

(2001/C 103 E/026)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1754/00**by Glenys Kinnock (PSE) to the Commission**

(31 May 2000)

Subject: Regional Economic Partnership Agreements

In view of the signing of the Suva Convention in June and the undertaking to begin negotiations by 1 January 2002 on WTO-compatible regional economic partnership agreements or other WTO-compatible arrangements, which should take account of the level of development and the socio-economic impact of trade measures on ACP states, will the Commission indicate the composition and working methods of the bodies that have been, or will be, established to prepare and carry out these negotiations?

In particular, what will be the relationship between the DG for Trade and the DG for Development in this process, and how will responsibilities be allocated?

Answer given by Mr Lamy on behalf of the Commission

(27 June 2000)

The Commission is presently examining an action plan for the preparation and the negotiation of regional economic partnership agreements.

Without anticipating the results of the deliberation of the Commission, it is obvious that the preparation and the negotiation of these agreements will require a close cooperation between the relevant services of the Commission, in particular between Directorate general Trade and Directorate general Development. The Commission is indeed convinced that, as provided in the partnership agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States and the Community, trade cooperation and development cooperation must be interlinked and mutually supportive so as to create the most favourable conditions for the ACP to adapt to the new trading environment.

(2001/C 103 E/027)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1769/00**by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL) to the Commission**

(31 May 2000)

Subject: Controversial use of Konver subsidies by the Dutch municipality of Den Helder and the channelling away of funds

1. Since 1997 the media in and around the municipality of Den Helder, located in the region 'Kop van Noord-Holland' in the north west of the Netherlands, have reported time and again on the political furore over the spending of subsidies, inter alia on the construction by the municipality of Den Helder of a footbridge and landing stage in the inner harbour of Koopvaarder. On 9 May 2000 a fresh bout of controversy erupted. This was triggered by an investigation by the Central Criminal Intelligence Agency into municipal town planning and administration fraud. Is the Commission aware of these reports?

2. Can the Commission confirm that works in the municipality of Den Helder, such as the construction of the footbridge and landing stage in the inner harbour of Koopvaarder, commonly known as 'Eurosteiger', were brought into being with the help of European subsidies under the Konver programme? If so, what subsidies were granted under the Konver programme to Den Helder and under what conditions?

3. The political furore prompted the municipal council to commission an inquiry by the KPMG bureau. In its report reference was made to irregularities in the use of subsidy payments: deferment of subsidies to a subsequent stage without approval; failure to report related co-financing; failure to implement parts of the proposed project. Furthermore, there are reports in the media of the inflation of the project's costs and the channelling away of money flows. Is the Commission aware of the KPMG inquiry and its conclusions? Does it agree with those conclusions?

4. Public opinion has strongly criticised the project because of its implications for quality of life and safety (up to 2015 no solution to the sharp increase in car traffic through residential districts, unwanted tree felling, lack of evacuation options in the event of harbour disasters). Does the Commission agree that in a people's Europe such concerns as quality of life and environmental conditions should have a place and that till now insufficient account has been taken thereof in Den Helder?

5. What possibilities does the Commission see, through appropriate planning changes, for meeting the citizens' grievances?

(2001/C 103 E/028)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1770/00

by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(31 May 2000)

Subject: Investigation to combat the possible fraudulent misuse of Konver subsidies by the Dutch municipality of Den Helder

1. With the passage of time and the political stir over the spending of subsidy payments on, inter alia, the construction of a footbridge and landing stage in the inner harbour of Koopvaarder by the municipality of Den Helder in the Dutch province of North Holland, a picture has emerged of fraud and deception in the matter of European subsidies. Does the Commission agree that this should be dealt with by removing the causes for the underlying suppositions?

2. Does the Commission also agree that the information we now have concerning the use of subsidies by the municipality of Den Helder should prompt a thorough further investigation, so that due light may finally be shed on the course of events up to this moment? Is the Commission ready for such an investigation?

3. Are there at present any requests by the municipality of Den Helder for other European subsidies that have not yet been processed? If so, what are they?

4. Does the situation with regard to Konver subsidies — as indicated in the above questions and in my questions on their disputed use and the channelling away of funds — prompt the Commission to reconsider its position vis-à-vis the municipality of Den Helder as regards the granting or the supervision and monitoring of any new European subsidies to that town?

**Joint answer
to Written Questions E-1769/00 and E-1770/00
given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission**

(2 August 2000)

The Commission participates as an observer in the monitoring committees of the structural fund programmes. Those committees discuss programme strategy, as well as organisational and procedural matters. In accordance with the subsidiarity principle, the selection and approval of projects is performed by a steering committee, which is constituted by regional partners and co-financing partners other than the Community.

The Commission has not been informed about the police investigation or the KPMG inquiry mentioned by the Honourable Member.

The Commission can however confirm that the Community initiative Konver for the period 1994-1999 has financed the project 'Koopvaarderbinnenhaven'. The Dutch ministry of Economic Affairs issued on 14 July 1997 the relevant commitment letter which corresponds to an amount of HFL 4,45 million (€ 2,02 million). The Community contribution corresponds to 50 % of this sum. In December the project was closed down. The actual project expenditure remained below budgeted costs (HFL 3,78 million or € 1,72 million).