

The condition assessment system (CAS) introduced under Regulation (EC) No 417/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 February 2002 on the accelerated phasing-in of double hull or equivalent design requirements for single hull oil tankers and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 2978/94⁽¹⁾ is an additional reinforced inspection scheme, specifically developed to detect structural weaknesses in single-hull oil tankers over 20 000 tonnes which have not yet attained their age limit. It is carried out every two and a half years by the flag State and by classification societies acting on its behalf.

Following the wreck of the Prestige, the Commission drew up a proposal for an amendment to Regulation (EC) No 417/2002 (see the Communication of 20 December 2002)⁽²⁾ on the accelerated phasing-in of double hull or equivalent design requirements for single hull oil tankers, and reinforcing the inspection procedures. Accordingly, from 2005, the Commission proposes the extension of that measure to single-hull oil tankers of all categories still in use, including those below 20 000 tonnes, once they have attained the age of 15 years. Political agreement was reached on the proposal at the Transport Council on 27 March 2003.

In order to apply these measures beyond the Member States, the Commission plans to coordinate action against flags of convenience by improving the supervision of maritime administrations and recognised bodies which check the structural integrity of ships. The first steps were taken to create an audit procedure at the Tokyo ministerial conference in January 2002 and the idea was supported by the Commission in its White Paper on 'European transport policy for 2010: time to decide'⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 64, 7.3.2002.

⁽²⁾ COM(2002) 780 final.

⁽³⁾ COM(2001) 370 final.

(2003/C 242 E/150)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0543/03

by Elisabeth Schroedter (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(26 February 2003)

Subject: Bridge linking the island of Rügen with the mainland

Working on behalf of the Federal German Government, DEGES is planning to link the island of Rügen to the mainland by means of a bridge incorporating pylons built to a height of 126 metres. The project will damage the unspoilt landscape of the island and neighbouring mainland areas. Rügen's uniqueness and its rich plant and animal life have for generations offered a guarantee of high-quality tourism and income for the island's inhabitants. Half of the funding for the project is to be provided from the ERDF, even though there is clearly no need for a new bridge. The number of people using the existing link fell substantially between 1992 and 2000.

1. (a) Is the Commission aware that there is no need for the project referred to above, since the capacity of the existing bridge is generally sufficient, with the risk of traffic congestion confined to a small number of days at the beginning and end of the holidays?
- (b) Is the Commission aware that the parallel rail link offers substantial unused capacity which has not been properly taken into account thus far?
2. (a) How does the Commission assess the financing arrangements for the bridge, which provide for the repayment of loans from toll proceeds?
- (b) Is the Commission aware that this toll can be avoided, since the existing link will remain toll-free in the interests of the local population?
3. What view does the Commission take of the fact that the bridge will stand right in the middle of a route linking two European protection areas (DE 1543-401, DE 1747-401) for migratory birds and seabirds under the bird protection directive, 79/409/EEC?
4. (a) Despite the facts outlined above, does the Commission take the view that the project should be funded using ERDF resources?
- (b) If so, on what grounds?

Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(9 April 2003)

The Commission is aware of plans of the government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to build a new bridge across the Ziegelgraben and Strelasund — to the west of the existing road-rail drawbridge. The new bridge is designed as a suspension bridge, held by two pylons, designed to allow ships to pass underneath. It is intended as a toll bridge. The planning and financing of the bridge, which was subject to a public tender procedure, is the responsibility of the German federal and state authorities, not of the Commission.

Regarding the possible effects of the bridge on bird life in the area as mentioned by the Honourable Member, the Commission is currently investigating this issue. Based on the available information, the Commission has taken action to ensure that the Federal Republic of Germany fulfils its obligations under Article 6 (3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora⁽¹⁾ with regard to the possible effects of the planned bridge. As a result, the German authorities are conducting an additional assessment of the possible effects of the bridge on the movements of birds.

The German authorities have not requested support for the project from the Union under the Structural Funds.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992.

(2003/C 242 E/151)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0545/03**by Konstantinos Hatzidakis (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(26 February 2003)

Subject: Compensation for fire damage in Pilion in 2000

In July 2000, the area of Pilion in Greece suffered major damage to olive trees in the areas of Xynovrisi, Argalasti and Siki situated in the municipality of Argalasti and Afetai, destroying the property and, in many cases, the sole livelihood of hundreds of inhabitants. Initially, the Greek Government announced payment of damages in the order of GRD 16 000 per olive tree. Those affected initially received an advance payment of GRD 5 000 per olive tree and the ministry responsible announced that the remaining amount would be paid following Commission authorisation.

When was the relevant file submitted to the Commission informing it of the extent of the damage?

Was the Greek Government seeking Commission authorisation to meet the damages from national funds (in ELGA — Farmers Insurance Organisation), or was it seeking Community funding under the CSF Operational Programme for Agricultural Development?

What stage has now been reached by the proceedings?

If the request by the Greek Government has not yet been approved by the Commission, to what can this delay be attributed?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(26 March 2003)

The scheme for compensating Greek farmers who suffered losses caused by the fires in 2000 was notified to the Commission by letter of 7 December 2000, received on 11 December.