

In relation to the facts reported by the Honourable Member, it remains a matter of national competence for each Member State to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms through their internal systems and through the mechanisms provided by the European Convention on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Insofar as co-operation between the judicial systems of Member States is concerned, judicial co-operation in criminal matters is of course a matter of common interest under Article K.1(7) of Title VI of the Treaty on European Union. Article K.2 specifically requires that such co-operation must be dealt with in compliance with the European Convention on human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Commission is fully associated with this work but in accordance with Article K.3 does not have a right of initiative. Neither, of course, does it have a power to police compliance with respect for human rights.

(98/C 174/114)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3507/97**

**by Rijk van Dam (I-EDN) to the Commission**

*(12 November 1997)*

*Subject:* German canal levies

In its communication on Intermodality and intermodal freight transport in the European Union, the Commission refers to the expected increase in freight transport and says that 'in order to achieve socio-economic and environmental sustainability, the efficient and balanced use of existing capacities throughout the European transport system has become a key challenge'. In view of congestion on the roads and the external effects of road transport, this means promoting freight transport by waterway and rail.

1. In this context, is the Commission aware that so-called 'Abgaben' are levied on German canals, increasing inland waterway freight transport costs by between 10 and 30% and significantly worsening the competitive position of inland waterway as opposed to road transport?
2. Are these levies compatible with European transport policy which promotes waterway transport?
3. If not, what action does the Commission intend to take?

**Answer given by Mr Kinnoek on behalf of the Commission**

*(12 December 1997)*

The Commission's Green Paper 'Towards fair and efficient pricing in transport' <sup>(1)</sup>, which was published in 1995, contained a section on infrastructure charging. In the debate which followed the publication of the Green Paper, it became clear that there is a lack of information regarding charging for waterway infrastructure in the Community. For this reason, the Commission recently sent a questionnaire to each Member State on this topic, in order to obtain a clearer picture of current practices, the principles upon which waterway charges are based and plans at Member State or regional level regarding such charges in the future.

The Commission has just begun work on a White Paper on infrastructure charging from a multimodal perspective which should appear in 1998. Inland navigation will be considered in that document as well other modes.

<sup>(1)</sup> COM(95) 691 final.