

(98/C 187/70)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3701/97**by Raimo Ilaskivi (PPE) to the Commission***(19 November 1997)*

Subject: Effects of the French lorry drivers' strike on foreign hauliers

The strike in the French transport sector, which seeks by political means on a large scale to influence the pay settlements of French lorry drivers, is also having significant and far-reaching effects on foreign firms which use the French road network for transit. The disturbances caused are completely irrelevant to French internal labour issues.

What has the Commission done and what does it intend to do to protect the flow of transport from other EU countries in France and to provide full compensation for the economic damage suffered as a result?

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission*(29 January 1998)*

The Commission has no legal basis for intervening in a national dispute between employers and trade unions unless a Member State is shown to be negligent in its duty to uphold the legal freedom of movement of goods and persons as laid down in the EC Treaty. Compensation for damages also falls within national competence.

The Commission is, however, ready to cooperate with the appropriate authorities in efforts to try to secure solutions that are satisfactory for all relevant parties. To this end Commissioners wrote on several occasions to French ministers urging them to re-establish free circulation on their road network and it has approached both the French authorities and professional road transport associations to ask them to pursue progress on compensation claims. The Commission does not, however, have any legal power to establish or manage compensation arrangements or to require payment when compensation provisions have been established under the national laws of Member States.

(98/C 187/71)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3702/97**by Marjo Matikainen-Kallström (PPE) to the Commission***(19 November 1997)*

Subject: Reduction and harmonization of drink-driving limits in the European Union

Every year some 45 000 people die on the roads of the EU Member States and one and a half million are injured. It is estimated that alcohol plays some part in at least half of fatal traffic accidents.

The drink-driving limits vary considerably between the EU Member States. For example, in Denmark, Italy and Germany the legal limit is 0.8 ml whereas in Sweden, which has the strictest limit, it is 0.2 ml. The harmonization of the limits — which in most cases would mean the reduction of the limit — at for example the Swedish level of 0.2 ml would undoubtedly have a positive effect on road safety. Maximising the safety advantages would of course call for a widespread change in attitudes, increased effectiveness of controls and the modernization of control mechanisms.

In the light of the above, what measures does the Commission propose taking to explore the possibility of harmonizing and reducing the drink-driving limits in the various Member States? What measures does it intend to take to find out how traffic controls can be tightened in order to eradicate drunken driving more effectively?