

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(5 February 2003)

On 2 October 2002 the Commission approved planned aid of EUR 74,5 million for the firm Fibre Ottiche Sud in respect of a EUR 167,4 million investment project at Battipaglia, Campania, an assisted region in southern Italy. The project should create 311 direct jobs and 108 indirect jobs. The Commission took its decision under the rules laid down in the multisectoral framework on regional aid for large investment projects ⁽¹⁾.

The Commission's general objective in implementing the multisectoral framework is to limit aid for large-scale projects in such a way as to avoid as much as possible adverse effects on competition while at the same time maintaining the attraction of the assisted area. In the case under consideration, the maximum admissible aid intensity was 28 % net grant equivalent (corresponding to the investment's gross intensity (44,5 %), discounted and less taxes).

The Commission is not aware that Pirelli's investment constitutes a transfer of production from the United Kingdom to Italy. It should also be pointed out that the investment project involves the extension of an existing fibre optic plant.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 107, 7.4.1998.

(2003/C 280 E/025)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3782/02**by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL) to the Commission**

(6 January 2003)

Subject: Combination of parliamentary democracy with the right to decentralised decisions and diversity within a new institutional structure of the EU

1. Does the Commission agree that there is a need to defend, vis-à-vis the framework for a new administrative structure devised by the Convention on the Future of Europe which concentrates power in the combined national governments, Heads of Government and a President appointed from among them, a model of parliamentary democracy such as exists in the Member States with the usual distribution between preparation and implementation by a day-to-day administration together with a broad decision-making process on guidelines by means of a Parliament elected by all those eligible to vote?
2. Why, on 5 December 2002, in his justified attempt to defend parliamentary democracy against a regression into previous authoritarian administrative forms, did the President of the Commission give the impression that he was coupling such defence with further centralisation and harmonisation within the EU instead of the common resolution of our large-scale and cross-border environmental, human rights, transfrontier work, transport and tax haven problems?
3. Is the President aware that, by causing the impression referred to in question 2, he was making the less democratic alternative of a 'Europe of governments of states' unnecessarily attractive for those who, within the collectivity of Europe, are attached to the preservation of scope for decision-making at the lowest possible level and the right to diversity of the participating nations?
4. Apart from his personal preferences, does the President feel that a new institutional structure is possible in which parliamentary democracy, the protection of national parliaments and the right to diversity go hand-in-hand with decentralised decision-making on the basis of subsidiarity or a 'catalogue of competences' for the allocation of tasks between the EU and the Member States?

5. In its attempts to convince a majority of the Convention, is the Commission prepared to emphasise guarantees of a normal distribution of tasks between Parliament and day-to-day administration and not variants which sow discord among the probable majority which seeks to defend parliamentary democracy against an authoritarian administrative form based on opaque private agreements between national governments?

Answer given by Mr Prodi on behalf of the Commission

(13 March 2003)

In its communication to the European Convention on the institutional architecture of the Union⁽¹⁾, the Commission stressed its attachment to the 'Community method', which is based on a balance between the institutions in the different phases of the decision-making process, from conception to implementation of EU policies. It takes the view that the roles and responsibilities of each institution must be clarified without upsetting the current institutional balance.

On 5 December 2002, when the communication was presented to the European Convention, the President of the Commission reaffirmed the Commission's intention to 'consolidate a Union of peoples and of States that is the first true supranational democracy'.

The Commission considers that it is clear from its proposals to the Convention, both in the communication referred to above and in the communication it presented at the beginning of the Convention's deliberations⁽²⁾, that it in no way intends to increase the level of centralisation and harmonisation but, rather, that the essential challenge for the Union is to meet the public's concrete expectations while respecting the diversity of national, regional and local identities.

To this end, it will be necessary not only to make a clearer distinction than is currently the case between legislative and executive functions at Union level – and the role of each institution in these functions – but also to involve national parliaments more closely in managing European affairs.

⁽¹⁾ Communication of 4 December 2002, 'For the European Union: Peace, Freedom, Solidarity', COM(2002) 728 final.

⁽²⁾ Communication of 22 May 2002, 'A project for the European Union', COM(2002) 247 final.

(2003/C 280 E/026)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3784/02

by Diana Wallis (ELDR) to the Commission

(17 December 2002)

Subject: Infringement proceedings

On 13 November 2002, the European Commission took the decision to withdraw its application to the European Court of Justice for the imposition of a daily fine on France for failure to implement the Judgment of the Court (C-1/00) of 13 December 2001 ordering France to lift the British beef embargo.

In the light of this and other cases, the Commission stated that it will re-examine its approach to the application of Article 228 of the EC Treaty.

Does the Commission agree that the present possibilities available to it to pursue compliance with EU legislation by a Member State are insufficient to have a deterrent effect on Member States, and therefore need to be reinforced in some way?

Is the Commission intending to bring forward proposals in this respect, bearing in mind the increasing gap in implementation shown in the recent Internal Market scoreboard report?

Does the Commission agree that lump sum or daily penalty payments (Article 228(2)) can be avoided by Member States exploiting the legal process, and that this sends the wrong message to Europe's citizens?