

If the application was introduced after this date, this project would be among those included in Annex II to Council Directive 97/11/EC of 3 March 1997⁽²⁾, which amends Directive 85/337/EEC. If that is the case, the decision to carry out an EIA or not is still up to the Member State, which may apply thresholds or criteria, or take a decision on a case by case basis but which, in all cases, will apply the criteria laid down in Annex III.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 175, 5.7.1985.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 73, 14.3.1997.

(2001/C 187 E/066)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3847/00

by Rütta Myller (PSE) to the Commission

(7 December 2000)

Subject: Promotion of public transport

The promotion of public transport is a central factor in attempting to achieve a transport policy compatible with sustainable development. Mass transport reduces the burden on the environment and creates social equality, and must therefore be seen as a social service which may justifiably be subsidised with public funds. The Commission's proposal for a regulation on the principles of public service contracts in passenger transport by rail, road and inland waterways has raised concerns that the operational possibilities of public transport will be reduced. Opening rail traffic to competition would reduce the level of services in countries such as Finland where there are long distances to be covered. In the same way, restricting public support to particular groups of travellers would threaten the competitiveness of public transport in commuter traffic and increase the use of private cars correspondingly. How does the Commission intend to ensure that the EU's transport policy encourages the principle of sustainable development, is environmentally sound and promotes regional and social equality?

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(9 March 2001)

The Commission is in full agreement with the view that greater use of public transport is one of the essential factors in sustainable development, the preservation of the environment and social and regional cohesion, as mentioned in article 161 (ex Article 130d) of the EC Treaty.

It agrees, too, that in this sector an approach based on a pure open market is not appropriate. Among other problems, this approach would certainly carry the risk of operators cutting back socially and environmentally important services.

However, the Commission's proposal for a regulation on public services in public transport⁽¹⁾ has a quite different approach, based as it is on the principle of controlled competition rather than a pure open market approach.

Experience in Member States that have introduced controlled competition shows that, properly managed, it is an effective way to make services more attractive and more efficient. It is true that some operators that do not face competition provide excellent services. However, others do not — and costs are generally high. Closed market regimes seem to make change hard to achieve where it is most needed.

The basic objective of the Commission's proposal is to promote quality and efficiency in public transport. It takes the widespread necessity of public financial support as its main starting point.

Under this approach, public authorities have wide powers to fix the service levels and quality standards that are needed, and select the operator that will fulfil these standards in the way that offers the best value for money. Authorities are encouraged by a specific provision in the draft regulation to guarantee continuing support for socially necessary services in lightly populated areas.

The Commission recognises that keeping fares at an affordable level has an important part to play in making public transport more attractive and accessible to everyone. There is nothing in the draft regulation to rule this out. If an authority decides to reduce fares for all passengers, the regulation simply proposes that this fare reduction should be incorporated in a public service contract. In this way, authorities can ensure that the services are provided with an adequate level of quality and reliability.

It is also important to consider the question of legal uncertainty. Over the past ten years, operators providing public transport in more than one Member State have emerged for the first time. This has created a strong Community dimension to the question of the award of state aids and exclusive rights in this sector and has led to legal uncertainty. The proposed regulation, by establishing a clear regulatory framework, will provide an effective solution while ensuring full respect for transport policy objectives and strengthening public transport operators' ability to compete with private cars.

For these reasons, the Commission considers the draft regulation to be an important contribution to the task of developing local and regional transport systems that are able to respond effectively to the challenges they face today. But regulatory action is only one part of the Commission's activities in this area. At the same time, the Commission has put in place practical tools to support action by local and regional authorities and operators. These include a computerised database of good practice, a programme to enable localities to benchmark the quality of their transport systems, and extensive research and development programmes. All have their part to play in lessening the environmental impact of transport and promoting regional and social cohesion.

In order to develop strategies to promote environmental integration and sustainable development in the wake of the 1998 Cardiff European Council, the Commission has set up an expert group comprising members from the Ministries for Transport and for Environment of the Member States. This group has produced a report to the Commission with a number of recommendations for actions towards sustainable transport, in order to support the Commission's input into the revision of the transport Council integration strategy. The report is available on the Internet at the following address: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/trans>.

(¹) OJ C 365 E, 19.12.2000.

(2001/C 187 E/067)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3848/00

by Giovanni Pittella (PSE) to the Commission

(7 December 2000)

Subject: Traffic in human organs

Noting that:

- in recent days, various reports have appeared in the European press concerning the warning issued by the Moldavian Minister of the Interior on trafficking in organs, most of which come from poor countries (including Guatemala, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Paraguay, but also North Africa and eastern Europe) and are destined for the West and the Middle East;
- in India, meanwhile, the sale of organs from living persons is legal; in the period from 1990 to 1993, over 2000 kidneys were sold to wealthy patients in the West or the Middle East;
- according to reliable published statistics, some 960 patients in the Gulf States have bought kidneys in India, Egypt, Iraq or the Philippines at prices which ranged, in 1998, from USD 30 000 for a heart to USD 20 000 for a kidney purchased over the Internet; in 1999, prices rose to USD 100 000 for a heart or pancreas and USD 30 000 for a kidney;
- to tackle this and other alarming trends, we must achieve closer international cooperation and enhance the role played by Europol in combating crime by means of specific, consistent action to ensure surveillance and policing at frontiers.