

Strategy, and there are many other channels by which the respective European institutions as well as external actors and stakeholders can bring their own ideas and contributions to the process. This includes specific and sectoral social partner organisations, other players in the economic and social fabric of Europe, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), who all have a key role to play in the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy.

The Commission has indeed stressed the significant contribution of all socio-economic players in the successful implementation of the Lisbon strategy and attainment of the targets for economic and social reform, and fully recognises the role of the Chambers in the management of change represented by EuroChambres, and the importance of the commerce and retail sector, represented by EuroCommerce.

Participation in the Summit has been necessarily restricted firstly for the practical reason of its efficiency, in order to ensure that the forum operates effectively as a mechanism for tripartite concertation. Secondly, because discussions at the Tripartite Social Summit are of an interprofessional nature, it follows that it would be inappropriate to invite the participation of selected sectoral and specific organisations. EuroChambres is listed in the organisations consulted under the provisions of Article 138 as a 'specific organisation' and EuroCommerce as a 'sectorial organisation'. As a result, the positions of these organisations are taken into account through their participation in other European-level fora, in particular, in the case of EuroCommerce, the relevant sectorial social dialogue committee. Moreover, the proposal for a decision now contains a specific reference to the fact that the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE), as the spokespersons for the employees and employers representatives respectively, must ensure that their contributions take into account the opinions of specific and sectorial organisations. This underlines the fact that the challenges of the Lisbon Strategy are not expected to be met solely by the Val Duchesse partners, but by all socio-economic partners, including EuroChambres and EuroCommerce.

(¹) COM(2002) 341 final.

(2003/C 161 E/217)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0312/03

by Ioannis Marínos (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(10 February 2003)

Subject: Delay by Greece in transposing directives

According to data from the 'Internal Market Scoreboard' (November 2002 issue, number 11), the Commission publication, there are significant delays in some countries in the European Union in the transposition of directives on the EU's internal market, while in some of these Member States the rate of transposition has slowed further in recent years.

On page 1 of the publication, the Commission states that the transposition deficit at EU level dropped from 21,4% in 1992 to 2,1% in November 2002, but that the deficit of three Member States (France, Portugal and Greece) is more than double the European Council's target (i.e. that by spring 2003 the deficit should not exceed 1,5%). The report's figure 4 shows that Greece must transpose 86 directives in total by next spring if it wishes to eliminate the current transposition deficit.

What will be the consequences for the countries which do not manage to achieve the target of 1,5% by spring 2003? What justifications have been put forward by the authorities of the countries which are lagging behind? Has the cost to undertakings in the EU of the delay in transposing directives relating to the EU internal market been calculated? Are there, perhaps, plans to refer to the Court of the European Communities, during the course of 2003, those countries which are delaying in transposing the above directives? Which countries are involved and which directives or sectors are affected?

Answer given by M. Bolkestein on behalf of the Commission*(17 March 2003)*

The Honourable Member is right in expressing concern about Member States failing to implement Internal Market Directives on time. Last November 2002, disappointingly, only five Member States (Denmark, The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, United Kingdom) met the European Council's target of having a transposition deficit of 1,5 % or less. Greece, France and Portugal had transposition deficits at least double that of the European Council's target. The Internal Market Scoreboard will, of course, continue to report on Member States' performance. The next edition will be issued in May 2003.

The Commission launches infringement procedures under Article 226 of the EC Treaty every time a Member State misses a transposition deadline. When cases are not resolved, they are referred to the European Court of Justice. While the threat of legal action is, of course, critical to ensuring compliance, the Commission also seeks to generate peer pressure to get Member States to speed up matters. The 'name and shame' approach pursued by the Internal Market Scoreboard has been effective in helping to improve the transposition performance of Member States, as witnessed by the fact that the average transposition deficit has been reduced from 21,4 % a decade ago to close to 2 % at present. The Commission has also begun to organise so-called 'package' meetings with Member States with a view to preventing problems as well as discussing ways of ensuring high-quality transpositions. The Commission is confident that such meetings not only contribute to speedier transposition, but also to fewer cases of incorrect transposition.

The reasons for non- or late transposition are not always clear, but can vary from case to case. From information available to the Commission, it seems that in most cases delays stem from inadequate planning and lack of co-ordination within national administrations. Administrations often start the national transposition process too late. In the case of longer delays, the reasons often go deeper in that it may be a symptom of serious political difficulties or even unwillingness to transpose.

The Commission is not in a position to quantify the costs of non-transposition to business other than on the basis of anecdotal evidence in individual cases. However, it is clear that these costs can be considerable. Following a recent request from the Parliament (the Harbour Report on the 2002 Internal Market Strategy Review adopted on 13 February 2003) the Commission will examine this question again. However, it should be noted that the measures which represent the deficit for each Member State change constantly, as outstanding directives are transposed and deadlines on new directives are missed. Furthermore, non-transposition creates legal insecurity whose impact on the behaviour of businesses and citizens is always difficult to estimate. Both aspects pose considerable challenges to the possibility of quantifying the costs of non-transposition.

(2003/C 161 E/218)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0326/03**by Maurizio Turco (NI) to the Commission***(5 February 2003)*

Subject: Small grants from Community funds, managed directly by the Commission, for a great variety of religious organisations

In the answer to Question E-0291/01 ⁽¹⁾, it was stated that 'a great variety of religious organisations ... may be eligible for small grants from Community funds, managed directly by the Commission. These are of two types: firstly there are subsidies to help cover the running costs of coordination and representation activities, at European level, of not-for-profit organisations; and secondly there are specific grants for individual projects.'

Will the Commission provide details of the amounts and the names of the organisations which received such small grants in the period 2000-2002 for the coordination and representation activities at European level of not-for-profit organisations and for individual projects?

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 261 E, 18.9.2001, p. 78.