

The call for proposals No 63/01 <sup>(2)</sup> and the administrative procedures of the town twinning grant scheme correspond to the principles laid down by the Commission's vade-mecum for grant management and by its code of conduct for officials in their relation with the public, and respect the provisions of the article 41 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

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<sup>(1)</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education\\_culture/towntwin/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/towntwin/index_en.html).

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 283, 9.10.2001.

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(2002/C 205 E/274)

**WRITTEN QUESTION P-1011/02**

**by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission**

(5 April 2002)

*Subject:* Operation of the subsidised unit 'Typopoiitiria Thivas'

In its answer to my Question P-3402/01 <sup>(1)</sup> on the possible closure of 'Typopoiitiria Thivas' which has been subsidised under Regulations (EEC) 355/77 <sup>(2)</sup> and 866/90 <sup>(3)</sup>, the Commission expresses its interest in the operation of the unit and states that it wrote to the Greek authorities on 23 November 2001 requesting them to give explanations and take corrective measures to ensure that the unit can operate properly.

Will the Commission say whether it has received any reply to its letter of 23 November 2001 in which it called on the Greek authorities to solve the problem rapidly? Does it know whether any procedure has been set in motion to allow the unit to continue operating?

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<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 147 E, 20.6.2002.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 51, 23.2.1977, p. 1.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 91, 6.4.1990, p. 1.

**Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission**

(30 April 2002)

The Commission has not yet received an official reply from the Greek authorities and consequently has no written information on whether a procedure to enable 'Typopoiitiria Thivas' to continue operating has begun.

It has in the meantime received a complaint on the matter that it will deal with under the procedures in force. In any event it rests with the Greek courts to rule in the dispute referred to them.

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(2002/C 205 E/275)

**WRITTEN QUESTION P-1016/02**

**by Dirk Sterckx (ELDR) to the Commission**

(8 April 2002)

*Subject:* Application of the 'strawberry regulation' to France's obstruction of rail freight transport through the Channel Tunnel

Regulation (EC) No 2679/98 <sup>(1)</sup>, the so-called 'strawberry regulation', provides for a number of measures in response to serious obstacles to the free movement of goods in a Member State.

France has been obstructing the free movement of goods by rail through the Channel Tunnel for months now.

What measures has France taken to comply with its obligations under this regulation? Has France taken 'all necessary and proportionate measures' to put an end to this unacceptable obstruction of the free movement of goods? Bearing in mind the Commission's relatively adverse assessment of this regulation, does it not regard the regulation as inadequate, and would it not be appropriate to tighten up its provisions so that in future such situations as this one, which undermine the principle of the internal market, can be remedied more quickly?

(<sup>1</sup>) OJ L 337, 12.12.1998, p. 8.

### **Answer given by Mr Bolkestein on behalf of the Commission**

(2 May 2002)

Since November 2001, freight traffic between France and the United Kingdom, via the Channel Tunnel, has been regularly disrupted by the unlawful intrusion of large numbers of illegal immigrants at the site of the SNCF goods station at Fréthun.

The Commission has taken action by applying Council Regulation (EC) No 2679/98 of 7 December 1998 on the functioning of the internal market in relation to the free movement of goods among the Member States (<sup>1</sup>) on 19 November 2001, 5 December 2001 and 14 March 2002.

In their latest response dated 20 March 2002, the French authorities indicated that the work on security installations at the Fréthun site, such as erecting additional fences and raising existing fences to 260cm, has been completed. Work on extending the length of the fence to 6 km and installing external video cameras and detection devices is nearing completion. Other measures to strengthen the work already carried out are being examined. The French authorities have promised that completion of the work announced would mean that in June 2002 freight traffic through the tunnel would be back to its normal level prior to October 2001. In addition, as of 18 March 2002, the number of security staff at the SNCF's Fréthun site had been increased significantly to around 150 personnel.

In a letter of 26 March 2002 from Mr Bolkestein, the Member of the Commission responsible for the Internal Market, Taxation and Customs Union, to Mr Moscovici, the French Minister for European Affairs, the Commission took note of the range of measures announced and the commitments given by the French authorities, asked the latter to pay careful attention to observing these commitments and reminded them of their obligations to systematically provide information under the aforementioned Regulation No 2679/98. The Commission remains in close contact with the French authorities, the UK authorities and the operators concerned, and a meeting will be organised in the near future on this topic in order to identify all options which could lead to this issue being resolved as quickly as possible.

The Commission would stress that all the proposals and actions which it may put forward in order to resolve the basic long-term problems, as highlighted by the situation regarding the movement of goods through the Channel Tunnel, are already on the table. These relate mainly to European measures which seek to create a common framework in the field of immigration and asylum.

With regard to Regulation No 2679/98, the Commission would remind the Honourable Member that, in its report on the application of this Regulation (<sup>2</sup>), it had proposed that one of the avenues which could be explored would be to amend the Regulation in order to expand and improve its scope. In its resolution of 27 September 2001, the Council rejected this suggestion, preferring to maintain the status quo accompanied by a more vigorous approach to applying the Regulation.

(<sup>1</sup>) OJ L 337, 12.12.1998.

(<sup>2</sup>) COM(2001) 160 final of 22.3.2001.