

Where does the Commission's stand on this matter?

Where does the Danish government stand on this matter?

What measures is the Commission minded to adopt to bring the annual killing of pilot whales on the Faroe Islands to an end?

To what extent can this matter be considered as integral to the EU Fisheries Agreement with the Faroe Islands?

(¹) OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission

(4 June 2002)

For a long time the Commission has supported a definitive ban on commercial whaling (¹) and would take the opportunity to reiterate this position. It is however aware that this view is not fully shared by all concerned at international level.

The Community does not support any form of whaling, or trade in products obtained from that activity. It supported the moratorium recommended by the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

The Commission cannot comment on the position of the Danish Government. The question should be put to the Danish authorities.

The Commission is unable to take action on the matter, as the EC Treaty does not apply to the Faroe islands (²). Consequently, nature protection provisions based on the EC Treaty do not apply, notably the Habitats Directive (³) and the CITES Regulation (⁴).

The fisheries agreements between the EU and the Faroe islands do not concern whales.

(¹) Communication from the Commission to the Council concerning the conservation of whales within the framework of the International Whaling Commission, COM(92) 316 final.

(²) Documents concerning the accession to the European Communities of the Kingdom of Denmark, Ireland, the Kingdom of Norway and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, act concerning the conditions of accession and the adjustments to the Treaties, part 2: adjustments to the Treaties, Title II, other adjustments, Article 26, OJ L 73, 27.3.1972 EC Treaty, Article 299(6)(a).

(³) Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992.

(⁴) Council Regulation (EEC) No 3626/82 of 3 December 1982 on the implementation in the Community of the Convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 384, 31.12.1982.

(2002/C 301 E/071)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0910/02

by Gabriele Stauner (PPE-DE) and Paul Rübzig (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(5 April 2002)

Subject: Sapard financing for Poland

As reported by the Austrian daily Der Standard of 20 March 2002, Poland, as an accession applicant, is encountering serious difficulties with the financing of projects under the Sapard (Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development) pre-accession aid programme.

1. Can the Commission confirm that of the EUR 529 million made available under the Agenda 2000 financial perspective for Sapard since the beginning of 2000, not a single euro has as yet been paid out to Poland?
2. Can the Commission state how the difficulties with approving Sapard-supported projects in Poland originated?
3. It is true that the Polish Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation in Agriculture was involved in a corruption scandal and consequently was not recognised by Brussels as an official payments agency for Sapard financing in Poland?
4. If so, what figure can be placed on the losses to the Community budget from that corruption scandal?

Answer given by Mr Verheugen on behalf of the Commission

(14 May 2002)

1. The Commission can confirm that Poland has not yet (April 2002) received any Community funds for the Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (Sapard) because the preconditions have not yet been fulfilled in order to allow for the Commission Decision conferring management of the measures in the Programme to the Sapard Agency in Poland.

2. In order to fulfil the objectives of the Sapard instrument various tasks have to be accomplished in particular in the eligible candidate countries. A description of these tasks is set out in the Commission report on the Sapard instrument to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions⁽¹⁾. In addition to the information available in that report it should be noted that currently seven countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia) have received a Commission Decision conferring management of aid for Sapard. Good progress is being made in the other candidate countries and it is expected that the Commission will soon be able to take further Decisions conferring management of aid. Concerning Poland, the process is now at an advanced stage. However, until it is completed, no project selection can take place.

3. The Agency for the Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (ARMA) is a Government Agency under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture in Poland, that has been designated by the Government to also put in place the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), i.e., which Poland needs to have to be able to manage certain payments under the Common Agricultural Policy. While ARMA is the same agency that has been designated as the Sapard Agency, the functions of that Agency and IACS are separate. IACS is the system to manage payments from the Community budget to farmers after accession. Sapard is a pre-accession programme to help the countries to start restructuring their agriculture already before accession. These two systems are operationally and administratively separate.

ARMA received PHARE funding for the establishment of this IACS system since 1998. In September 2001, the Commission discovered a number of irregularities. As a consequence, all PHARE assistance for IACS was suspended by the Commission, pending further clarification from the Polish authorities, and the outcome of an audit. The Polish authorities also launched their own independent investigations.

4. The Commission has from the beginning undertaken the necessary steps to safeguard the PHARE funds involved in IACS. As a result, and due to the issuing of a recovery order (for EUR 2,8 million) no losses to the Community budget have been incurred. The Commission is now expecting further information from the Polish authorities on the results of their own investigations and on their plans on how they will take IACS forward.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2001) 341 final.