

Reply

(29 November 2001)

1. The Council deplores the events that occurred in Genoa during the G8 summit and condemns the actions of those who abuse the democratic rights to express opinions and to assemble in a peaceful manner.

2. The Council is fully aware of the problems raised by the Honourable Member of the Parliament. Following the Göteborg European Council of June 2001 the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States adopted conclusions, on 13 July 2001, on security at meetings of the European Council and other comparable events (10608/01 Presse 281).

3. These conclusions underline that in an area of freedom, security and justice, citizens must enjoy the right freely to express their opinions, to assemble in a peaceful manner and to do so in conditions where there is not a threat to their own security or to that of other citizens or properties.

Having recalled the importance of a constructive dialogue between the organizers of public demonstrations and the authorities of the host country and the importance of close international contacts to ensure that demonstrations are not exploited or abused by other elements for the purpose of committing acts of individual or collective violence, the conclusions stress the possibilities offered by existing legal instruments and bodies set up within the European Union, particularly the Schengen Convention of 1990 ⁽¹⁾, the Joint Action of 1997 with regard to cooperation on law and order and security ⁽²⁾ and the Decision of 2001 setting up a European crime prevention network ⁽³⁾.

4. While recognising that the host country is responsible for maintaining public order and safety, the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States stated, in their conclusions of 13 July 2001, that the following measures may help to reduce the risk of serious disturbances of law and order:

- (a) Police cooperation (permanent national contact points, use of the liaison officers and the Police Chiefs' Task Force, possible increase of the powers of Europol, training by the European Police College);
- (b) Exchange of information, respecting the right to the protection of personal data;
- (c) Measures relating to the crossing of borders;
- (d) Judicial cooperation (facilitation of direct cooperation in the European Judicial Network);
- (e) Organisational measures (common approach to communication with organisers of demonstrations to ensure that legitimate demonstrations are not exploited by groups with a violent agenda).

5. In view of the next European Council in Laeken in December 2001 and the future European or international summits, the Council is convinced that the implementation of the existing legal instruments and of the above measures concerning the management of public demonstrations will guarantee the right to demonstrate while reducing the risk of serious disturbances of law and order.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 239, 22.9.2000, p. 19.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 147, 5.6.1997, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 153, 8.6.2001, p. 1.

(2002/C 81 E/186)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2364/01

by Marco Cappato (TDI) to the Council

(3 August 2001)

Subject: G8 in Genoa and EU data bases

The Schengen Information System (SIS) was set up to store data concerning persons reported or wanted for arrest, such data being directly supplied by the competent authorities of the Member States. On the

occasion of the G8 in Genoa, Italy suspended the Schengen Convention and re-introduced checks at the Italian borders. However, despite those checks, many people, including people from outside Italy, caused physical injuries to persons and damage to property in Genoa. Various sources have confirmed that some of the perpetrators were already known to the police, evidently because they were reported on Community data bases on grounds of public policy or public safety.

Would the Council clarify the following points:

- Was the SIS data base consulted by the Italian authorities when the border checks were carried out for the G8? If so, how many people were refused entry at the border on the basis of data supplied by the SIS?
- Were some of the people arrested during the G8 already entered on the SIS data base or other Community data bases because they had a criminal record of crimes of violence? If so, on what grounds were they allowed to enter Italian territory?
- Were the data concerning persons arrested or reported during the Göteborg European Council and other demonstrations entered in the SIS or other Community data bases?

Reply

(29 November 2001)

The question of the Honourable Member refers to the use of the SIS database by the Italian public authorities in connection with the G8 in Genoa.

As the use of the SIS database by these public authorities is a matter of national responsibility, the Council is not able to inform whether and how the Italian authorities consulted the SIS database at the border checks carried out for the G8 and what the possible results of these checks were regarding the refusal of entry onto Italian territory. However, the Council wishes to clarify that a suspension of the Schengen Convention on the basis of Article 2(2) of the Schengen Convention only concerns the re-introduction of border checks at internal borders and does not have an impact on the availability and/or functioning of the SIS.

The Council is equally unable to answer the second question as it has no information on what persons were arrested during the G8.

As to the question whether data concerning persons arrested or reported in Göteborg were entered in SIS, it is recalled that this is a responsibility of the Swedish authorities and, moreover, it should be kept in mind that according to Article 94 of the Schengen Convention⁽¹⁾, data can only be entered 'as required for the purposes laid down in Articles 95 to 100'.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 239, 22.9.2000.

(2002/C 81 E/187)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2366/01

by Glyn Ford (PSE) to the Council

(28 August 2001)

Subject: Utilities bill for low-income users

Under the 1991 UK Water Industries Act, water companies set their water charges according to the rateable value of the property they were serving.

In a recent case in the South-West, a low-income constituent of mine, Mr Ken Cole, was charged a high price for his water consumption, because the property he was living in at the time had a high rateable value.