

At present, the Commission is preparing its second report on the levels of the minimum excise duty rates and the excise duty rates applied by Member States on alcoholic beverages. In this context, all Member States have been consulted on the basis of a detailed questionnaire covering the various elements that the Commission has to address in its report. These elements are the proper functioning of the Internal Market, competition between different types of alcoholic beverages, the real value of the rates and other objectives of the EC Treaty, such as health and agricultural policy. Regarding the last point, the Commission is well aware of the concerns expressed by a number of wine-producing Member States about the impact of the introduction of a positive rate on wine, particularly upon the production of table wines.

Based on all the information and opinions received, the Commission is drafting its report, which should be adopted during the coming months. The issue raised by the Honourable Member will be addressed in the report. As yet, no decision has been taken on whether or not this report should be accompanied by a proposal for a Directive changing the minimum rates of excise duty on alcoholic beverages.

(¹) OJ L 145, 13.6.1977.

(2001/C 350 E/083)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1126/01

by Jorge Moreira Da Silva (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(6 April 2001)

Subject: Cais dos Vapores river jetty, Montijo, Portugal

The Civic Platform for the Defence of Cais dos Vapores jetty has informed me that Montijo town council plans to transfer the river station there to another jetty, Cais do Seixalinho.

The citizens' group concerned takes the view that the option chosen by Montijo town council would have a highly negative social and environmental impact.

Can the Commission answer the following questions:

1. Has any Community funding been allocated to this project?
2. Given that the area in which Cais do Seixalinho jetty is situated forms part of a significant ecosystem for birds and aquatic species, what type of environmental impact assessment has been carried out?
3. Does this project comply with the Directive on the conservation of wild birds and the Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission

(20 June 2001)

The project mentioned by the Honourable Member, to transfer the river station from the Cais dos Vapores to the Cais do Seixalinho is not the object of Community co-financing.

The Cais do Seixalinho lies outside the Special Protection Area 'Estuário do Tejo' designated by Portugal under the Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds (¹) and the proposed site of Community importance of the same name designated under the Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (²). However, according to article 6 of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC, all projects likely to have a significant impact on the sites, even if located outside those sites, must be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Commission is therefore asking the Portuguese authorities for the necessary information concerning the project, including what type, if any, of impact assessment has been carried out.

The elements supplied by the Portuguese authorities will also allow an evaluation of the compliance with the Council Directive 97/11/EEC of 3 March 1997 amending Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment ⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 103, 25.4.1979.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 73, 14.3.1997.

(2001/C 350 E/084)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1131/01

by Karl von Wogau (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(10 April 2001)

Subject: Traceability and information system for cattle

The information system allowing cattle movements to be traced gathers all data covering animals. The notification of all animal movements is compulsory.

However, access to these data which can be consulted on the Internet varies considerably. Unlike other interested parties, farmers who have sold the animals have no access to information about the carcass weight of these animals.

What is the justification for this arrangement, and does the Commission intend to amend it, if appropriate?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(13 June 2001)

With the adoption in 1997 of Council Regulation (EC) 820/97 of 21 April 1997 establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products ⁽¹⁾, the existing provisions for identification and registration of bovine animals (Council Directive 92/102/EEC of 27 November 1992 ⁽²⁾) were reinforced. This reinforcement was necessary as experience and notably the bovine spongiform encephalopathy crisis had shown that the implementation of the existing rules for identification and registration had not been entirely satisfactory and needed further improvement.

The obligation on Member States to set up a computerised database was introduced as part of the reinforced system for the identification and registration of bovine animals which in addition comprises of eartags to identify animals individually, animal passports and individual registers kept on each holding.

These provisions have been carried over in Regulation (EC) 1760/2000 of the Parliament and of the Council of 17 July 2000 establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 820/97 ⁽³⁾.

Hence each Member State shall create a national computerised database which will record the identity of bovine animals, all holdings on its territory and the movement of the animals for the purpose of rapid and accurate tracing of animals for reasons relating to the control of Community aid schemes. Furthermore the localisation and the tracing of animals is of crucial importance for the control of contagious diseases.

Since the database serves for management of Community aid schemes and disease control, the information, which the computerised database must contain as laid down in Council Directive 64/432/EEC of 26 June 1964 on animal health problems affecting intra-Community trade in bovine animals and swine ⁽⁴⁾ includes information on the date of death or slaughter to be recorded for each animal, but not on the carcass weight. It is not the intention of the Commission at this stage to propose further amendments