

(98/C 158/24)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2908/97
by Kenneth Collins (PSE) to the Commission
(17 September 1997)

Subject: Portugal — VAT discrimination

In its response given on 7 December 1994 to Question E-2086/94 ⁽¹⁾ concerning Portugal's application of VAT within the alcoholic beverage sector, the Commission advised that it is currently examining the question with a view to taking the appropriate decision.

Will the Commission say whether it took such a decision and whether steps have since been taken to bring Portugal's VAT rate in line to at least the 12% minimum required since 1 January 1993 or to the 17% rate which applies to all other alcoholic drinks?

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 75, 27.3.1995, p. 17.

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission
(11 November 1997)

The Community VAT legislation governing the taxation of alcoholic beverages is still the same as described in the Reply to the Honourable Member's question E-2086/94. At present, alcoholic drinks are generally taxed at the standard rate of 17% in Portugal. However, Portugal continues to tax wine at the reduced rate of 5% which in the Commission's view is a breach of the above Community legislation. An appropriate infringement procedure is currently under way.

(98/C 158/25)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2910/97
by Johanna Maij-Weggen (PPE) to the Commission
(17 September 1997)

Subject: Transportation of calves between Germany and France and methods used in French slaughterhouses

Is the Commission familiar with the documentary broadcast by ZDF (Second German TV channel) on 18 July 1997 which reported on the transport of 'surplus' male calves from Germany to France and on the methods used to kill those calves in French slaughterhouses ⁽¹⁾?

Is the Commission aware that this transportation takes place because a higher slaughter premium is payable in France than in Germany, and that such action could well be fraudulent?

Can the Commission state what the relevant slaughter premiums are in Germany and France, and how it is possible for these calves to be transported unnecessarily? To what extent do Commission rules play into the hands of those engaging in such practices?

The German television documentary also showed that the calves are first hung up by one leg and then have their throats cut. Does the Commission consider this as an authorized method of killing cattle earmarked for slaughter? Are there any European laws or regulations containing provisions relevant in this connection, and if so who is responsible for enforcing them?

⁽¹⁾ The film, entitled 'Kopfgeld für Kälber', is available from the ZDF offices in Mainz (tel:0049-6131-704535).

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission
(1 December 1997)

The Commission is putting special emphasis on improvement of Community rules on animal welfare. Recently new rules on the transport of animals as well as welfare of calves came into force. Some problems in this field result from insufficient implementation of rules or controls by the Member States. The Commission is carefully monitoring the situation and taking appropriate steps against Member States where obligations have not been respected.