

is currently impossible for farmers, of whatever nationality, to buy up new manure rights, and thereby increase the production of manure in Flanders.

At this stage, the Commission has not yet taken a position on the proposed Dutch aid scheme. Therefore, it cannot yet indicate whether any conditions will be attached to a possible approval of the scheme.

(2001/C 81 E/083)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1682/00

by Camilo Nogueira Román (Verts/ALE) to the Council

(7 June 2000)

Subject: Lisbon-Ferrol high-speed rail line linking Portugal and Galicia

Despite the statements of the President of the Galician regional government, Mr Manuel Fraga, to the effect that the planned high-speed rail link to Galicia will not be operative until the distant date of 2006, the Mayor of Oporto, Mr Nuno Cardoso, has called for the construction of a high-speed rail line which would link Lisbon, Coimbra and Oporto in Portugal to Vigo, Pontevedra, Santiago de Compostela, La Coruña and Ferrol in Galicia, with a maximum journey time of four hours. The Mayor of Oporto believes that this railway would also greatly facilitate travel from northern Portugal to the European heartland, via the proposed link connecting Galicia to Valladolid and to Irún on the French frontier.

At a recent meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism, the Portuguese Minister of Transport and President-in-Office of the Transport Council, Mr Jorge Coelho, replying to the author of this question, expressed his support for this Portuguese proposal for a Lisbon-La Coruña link, in the context of the need to define a joint project for the creation of a high-speed rail connection between the Iberian peninsula and the European heartland, to be implemented immediately by the Spanish and Portuguese governments.

Can the Council state what progress has been made on this matter? Can it also state what potential political and economic obstacles need to be overcome or removed with a view to the implementation of this project, which is of vital importance for the economic and social development of the Portuguese regions and of Galicia, given that the Atlantic seaboard area is home to 11millionpeople and is of major strategic importance for the Union?

Reply

(29 September 2000)

A high-speed rail network was provided for in the Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (Decision No 1692/96/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 1996) ⁽¹⁾. However, a line such as that mentioned in the Honourable Member's question is not included.

New guidelines concerning the trans-European transport network are currently being prepared by the Commission, and the Council expects the relevant proposals to be referred to it. The Council will give its opinion when the time comes and is therefore not able at this juncture to anticipate what its position will be.

The Council will nevertheless bear the Honourable Member's question in mind when looking at all aspects of the matter as a whole.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 228, 9.9.1996.