

3. Does the Commission advocate a quota policy for the production of apples in the European Union as a means of providing a structural solution to the crisis in the apple growing sector? If so, when and in what way will the Commission draw up a quota scheme? If not, why does the Commission reject a quota policy as a structural solution to the apple crisis, and what alternative approach does it advocate?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(22 May 2000)

1. The Commission is also aware that apple prices have generally been lower during the 1999/2000 marketing year than in the previous marketing year. Prices are, however, roughly the same as in the 1997/1998 marketing year. This overall trend is largely attributable to the relatively high level of Community production (almost 8,5 million tonnes, i.e. about 10 % more than the average for the last few marketing years). This figure conceals a degree of variation by Member State, however: for example, Belgian apple production amounted to almost 550 000 tonnes in 1999, i.e. 30 % more than the average for the previous marketing years. Against this background, Community production of the Jonagold variety has likewise reached record levels at over 900 000 tonnes. Producer prices for Belgian apples, and particularly for the Jonagold variety, are therefore logically lower than usual.

2. In such circumstances, producers are able to call on several types of financial instrument under Council Regulation (EC) No 2200/96 of 28 October 1996 on the common organisation of the market in fruit and vegetables⁽¹⁾. Producer organisations may decide to implement the intervention arrangements through market withdrawals, the aim of which is to support prices for products remaining on the market. Also, the operational funds provide producer organisations with considerable public financial resources which they can use to make structural improvements. These measures have been devised to enable producer organisations, which account for 70 % of fruit and vegetable production in Belgium, to deal with short-term crises and to take steps that will improve their competitiveness.

This framework therefore provides apple producers with adequate instruments through which to alleviate the effects of the short-term production crisis. It is not necessary to devise new, special measures. With more specific regard to the Jonagold variety, which accounts for 50 % of Belgian production, the operational funds likewise mean that producers have the financial resources to convert their orchards to less over-produced varieties.

3. Nor does the Commission plan to introduce a production quota system for apples. The common organisation of the market does not provide for this type of measure, which does not appear suited to crops for which producers cannot readily forecast their final production. Since 1996 the Council has instead chosen to assist the fruit and vegetable sector by providing producer organisations with structural support through the operational funds, so that producer organisations which concentrate supply should be able to manage short-term fluctuations in production more and more effectively.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 297, 21.11.1996.

(2001/C 53 E/131)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1210/00

by Ioannis Marinos (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(14 April 2000)

Subject: Turkish illegal immigrants

The European Council meeting in Helsinki last December declared Turkey to be 'a candidate State destined to join the Union'. For many years, however, Turkey has pursued a policy of not controlling or even encouraging the illegal migration of Turkish citizens to European countries, which creates problems in Member States bordering Turkey, particularly Greece which receives large numbers of illegal immigrants, primarily across its extensive sea borders to the east.

Recently, the entire problem has also become particularly pressing for countries applying for membership of the Union, which are being compelled to adopt measures to restrict the illegal immigration of Turkish nationals into their territory.

For example, the Commission's 'Regular Report' on Slovenia published on 13 October 1999 states (page 50) that Slovenia was compelled to reintroduce visas from 1 December 1999 for Turkish citizens wishing to visit the country owing to the volume of illegal immigrants from Turkey arriving on its territory.

Has the Commission considered the question of the mass illegal immigration of Turkish citizens into the Member States and the applicant countries? What is the official position of Turkey and what monitoring mechanisms have been developed to establish whether Turkey is complying with its commitments?

Answer given by Mr Vitorino on behalf of the Commission

(14 June 2000)

The Commission is closely following the problem of illegal immigration from Turkey into the Union. Turkey is both a country of origin and a transit country for illegal immigrants from neighbouring areas (e.g. Northern Iraq and Iran) as well as more distant third countries (e.g. Bangladesh, Pakistan). Member States' analysis and intelligence have confirmed that one of the main routes for illegal immigration into the Union passes through Turkey.

Most of the transit migrants enter Turkey without valid documentation and with the help of internationally operating facilitator networks who provide the necessary 'services' by procuring documents, supplying couriers, planning routes and arranging accommodation for stopovers. In many cases, bribery is involved. Most of the transit migrants chose Turkey as transit country mainly because of its advantageous geographical position, its liberal immigration regulations and the availability of transport to it.

The continuing flow of illegal immigrants, mainly travelling on false or falsified documents, has prompted the Member States' decision to take effective countermeasures and to enhance co-operation with Turkey on the fight against illegal immigration. The Union initiatives launched to this end include the Union action plan on Iraq and the neighbouring region, adopted by the Council on 11 October 1999, in the implementation of which Turkey plays a very prominent role. When implementing this plan, the Member States agreed to examine means of support to assist Turkey in the improvement of conditions for detaining illegal immigrants prior to removal, to exchange experience on formulation of laws on illegal immigration, to examine the scope for exchange of expertise on the detention of false documents, including possible technical assistance and Community funding, to ensure feedback, at a bilateral level, to Turkey on operational information involving illegal immigration, in particular where trafficking is involved, to liaise with the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) in examining ways of ensuring the proper screening of asylum-seekers, and to consider means of assistance for this purpose, in particular by providing training to Turkish border police in the screening of asylum seekers. Further a joint German and Dutch pilot project, conducted in 1999, established at Istanbul airport a 'round-the-clock document adviser bureau'.

As a result of an evaluation visit of Union immigration experts to Turkey in May 1999 it was proposed, in February 2000, to provide to Turkey specific training and assistance in the form of technical aids for checking the authenticity of travel documents in order to detect false or falsified travel documents and to curb illegal immigration into Western European countries. A meeting with Turkish senior officials in Helsinki, on 26 November 1999, on justice and home affairs issues discussed illegal immigration and repatriation of illegally residing persons. A study was launched in 1999, with a seminar held in Brussels in March 2000, on 'Turkey as transit country and country of illegal immigration'. Moreover, in the framework of the Odysseus programme 2000, the Commission will seek to select projects involving practical co-operation with Turkey in the field of asylum, migration and the crossing of external borders.

In accordance with the conclusions of the 1999 Helsinki European Council, an accession partnership will be drawn up with Turkey on the basis of previous European Council conclusions while containing priorities on which accession preparations must concentrate in the light of the political and economic criteria and the obligations of a Member State, combined with a national programme for the adoption of the 'acquis'. Appropriate monitoring mechanisms will be established.

(2001/C 53 E/132)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1215/00

by Daniel Hannan (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(14 April 2000)

Subject: Parliamentary dependants

How many British politicians, excluding members of the European Parliament, are in receipt of monies from the European Communities, be they pensions or otherwise sourced?

Who are they? What level of finances are involved in each case? What requirement remains on such individuals to support the policy of their former employers?

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(25 May 2000)

The Commission takes the Honourable Member's reference to 'British politicians' to refer to former Members of the Commission.

The following former members of the Commission of British nationality currently benefit from a pension which commenced when they reached retirement age: George Thompson, Roy Jenkins, Stanley Clinton Davis, Francis Cockfield, Ivor Richard, Bruce Millan, and Ralf Dahrendorf. The total cost involved is currently of the order of £ 245 000 net per annum. The transitional allowance to which Sir Leon Brittan was entitled was suspended, at his request, from 1 January 2000.

There is no 'requirement' that former Members of the Commission 'support the policy of their former employers'. Ex-Members of the Commission are bound by the provisions of Article 213 of the Treaty and by their Oath of office 'to behave with integrity and discretion as regards the acceptance, after they have ceased to hold office, of certain appointments or benefits. In the event of any breach of these obligations, the Court of Justice may, on application by the Council or the Commission, rule that the Member concerned be, according to the circumstances, ... deprived of his right to a pension or other benefits in its stead'. There is also an obligation to inform the Commission of all changes that might modify the level of entitlement (Article 43 of the Staff Regulations and Regulation No 422/67/EEC, 5/67/Euratom of the Council of 25 July 1967 determining the emoluments of the President and members of the Commission and of the President, Judges, Advocates-General and Registrar of the Court of Justice⁽¹⁾).

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 187, 8.8.1967 and amendments.

(2001/C 53 E/133)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1216/00

by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL), Alexander de Roo (Verts/ALE), Johannes Blokland (EDD), Dorette Corbey (PSE) and Theodorus Bouwman (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(14 April 2000)

Subject: Reopening of the 'Iron Rhine' railway link through De Meinweg nature conservation area on the Dutch-German border

1. Can the Commission confirm that in late March 2000 Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany agreed to re-open the 'Iron Rhine', the former rail link between the port of Antwerp and the Ruhr area in Germany?