

Those concerned need to apply to the Italian Ministry for Agricultural Policy for registration of a designation of origin or geographical indication within the meaning of the above-mentioned Regulation. The procedure is that if the Ministry considers that the application is justified and contains the necessary information, it forwards the complete file to the Commission for registration at Community level.

The Commission would point out that for the evaluation of certain products which are clearly distinguishable from other similar products, the regulation applicable is Regulation (EC) No 2082/92 on certificates of specific character, which refers to a specific and traditional method of production. The Commission will give due consideration to any application from a national authority for the registration of a designation of origin or certificate of specific character for the product in question

(¹) OJ L 208, 24.7.1992.

(2000/C 280 E/092)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2632/99

by W.G. van Velzen (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(12 January 2000)

Subject: Millennium-compliance of the Albanian aviation sector

Considerable thought has been given to the question of the millennium, which is a cause of concern to many. Now that there are fewer than thirty days to go, it appears that not all of Europe can make a safe transition to the new century.

Albania has still not submitted a report to the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) on the millennium compliance of airports in Albania. Clearly, not only the ICAO but the EU, too, has an interest in clear information on whether its neighbour is millennium-compliant.

On 24 November 1999 the Commission referred to negotiations with Albania and the political, institutional and economic problems involved.

1. Is the Commission aware of the possible risks to the Union from this situation in Albania with regard to the millennium question and aviation? Which of these risks does the Commission regard as most important?
2. How does the Commission envisage being able to limit the risks to EU citizens of an aviation system in the immediate vicinity of the European Union which is not millennium-compliant?
3. What role did the millennium question play in the Commission's conclusion (24 November 1999) that at present it is not possible to formulate an official proposal for negotiating guidelines on an agreement with Albania on stability and accession?
4. What action will the Commission take to obtain clarity on whether the Albanian aviation sector is millennium-compliant?
5. In the absence of any clarity on this from the Albanian side, is the Commission prepared to issue a warning not to fly to Albania or use Albanian airlines at the end of the year?
6. Given the special nature of these questions, can the Commission reply before 31 December 1999?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission

(2 February 2000)

The purpose of the recent Commission report ⁽¹⁾ mentioned by the Honourable Member was to assess the feasibility of negotiating a stabilisation and association agreement with Albania. It identified important political, institutional and economic requirements for a successful participation of Albania in such perspective. It did not address the specific issue of the millennium bug in relation to Albania.

The Commission did not receive detailed information from the Albanian authorities on their preparedness for the millennium bug. However, landing and take-off at Tirana (Rinas) airport takes place visually and the lighting system at night does not operate by computer. At the current stage, there are only very few flights from Community airports to Tirana and during night hours the airport is normally closed. Check-in systems are compliant given that they are extensions of systems in Western Europe, Swissair being its main user. The air space is controlled by a system of SITA (Société internationale de télécommunications aérienne) and according to Eurocontrol and other relevant sources it is considered that there is no major risk.

⁽¹⁾ COM(99) 651 final.

(2000/C 280 E/093)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2634/99**by Bart Staes (Verts/ALE) to the Commission**

(22 December 1999)

Subject: Compensation of EU citizens in the case of road accidents in Switzerland

Loopholes in Swiss legislation allow insurance companies to delay paying compensation in respect of third party liability. This source of legal uncertainty also affects nationals of EU countries who are the victims of road accidents in Switzerland. They find themselves involved in legal proceedings without any prospect of obtaining fair compensation within a reasonable period of time.

The forthcoming ratification of the transport agreement between Switzerland and the EU in the course of 2000 should be taken as an opportunity to resolve this legal problem as soon as possible. EU citizens in Switzerland are entitled to the same protection as Swiss nationals enjoy in the fifteen Member States of the EU. It is also worth noting that former Commission President Santer was informed of this problem in writing on 12 March 1998 and 27 July 1998 (letters from Dr Eric Suy, president of VTB-VAB and Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister, Elio de Rupo).

1. What action has the Commission taken to remedy the loopholes in Swiss legislation, which result in a lack of legal certainty in the case of road accidents in Switzerland?
2. Will the Commission take advantage of the ratification procedure for the transport agreement between Switzerland and the EU to demand from the Swiss Government a rapid, fair and reasonable solution to this legal problem? If not, why not?
3. What further steps will the Commission take to ensure that Swiss Government finds a fair and reasonable solution to this legal problem as soon as possible?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission

(21 January 2000)

The Commission is aware of a number of cases in which Community nationals have encountered difficulties in their dealings with Swiss insurance companies, following accidents in Switzerland.