

(98/C 187/64)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3659/97**by María Izquierdo Rojo (PSE) to the Commission***(19 November 1997)**Subject:* Car-free cities

Does the Commission believe that there are good grounds for the claim that 'the Club of car-free cities' and its schemes 'are only a pretext for some of its leading figures to go on one trip after another'; 'the project represents a waste of local authority money which merely provides several local authority leaders with a splendid opportunity to go on their travels, and has nothing new to teach us'?

Given that such claims are damaging the good name which the car-free initiative enjoyed in Granada, what arguments would the Commission bring forward in this connection?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission*(23 January 1998)*

The car free cities network numbers some 60 local authorities from throughout Europe which are committed to reducing the volume of traffic and promoting environmentally friendly modes of transport in urban areas. This network, partly financed by the Commission, enables cities to pursue these aims notably through facilitating, both at technical and political levels, the exchange of experience and transfer of know-how, identifying and highlighting possible solutions for sustainable mobility and disseminating good practice. This sort of activity requires some degree of travel for cities' representatives. From information available to the Commission, less than 12% of the total budget of car free cities has been allocated in 1997 to travel and accommodation expenditures.

Car free cities seeks to bring those responsible for urban mobility into contact with each other. This is the principal aim of six working groups, which deal with key urban transport themes. The working group activities are backed up by the organisation of larger events, such as seminars and conferences involving local authorities both at the political and technical level.

The success of the network is demonstrated by the number of projects developed in cities. These are either the direct result of a transfer of experience and know-how or are the fruits of collaboration of a number of car free cities members. The network, which now collaborates on a regular basis with the Commission, has enabled achievements in terms of a reduction in the use of the private car, improvements in air quality, a more rational use of energy and improvements in quality of life in a number of cities.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-3679/97**by Patricia McKenna (V) to the Council***(19 November 1997)**Subject:* State repression in Burma

On 28 October 1997 several arrests were made as members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) tried to hold a meeting in an office in the Mayangone township on the outskirts of the Burmese capital, Rangoon. The activists had planned to hold a meeting with their leader Aung Saan Suu Kyi but the security forces set up barricades to prevent them from gaining access to her.

At the time of writing, eight of those arrested are still in custody. Human rights organizations have expressed fears that they may have been tortured.

Has the Council been made aware of this incident? What action has it taken? Will it raise the ongoing incidents of suppression of peaceful activity in Burma at the next EU/ASEAN meeting? If such incidents continue, will the Council consider fresh economic sanctions against Burma?