

(2003/C 268 E/118)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0670/03**by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission**

(7 March 2003)

Subject: Tolls on the Attica motorway

The tolls fixed by the company contracted to build and operate the Attica motorway into Athens have met with a justified public outcry from road-users who will have to pay a high, flat-rate amount irrespective of the length of their journey. Setting the tolls in this manner effectively bars residents from using the motorway for local journeys.

The agreement signed between the Greek Government and the contracting consortium states (Article 50.1.3) that it is open to the contractor 'to raise or lower the tolls according to the category of vehicle at the various toll booths along the motorway', while Directive 93/89/EEC⁽¹⁾ defines tolls as 'payment of a specified amount for a vehicle travelling the distance between two points on the infrastructure' and states that 'the amount shall be based on the distance travelled and on the category of the vehicle.' Will the Commission, therefore, make representations to the Greek authorities and the contractor to persuade them to use a cheaper and more flexible system of toll pricing in order to fulfil the purpose of the Attica motorway — a project jointly funded by the EU — which is to serve the needs of road-users?

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 279, 12.11.1993, p. 32.

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(10 April 2003)

Directive 1999/62/EC⁽¹⁾ is the Community legal instrument for the levying of taxes, tolls and user charges on lorries above 12 tonnes. It is to be underlined that Member States levying tolls on vehicles below 12 tonnes do not have to comply with the provisions contained in Directive 1999/62/EC as such tolls fall outside its scope.

Within the scope of the Directive that has replaced Council Directive 93/89/EEC of 25 October 1993 on the application by Member States of taxes on certain vehicles used for the carriage of goods by road and tolls and charges for the use of certain infrastructures, the principles of tolls have not changed. As the Honourable Member has pointed out they are defined as 'payment of a specified amount for a vehicle travelling the distance between two points on the infrastructure' where 'the amount shall be based on the distance travelled and on the type of the vehicle'. Therefore, it is clear that a flat rate irrespective of the distance travelled raises some issues from the point of view of Community legislation that need to be addressed.

The Commission will contact the Greek Authorities in order to clarify this point.

⁽¹⁾ Directive 1999/62/EC of the Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 1999 on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructure, OJ L 187, 20.7.1999.

(2003/C 268 E/119)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0671/03**by Caroline Lucas (Verts/ALE) to the Commission**

(7 March 2003)

Subject: Chemical testing

In its resolution on the White Paper: Strategy for a future Chemicals Policy⁽¹⁾, the European Parliament called for 'more resources to be provided immediately to accelerate the development and validation of further scientifically reliable, recognised and standardised alternative tests to replace animal tests in the

implementation of the new system'. However, funding provision for development and validation of new tests frequently lacks transparency, especially with respect to Member State contributions.

Could the Commission give details of current funding allocations for both development and validation of new non-animal tests from the following sources: (1) The Sixth Framework Programme for Research, (2) the Joint Research Centre (ECVAM budget), and (3) Member State contributions?

The UK Government claims that it contributes to the development and validation of alternatives through the EU, but does not make clear how much is contributed or how funds are allocated. Could the Commissioner quantify Member State contributions to EC funding of alternatives research over the past year, giving exact figures for each Member State contribution? Most specifically, how much money has been contributed to the Commission for the funding of development and validation of new non-animal tests by the UK over the past year?

(¹) OJ C 140 E, 13.6.2002, p. 552.

Answer given by Mr Busquin on behalf of the Commission

(22 April 2003)

The development of alternative methods will be funded in the 'Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) of the Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities, contributing to the creation of the European Research Area and to innovation (2002 to 2006)'. Two specific parts of the Framework Programme will support the development of novel alternative, non-animal testing methods: Development of new in-vitro tests to replace animal experimentation (Thematic Priority 1 – Life Sciences, Genomics and Biotechnology for Health) (¹), and Development of alternative in vitro testing methods and strategies for chemical substances (Specific activities covering a wider field of research – Policy support and anticipating scientific and technological needs) (²), the deadlines for submissions are of 25 and 12 March 2003, respectively. Financial participation by the Community will be granted in compliance with the principle of co-financing, with the exception of financing for studies, conferences and public tenders. This means that part of project costs shall be borne by the contractors themselves (Decision No 1513/2002/EC of the Parliament and of the Council concerning the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities, contributing to the creation of the European Research Area and to innovation (2002 to 2006) (³), Annex II, point 2). So far, no projects have been selected and first figures on actual project funding will not be available before the end of 2003.

Within Thematic Priority 1, the indicative budget allocated to all scientific areas of the 'Advanced Genomics and its applications for Health' for the duration of the Framework Programme is EUR 1 100 million, which includes the development of alternatives to animal experimentation and testing. Similarly, the indicative budget allocated to all the topics covered by the 'Policy support and anticipating scientific and technological needs', including the one on alternatives in support of the chemicals policy is EUR 555 million for the duration of FP6.

The increased availability of alternative methods involves first new methods to be developed and then these methods to be validated. Primary responsibility for method development lies with the cosmetics and chemical industries. The Joint Research Centre's (JRC) role, through the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM), is in the validation of the new methods thus produced.

The financial resources available for ECVAM within the Multi-Annual Work Programme of the JRC for the period 2003-2006 are increased to EUR 35,2 millions. This budget is not currently considered to be a limiting factor in the validation of alternative methods. However, should the situation change, the

necessary flexibility to address the variable needs for scientific and technical support to Community policy development and implementation is built into the JRC resource allocation as the actual JRC work programme budget is reviewed annually in close collaboration with our user Directorates General of the Commission.

Member State contributions to the Community budget are not broken down and attributed to specific areas of expenditure, such as those mentioned in the question. It is, therefore, not possible to answer to this specific question.

(¹) more information is available from the following <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/lifescihealth.htm>.

(²) more information is available from the following <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/support.htm>.

(³) OJ L 232, 29.8.2002.

(2003/C 268 E/120)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0688/03

by Joan Vallvé (ELDR) to the Commission

(7 March 2003)

Subject: Phytosanitary measures to detect Mexican fruit fly and Oriental fruit fly

Healthy quality of agricultural products is a precondition for viable trade, and the presence of pests and disease is one of the major limiting factors on the sector's productivity. Certain species of fruit fly represent a serious problem for farmers, both in terms of the direct damage they inflict and the quarantine measures they entail.

The Mexican fruit fly (*Anastrepha ludens* Loew), which attacks oranges, mandarins, grapefruit and the like, is a good example; it lays its eggs under the outer skin of ripe or nearly ripe fruit, and once the larvae hatch, they feed on the pulp, tunnelling through it and causing the fruit to fall to the ground, and encouraging the proliferation of bacterial and fungal infections.

The Oriental fruit fly (*Bactrocera dorsalis* Hendel) deposits eggs in the tissue of the host fruit, where the larvae grow until fully developed, when they leave the fruit and bury themselves in the soil at a depth of 1 to 5 centimetres, followed by pupation and the emergence of the adult insect. *B. dorsalis* is propagated by flying adults, the wind and movements of infected host fruit by human agency. *B. dorsalis*'s hosts include over 175 species. Over 100 types of fruit and vegetable are attacked by this pest, with some of the most common and popular hosts being Citrus spp., Prunus spp., apples, guavas, mangoes, bananas, coffee beans and papayas. Other hosts include Annona spp., pineapple, white sapote, star apples, figs, strawberries, passion fruit, avocados and others. *B. dorsalis* is one of the world's most destructive soft fruit pests.

Given the serious consequences should one of these pests enter the EU, does the Commission intend to step up phytosanitary measures on produce entering European ports, with a view to detecting Oriental fruit fly (*Bactrocera dorsalis*) and Mexican fruit fly (*Anastrepha ludens*) in citrus products from the USA, particularly California, so as to prevent them entering the EU and devastating Spanish citrus fruit production?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(15 April 2003)

The Commission is aware of developments as regards the two non-European fruit flies *Anastrepha ludens* (Loew) and *Bactrocera* (*Dacus*) *dorsalis* Hendel in the United States, in particular in certain citrus producing areas in California.