

For this reason it is not possible to give a definite answer to this question. However, the Community has supported a number of research projects investigating the local or regional impacts of sea level rise in north-western Mediterranean deltas and the eastern Po plane. The specific consequences of sea level rise for the Canary islands have not been studied, since for these regions no proposals were submitted to the environment and climate programme.

Socio-economic issues of sea level rise have been studied in some of the projects. The final reports of these projects are available on request.

Research is being carried out to study the effects of sea level rise on coastlines and beaches in Europe, but not in particular for the Canary islands for reasons stated above.

(¹) OJ L 361, 31.12.1994.

(98/C 174/200)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3810/97

by Luciana Castellina (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(19 November 1997)

Subject: Obligations of the Baltic States regarding the *acquis communautaire* in the audiovisual sector

The Baltic States are currently negotiating their entry into the WTO (World Trade Organization) and must in that connection specify any obligations they may have with regard to the audiovisual sector.

In view of the fact that the Baltic States are also bound by association agreements with the European Union and also aspire to join the EU, can the Commission tell us anything about these states' policy in this sensitive sector? Does not the Commission think that they should align themselves, within the WTO, with the Community position on audiovisual matters, which is defined by a lack of sectorial commitments and a derogation from the most — favoured — nation clause?

Answer given by Sir Leon Brittan on behalf of the Commission

(16 December 1997)

The negotiations for the accession of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania to the World trade organisation (WTO) are continuing. The requests made by the Community to these countries in the context of the General agreement for trade in services (GATS) have focused on the need to balance a high degree of liberalisation with compatibility between the specific commitments that these countries will make and those made by the Community for each services sector as a result of the Uruguay Round and the following WTO negotiations. This policy line responds to the existence of association agreements between the Community and each of those three countries and also to their possible accession in the future to the Community.

This line of ensuring compatibility has also been followed by the Community on audio-visual services. Accordingly, the three Baltic countries have sought to treat audio-visual services in their accession offers in the same way as the Community does in its own WTO schedule of commitments: i.e. no specific market access and national treatment commitments on any audio-visual services and, some exemptions to the GATS most favoured nation (MFN) in order to protect European works and some European programmes such as MEDIA. So far, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia have all indicated that they will follow this approach in their offers for accession which are currently being negotiated within the WTO.

Some trading partners have requested the Baltic countries to undertake commitments on audio-visual services and depart from the MFN exemption approach. However the Commission understands that Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania are resisting these requests.