

In response to the difficulties faced by the neediest sections of society, the Commission and Bulgarian authorities agreed, in January 1997, an initial 20 MECU Phare emergency social assistance programme (ESAP1) channelling direct financial assistance to particularly poor households and to selected socio-educational institutions managed by the ministries of labour, education and health.

By a second 20 MECU Phare programme (ESAP2), signed by the Commission and the Bulgarian authorities on 16 October 1997, the Community is providing further direct support to needy families and institutions and, in conjunction with the United Nations development programme (UNDP), a number of urban renovation projects which will stimulate job creation possibilities in five selected municipalities.

During the course of 1997, Bulgaria received programme funds totalling 1.8 MECU, provided by the Commission. The funds were distributed by four European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the form of medicines to medical institutions, a supplementary food programme, food parcels to the most vulnerable and school meals. In March 1997, the Commission also requested the Phare-funded Civil society development foundation, as a direct and practical response to the social crisis, to re-direct grant funding towards Bulgarian NGOs active in socio-humanitarian spheres. Latest figures indicate that approximately ECU 630 000 has been channelled in this way while further direct funding totalling ECU 250 000 is expected to be contracted before the end of the year.

(98/C 158/257)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3774/97
by Nikitas Kaklamanis (UPE) to the Council
(24 November 1997)

Subject: Necessary conditions for the introduction of the euro in the EU Member States

A heated controversy has broken out at European level about the important issue of whether or not it is compulsory for the currencies of Member States of the Union to enter the Exchange Rate Mechanism at least two years before these countries introduce the euro.

Will the Council say whether the currencies of the countries which wish to adopt the euro at some point are obliged to participate in the Exchange Rate Mechanism, or whether Member States are not specifically and categorically required to do so if they wish to adopt the single currency and enter the third phase of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)?

Answer

(16 February 1998)

Those Member States which fulfil the necessary conditions for adoption of the single currency will be designated on the basis of Article 109j(4) of the EC Treaty.

Subsequently, those Member States with a derogation which fulfil the necessary conditions on the basis of the criteria set out in Article 109j(1) of the Treaty shall have their derogations abrogated under the conditions laid down in Article 109k(2).

(98/C 158/258)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3792/97
by Pedro Marset Campos (GUE/NGL) to the Council
(26 November 1997)

Subject: Police action at the demonstration in favour of employment on 20/11/97 in Luxembourg

Police units visited the headquarters of the UGT, CC. OO. and CSIF trade unions in Etreadura on 5 November 1997, demanding information about persons intending to take part in the demonstration which the European Trade Union Confederation has called for 20 November 1997 in Luxembourg.