory since July 1998, 100 % of the cost of acquiring the equipment was refunded on request by the European Union. In the case of cutters under 24 metres in length, however, all that will be paid, under the FIG, is a subsidy equivalent to 25 % of the cost of acquisition. As well as the cost of purchase, there are running costs of up to EUR 500 per annum, representing an additional burden for fishermen.

Leaving aside the fact that this additional expenditure is hard to justify in the case of off-shore and one-day fisheries, can the Commission say whether it is prepared to eliminate the clear discrimination against cutters under 24 metres in length as regards the purchase of the 'blue box', for example by amending the regulation, by supporting relevant initiatives through the budget or through an EU contribution to the Member States' monitoring costs, which would also enable a refund to be paid for satellite monitoring equipment installed in 2003 or as of 2004?

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 358, 31.12.2002, p. 59.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(11 July 2003)

The Commission shares the concern that fishermen shall be treated equally during the extension of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) to smaller vessels.

In this respect, the assumption that the equipment for bigger vessels was funded at 100 % and that the equipment for smaller vessels can only be funded at 25 % does not correctly reflect the actual situation. In fact, for vessels already subject to VMS, a Community financial contribution has been paid proportionally to the expenditure incurred for the acquisition of the equipment up to a maximum amount. The maximum contribution in 1999 and 2000 was EUR 3 400.

For the vessels smaller than 24 metres overall, the Commission will grant aid under similar conditions as it did in the past for the bigger vessels, within the budgetary constraints.

(2004/C 33 E/157)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1729/03**by Roger Helmer (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(19 May 2003)

Subject: Motor insurance in Lithuania

Would the Commission please tell me whether arrangements are in place for Lithuania to comply with EU standards on motor insurance, especially the First Directive on Motor Insurance, which says that every insurance policy issued in the EU must offer the minimum insurance cover required by law in any other EU country?

Currently, all EU Member States operate under the green-card system for motor insurance, which means that standard minimum insurance cover is offered throughout the EU. All Member States are also signatories to the 'Multilateral Guarantee Agreement', which means that Green Cards are not strictly necessary to enter other EU Member States. Will the Commission say whether Lithuania will operate the green-card system when it signs up for full EU membership? Will the Commission further state whether Lithuania will be signatory to the 'Multilateral Guarantee Agreement'?

Answer given by Mr Bolkestein on behalf of the Commission

(10 June 2003)

According to the latest information available to the Commission, Lithuania has not yet fully implemented Union provisions on Motor Insurance. According to the information provided by the Lithuanian authorities, draft legislation in order to implement the first Motor Insurance Directive 72/166/EEC⁽¹⁾ mentioned by the Honourable Member as well as the other three Motor Directives (84/5/EEC⁽²⁾, 90/232/EEC⁽³⁾ and 2000/26/EC⁽⁴⁾) is at the moment being prepared and should be submitted shortly for consideration by the national legislative authorities.

As regards the Agreement between the National Insurer's Bureaux of the Member States of the European Economic Area and other Associate States, concluded in accordance with the principles laid down in Article 2(2) of the first Motor Directive above, Lithuania is not yet part of such agreement but its incorporation is expected for the near future and, in any case, before the date of the accession.

Lithuania, as all the other Candidate Countries, must fully transpose the Union insurance legislation, including the Motor Insurance Directives, before the date of accession. The Commission will continue to monitor this process and in particular to check that all the conditions required for the suppression of the insurance border controls are fulfilled. If needed, the Commission will take the necessary measures to ensure the good functioning of the system.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 72/166/EEC of 24 April 1972 on the approximation of the laws of Member States relating to insurance against civil liability in respect of the use of motor vehicles, and to the enforcement of the obligation to insure against such liability, OJ L 103, 2.5.1972.

⁽²⁾ Second Council Directive 84/5/EEC of 30 December 1983 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to insurance against civil liability in respect of the use of motor vehicles, OJ L 8, 11.1.1984.

⁽³⁾ Third Council Directive 90/232/EEC of 14 May 1990 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to insurance against civil liability in respect of the use of motor vehicles, OJ L 129, 19.5.1990.

⁽⁴⁾ Directive 2000/26/EC of the Parliament and of the Council of 16 May 2000 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to insurance against civil liability in respect of the use of motor vehicles and amending Council Directives 73/239/EEC and 88/357/EEC (Fourth motor insurance Directive), OJ L 181, 20.7.2000.

(2004/C 33 E/158)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1735/03

by Michl Ebner (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(26 May 2003)

Subject: Harmonisation of public holidays

Due to different traditions and political and religious events, there is a lack of uniformity throughout the EU in terms of the number of public holidays in Member States and how they are fixed. This can be viewed as an economic handicap which has considerable disadvantages. A step-by-step harmonisation of public holidays in EU states over the long term, including the postponement of public holidays usually falling on a weekday to the following weekend, as is the practice in the UK, would bring about greater economic benefit and give citizens the opportunity to optimise the use of their free time.

Can the Commission, although it has no direct responsibility in this area, give a clear indication of what possibilities exist of harmonising public holidays?