

(2003/C 242 E/176)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0737/03****by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL) to the Commission***(11 March 2003)*

*Subject:* Serious delay in the building of new railway infrastructure for cross-border high-speed services

1. Can the Commission confirm that the Spanish high-speed railway line between Madrid and Barcelona, which is due to be completed in 2004, is being extended with a view to opening a new cross-border rail link in 2006 through the Pertuis tunnel between Figueras in Spain and Perpignan in France but that there is still no work is being done on the missing link between Perpignan and R dessaan to the south-east of N mes, the Western terminus of the French LGV LN5 Mediterranean high-speed train since 2001, while a small extension of the LGV LN5 via a southern loop around N mes to Montpellier is being built to relieve the congested coastal line, but will probably not come into operation before 2008?
2. Is there a risk that we may see a long-term situation in Spain comparable to the missing connection in the United Kingdom between the Channel Tunnel and London since 1995, as a result of which Spain cannot be linked to a European network for the time being? Do the reasons lie in an internal dispute in France between financial priorities for the extensions to Bordeaux or Perpignan? To what extent is public interest a factor after the storms in France in spring 2002, given the criticisms of the construction of new railway embankments and structures preventing the flow of excess water to the sea?
3. To what extent is it because the construction of new long-distance lines benefits users other than passengers on the finely-meshed regional rail networks where cuts are being made? Does the Commission try to make a distinction between the costs of high-speed railway lines and conventional lines so that there is no reason to fear that high-speed network will be at the expense of facilities for the vast majority of train passengers?
4. How is the Commission trying to ensure that the construction of new high-speed railway lines does not give rise to problems similar to those that occurred when the first railways were built in the 19th century when domestic interests and disputes prevented the construction of integrated cross-border networks?

**Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission***(23 April 2003)*

The Commission can confirm that it is aware of the expected delays in putting the Montpellier-Spanish border section of the TGV-South high-speed railway line into service. Nevertheless, the timetable is not incompatible with trans-European transport network programming, which stipulates that the projects of common interest must be completed by 2010. The recent audit of major transport infrastructure carried out at the behest of the French Transport Minister did however stress the urgent need to complete the entire line within a reasonable time period.

The audit also confirmed the priority given to the construction of the Mediterranean branch of the TGV-South line, which receives considerable financial support from the European Community as a result, particularly in respect of the international section. As for the technical details given by the Honourable Member, the Commission is not aware of any criticism of the construction decisions for works on this line.

The Commission takes a great interest in every aspect of the development of the rail network. Accordingly, a significant amount of Community funding is contributed from the various financial instruments available (ERDF, Cohesion Fund) and the TEN budget towards not only constructing new lines but also improving the conventional network and overcoming bottlenecks at the network's main rail nodes. The Community initiative Interreg IIIB (particularly its South West Europe and Western Mediterranean programmes) may also be used to cofinance cross-border cooperation to assist regional planning, including in the rail transport sector. Such cofinancing helps to improve the operation of the network as a whole, benefiting all passenger and freight transport.

Title XV of the EC Treaty, particularly Articles 154 and 155, defines the Community's sphere of jurisdiction in terms of setting up and developing the trans-European transport infrastructure network, as implemented through Decision No 1692/96/EC<sup>(1)</sup>, which lays down Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, its characteristics and scope as well as broad guidelines. In order to promote the deployment of these networks, the Commission has also proposed increasing the maximum level of Community cofinancing for construction works to 20% of the total investment cost (instead of the 10% set by the current Financial Regulation) for cross-border railway projects crossing natural barriers<sup>(2)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> Decision No 1692/96/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 1996 on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network — OJ L 228, 9.9.1996.

<sup>(2)</sup> COM(2003) 38 final.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0741/03**

**by Roberta Angelilli (UEN) to the Commission**

(11 March 2003)

*Subject:* Counterfeiting of Italian tinned tomatoes

In February 2003, following an investigation carried out by Coldiretti (Europe's largest farmers' organisation), it was revealed that 82 000 out of the 396 000 tonnes of tinned tomatoes produced in Italy in 2002 were imported from China. If this is true it would mean that some Italian tinned products contain tomato concentrate from China. It is obvious, therefore, that some processing companies place on the Italian market tinned goods which contain a mixture of Italian and Chinese produce — although this is not clearly specified on the label. This constitutes food counterfeiting, since labels carry no indication whatsoever concerning the origin of the raw materials; they merely state the place in which the raw materials were processed and the product itself was manufactured — and opportunistically bear an image of a traditional Italian tomato-growing area. All of this creates enormous confusion amongst Italian purchasers/consumers, who enjoy no protection whatsoever at the time of purchase and are not properly informed regarding product origin.

The consequence of this for the Italian processing industry, which uses only products of Italian origin and which is subject to customs duties, is a huge loss of profit (Italy being the world's second largest tomato producer after the USA) and distorted competition.

Will the Commission say:

1. whether or not this state of affairs infringes Articles 30 and 135 of the EC Treaty on consumer protection and Articles 85 and 86 of the EC Treaty on competition;
2. whether or not this state of affairs contravenes Directive 2000/13/EC<sup>(1)</sup> (in particular recitals 6 and 8 and Articles 2, 3, 5 and 7) on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs;
3. whether or not this state of affairs contravenes Regulation (EC) No 178/2002<sup>(2)</sup> (in particular recitals 1, 2, 8, 10 and 22 and Articles 1(1), 5(1), 7(1), 8, 11, 16, 17 and 18 on the general principles and requirements of food legislation);
4. what action it intends to take in order to put a stop to the repeated infringements of EU law?

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 109, 6.5.2000, p. 29.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 31, 1.2.2002, p. 1.