

So far, no DVT related cases in the rail, car and coach transport sector have been brought to the attention of the Commission administration and, as a consequence, no initiative on this matter has been taken to date. If the Commission were to learn about such cases, it would immediately consider how to make sure that non air passengers were adequately informed of the possible risks.

(2003/C 268 E/175)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0923/03

by Florence Kuntz (EDD) to the Commission

(18 March 2003)

Subject: Doubts concerning the Lyon-Turin link

A transport infrastructure audit carried out at the request of the French Government has raised doubts concerning the Lyon-Turin rail link

Given that all the evidence points to the crucial importance of this link for ensuring a free flow of trade between the north and south of Europe and the existing Alpine crossings are overcrowded and vulnerable, this poses a serious threat to the economic development of several regions. A further aim of the project is to reduce the environmental impact of the traffic on this route by switching it from road to rail.

The Community budget is to support this project by financing 50 % of the advance studies and, probably, 20 % of its construction costs out of a total budget of EUR 13 billion.

Will the Commission confirm that it supports this project and will contribute to its funding and will it give details of the scale of its contribution?

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(10 April 2003)

The Commission has clearly expressed on many occasions, and in particular in its White Paper 'Transport policy for 2010: time to decide' ⁽¹⁾ its desire for the completion of this priority project as soon as possible. It is an essential element in the development of the trans-European transport network and will contribute to rebalancing the transport flows crossing the Alps for the benefit of the railways. Its importance is all the more strengthened by the imminent enlargement to the East. The Commission's interest in it has been materialised by support for studies launched on the national sections and on the international part making up the project.

Over the period 1992-2000, the support granted to the project through the budget for the trans-European transport network broke down as follows ⁽²⁾:

- EUR 42 million were granted for the funding of technical studies relating to the international section, or around 45 % of the actual costs, making the Community the main financier for this section of the project;
- EUR 16,5 million were earmarked for studies for the Lyon-Montmélián section;
- EUR 27,5 million went to studies and work relating to access lines in the Italian side and the Turin node and the future freight ring.

Over the period 2001-2006, the Commission, as part of the Indicative Multiannual Programme (IMP), has programmed the following amounts from the budget for the trans-European transport network:

- EUR 100 million for the completion of the programme of studies relating to the international section out of a total of EUR 371 million;

- an additional EUR 12 million for studies and works on the Lyon-Montméria section;
- EUR 29 million for studies and works concerning the Turin node and the future freight ring.

The Community support is therefore substantial, in particular for the study phase⁽¹⁾. Taking into account the complexity and the cost of completing the Lyon-Turin project, the Commission has also proposed to raise the maximum Community co-financing rate for works to 20% (compared with 10% under the current Regulation) for trans-frontier rail projects crossing natural barriers. The amended proposal⁽²⁾, on which Parliament gave its opinion on first reading in July 2002 is still on the Council table, and it is impossible to anticipate when the 20% rate will become effective.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2001) 370 final.

⁽²⁾ Figures rounded off.

⁽³⁾ The overall budget provided for in Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No 1655/1999 of 19 July 1999 amending Regulation (EC) No 2236/95 laying down general rules for the granting of Community financial aid in the field of trans-European networks, OJ L 197, 29.7.1999, amounts to EUR 4 170 million for the TEN-T for the period 2000-2006.

⁽⁴⁾ COM(2003) 38 final.

(2003/C 268 E/176)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0924/03

by Jorge Moreira Da Silva (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(18 March 2003)

Subject: Funding the Natura 2000 network

The Natura 2000 network is a basic instrument of national and European nature conservation policies. Although the list of Natura 2000 sites is not complete, it already counts for 18% of the territory of the Union. 22% of Portuguese territory is covered and adequate financial arrangements are required to guarantee the protection of the sites included in the Natura 2000 network. Furthermore, in order to meet the objectives established by the Gothenburg Strategy and the Johannesburg Implementation Plan, a Natura 2000 network needs to be extended to cover the marine environment.

1. When will the new rules for funding Natura 2000 be submitted? What is the total amount earmarked for it?
2. How does the Commission intend to extend the Natura 2000 network to the marine environment?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission

(14 April 2003)

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora⁽¹⁾ includes, in Article 8, a provision for Community co-financing of the management of Natura 2000, within the framework of the existing financial instruments. A preliminary assessment of the financial needs and of the possible options for Community co-financing was prepared in 2002 by a working group composed of experts from several Member States, including Portugal. The final report of the working group is available on the Internet, and indicates three possible ways to proceed.

The Commission is presently analysing the above-mentioned report of the working group and will present a Communication to the Council and the Parliament in September 2003 on possibilities to finance the Natura 2000-network.

Concerning the marine environment, the Commission is aware that the implementation of the relevant provisions of Directive 92/43/EEC for the protection of marine species as well as the establishment of the Natura 2000 network in the marine environment is making slow progress. The delays are mostly linked to