

(2000/C 280 E/082)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2605/99**by Chris Davies (ELDR) to the Commission**

(22 December 1999)

Subject: Structural Funds 2000-2005/7 – Objective 1, Merseyside

With the approval of the British Government a bid for the next Merseyside Objective 1 programme has been submitted to the Commission which includes a financial table indicating that the programme will be supported by equal contributions from EU grants and matching public funding.

1. Is it the Commission's understanding that, by giving its approval to the bid, the British Government has indicated that it intends to ensure that matching funding from within Britain is provided on at least a pound for pound basis with the European Union?
2. What sanctions would be open to the Commission were it to become evident that the British Government did not intend to provide matching funding on this basis?
3. Have such sanctions been applied to any Member State in past years?

Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(20 January 2000)

1. The financial schedule in the draft single programming document (SPD) for the region of Merseyside, as submitted by the United Kingdom authorities for the period 2000-2006, cites a total volume of EUR 3 297,9 million broken down as follows:

	In million euro	Share (%)
EU Structural Funds	1 333,3	40
UK public contribution	1 333,3	40
Private-sector contribution	631,3	20

If this schedule remains unchanged in the final version of the SPD, the UK Government will be committing itself to financing the public-sector part of the plan on a pound-for-pound basis with the Community's Structural Funds.

2. The Community contribution will depend directly on the expenditure declared by the UK authorities. If the financial commitment originally made is not forthcoming, an automatic penalty is built in since the Community contribution is based on this declared expenditure in accordance with the relative shares laid down in the financial schedule.
3. This is the same mechanism as applies to all other Member States.

(2000/C 280 E/083)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2612/99**by Brigitte Langenhagen (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(12 January 2000)

Subject: More stringent intervention criteria for cereals

The moisture content is to be reduced once again from 15 % to 14,5 %. For decades the limit value was 16 %. In our maritime coastal climate with permanently high air humidity, under normal weather conditions the 16 % limit is possible only on a few days in Summer in the harvesting period. A glance at the harvesting conditions in previous years shows that under these conditions cereals could only have been sold in exceptional Summers. In the last seven years it would only have been possible to market the harvested crop on three occasions without artificial drying.

What stage has the procedure reached?

What are the specific reasons prompting the Commission to tighten up the intervention criteria?

Is the Commission aware that in climatically unfavourable regions — coastal areas, for example — the intervention criteria can only be satisfied at considerable technical cost, and hence with significantly higher production costs?

Is the Commission aware that if the criteria are made more stringent farmers in the regions described will have to suffer permanent disadvantages and losses of income, even though their product is in no way inferior?

Is the Commission planning a regionally graduated approach or a hardship scheme to compensate for climatic disadvantages?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(7 February 2000)

The Commission's purpose in launching a debate on the minimum quality of cereals offered for intervention was to bring cereal stocks more into line with (particularly export) demand. Discussion started in October 1999 and is currently continuing.

It should be borne in mind that the moisture content limit (currently 14,5 %) is set with a view to ensuring satisfactory intervention storage over a relatively long period. Dispensations up to 15 % have been granted during the last few marketing years.

The open domestic and export markets generally require lower moisture content, so that toxins do not build up and jeopardise quality.

The market accepts higher moisture content only for immediate use, or at a discount to offset the cost of drying. There are no grounds for proceeding differently with regard to intervention, which — it must be remembered — is not in itself a market but just a publicly-funded intermediate stage.

Regardless of region or harvest weather conditions, producers can sell their cereals provided that they satisfy the market's quality criteria — if need be by drying to reduce moisture content. Climatic risk is inherent in all forms of crop production and has to be taken into account.

(2000/C 280 E/084)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2613/99

by Horst Schnellhardt (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(12 January 2000)

Subject: Pharmaceuticals for veterinary medicine

In the legislative procedure for the adoption of a European Parliament and Council regulation on pharmaceuticals for rare illnesses, the text now available represents a satisfactory result for all parties concerned. As far as human medicine is concerned, the regulation creates a framework which will considerably facilitate the fight against rare diseases. The EU has closed a gap with the USA and Japan which were able to adopt similar legislation at a much earlier date.

In my opinion, however, similar conditions need to be created in other areas of pharmaceutical science; in particular in veterinary medicine. A number of veterinary pharmaceutical products have, I believe,