

(98/C 174/129)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3590/97**by Marjo Matikainen-Kallström (PPE) to the Commission***(13 November 1997)*

Subject: Improving data communications in the interests of citizens' safety

The free movement of dangerous prisoners may have very serious consequences. Most recently this was confirmed a few days ago when an escaped Danish prisoner killed two policemen.

What does the Commission propose to do to improve data communications between different countries' police forces, so as to prevent events like these from occurring? How will the Commission ensure that information on prisoners who have escaped or are on temporary release from Member States' prisons is transmitted to other Member States as efficiently as possible so that action can be taken, for example, to prepare for and react to escapes?

Does the Commission intend to invest in a Europol which will be able to coordinate police cooperation between different Member States?

How does the Commission propose to take account of the almost boundless possibilities of data transfer and data technology and of the increased cooperation between the Member States when the Schengen Convention enters into force?

(98/C 174/130)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3647/97**by Kirsi Piha (PPE) to the Commission***(19 November 1997)*

Subject: Cooperation between authorities in the EU

In the last few days Finland has lived through a tragedy caused by the violent death of two police officers on duty. The chain of events was this: a Danish criminal on temporary release from prison held up a hotel in Helsinki and violently killed two policemen. The tragedy raised a number of questions in Finland and no doubt in Denmark too.

What is being done to ensure that these events cannot be repeated? How can the exchange of information between authorities in the EU be simplified and made more efficient? How can border checks and cooperation be made more effective, particularly in providing intelligence on the movement of criminals and the granting of temporary release?

This event is not a very good 'advertisement' for the usefulness of the Schengen Convention to EU nationals. Extending the freedom of movement obviously has its drawbacks too, and everything possible must be done to eradicate these undesirable features.

**Joint answer
to Written Questions E-3590/97 and E-3647/97
given by Mrs Gradin on behalf of the Commission**

(16 January 1998)

As far as the Honourable Members' questions refer to cooperation in the European Union, it has to be noted that police co-operation in general, and via the Europol drugs unit and future Europol in particular, is restricted to combating serious forms of international crime. This has to be distinguished from the problem of escaped prisoners or people who are on temporary release which is usually dealt with at a bilateral level or through Interpol. As the Amsterdam Treaty will extend police cooperation to the prevention, detection and investigation of criminal offences in general, it has to be examined after the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty whether this would include the issue which is raised by the Honourable Members. In the field of judicial cooperation, extradition, arrangements exist between Member States to deal with the surrender of escaped prisoners and others against whom proceedings have been initiated in relation to serious crimes. These include the possibility of provisional arrest pending the submission of a formal request. These arrangements are provided for in a number of international treaties, principally the 1957 European Convention relating to extradition, and they have been supplemented and their application facilitated by the European Union Convention relating to extradition of 1996 which is currently being ratified.