

Can the Commission tell me what measures it has taken or is going to take in order to implement Parliament's proposals, with particular reference to steps to strengthen Turkey's legislation on intellectual property or to bring it into line with EC legislation, so as to combat plagiarism?

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 313, 12.10.1998, p. 176.

Answer given by Mr van den Broek on behalf of the Commission

(13 April 1999)

The Commission is following closely the steps Turkey is taking to meet its obligations under the Customs Union, in particular as regards the protection of intellectual, industrial and commercial property rights. In the most recent of its regular reports on Turkey ⁽¹⁾, it stated that the standard of such protection has improved in Turkey since the Customs Union came into force, but that a number of measures still needed to be taken before 1 January 1999. It is examining measures recently taken by the Turkish authorities to this end.

To date the Commission has been informed of few infringements but it is ready to examine any submission of a properly reasoned specific case.

⁽¹⁾ COM(98) 711 final.

(1999/C 341/164)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0457/99

by Concepció Ferrer (PPE) to the Commission

(5 March 1999)

Subject: Democratic clause in agreements with third countries

Given that respect for human rights is one of the founding principles underpinning the European Union and requires practical expression not only within the EU but also in third countries, and that the inclusion of the 'democratic clause' in Union agreements with third countries means that concrete action can be taken, including the suspension of financial aid to countries which do not respect human rights, does the Commission believe that the application of this clause under the various agreements has helped improve respect for human rights worldwide?

In which specific cases has the Commission been forced to suspend agreements under the provisions of the democratic clause?

Answer given by Mr van den Broek on behalf of the Commission

(13 April 1999)

The Council established in May 1995 that all agreements with non-Community countries should routinely include (i) a clause making adherence to democratic principles and human rights an essential element of those agreements, and (ii) a 'non-execution' clause. The Commission would like to point out that the motive for this was to promote a common commitment to respecting and promoting universal values, rather than to create a relationship governed by conditions.

The Commission considers it very difficult at this point to gauge the effect of such clauses on the human rights situation in the countries in question. The arrangements approved by the Council favour dialogue over countermeasures as a means of solving all but the most urgent problems. Suspending cooperation remains a last resort.

The range of measures available for dealing with serious and persistent violations of human rights or interruption of the democratic process is wide enough to allow reactions to be matched to the severity of the case. Although measures such as representations (*démarches*), specific action and decisions to change the content of cooperation programmes have been used in many instances, no cooperation agreement has actually been suspended.