

for a directive makes no reference to a ban on the sale of bull bars by dealers in spare parts for cars. New 4x4s with bull bars are therefore still being seen on Belgian roads.

Does the Commission agree that bull bars are dangerous accessories which increase the likelihood of collisions involving vulnerable road users being fatal?

What research data does the Commission have on the consequences of collisions between cars fitted with bull bars and vulnerable road users?

Does the Commission intend to take steps to completely ban bull bars? If so, when? If not, why not?

<sup>(1)</sup> COM(2003) 67 final.

### **Answer given by Mr Liikanen on behalf of the Commission**

*(7 May 2003)*

The Commission is aware that frontal protection systems, such as bull bars, mounted on vehicles constitute an increased risk of injury to pedestrians and other road users in the event of a collision.

In June 2001, the European automobile manufacturers represented by the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA) committed themselves to introduce a range of safety measures to improve pedestrian protection. Similar commitments were subsequently made by the Japanese and Korean automobile manufacturers (represented by JAMA and KAMA, respectively) in July 2001 and March 2002 respectively. The commitments include an agreement not to install so-called 'rigid bull bars' as original equipment on new motor vehicles, nor to sell them as spare parts, as of 1 January 2002. Rigid bull bars are defined in the commitments as a frontal protection system made of steel or any other metal or material presenting similar behavioral characteristics.

However, before taking a decision on whether to accept the commitments by the industry, the Commission decided to consult the Parliament and the Council. The Council, in its Conclusions of 26 November 2001, stated the view that the use of rigid bull bars should be banned for passenger vehicles carrying up to eight passengers and for vehicles designed for the carriage of goods up to 3,5 tonnes and that the Commission should propose a means to do so. The Parliament, in its Resolution of 13 June 2002 also invited the Commission to propose legislation providing for a ban of bull bars on the after-market.

As a result, the Commission is preparing the submission of a legislative proposal aimed at reducing the severity of injuries caused to pedestrians and other vulnerable road users when in collision with vehicles fitted with frontal protection systems. This proposal will contain test procedures for all bull-bars and similar devices placed on the market either as original or after-market equipment. In this regard the Commission has taken into consideration a report<sup>(1)</sup> made by the Transport Research Laboratory in the United Kingdom which provides a good assessment on potential approaches to the testing procedures required for bull bars.

<sup>(1)</sup> 'Assessment and test procedures for bull bars', G. Lawrence, C. Rodmell and A. Osbourne. TRL Report 460.

(2003/C 280 E/159)

### **WRITTEN QUESTION E-1415/03**

**by Joan Vallvé (ELDR) to the Commission**

*(23 April 2003)*

*Subject:* Closure of the newspaper 'Egunkaria'

On 20 February this year the newspaper 'Euskaldunon Egunkaria' was closed down in an operation ordered by the judge of the Spanish National Court Juan del Olmo. The Civil Police Force arrested 10 people responsible for the newspaper, among them its director, Martxelo Otamendi, because of his presumed entanglement with ETA. At present, three of them are still in prison.

On 10 March the same judge of the National Court decided to close temporarily for six months the trading companies Egunkaria Sortzen SL and Egunkaria SA and the daily newspaper Euskaldunon Egunkaria, and its premises, headquarters and establishments, and to suspend its activities for the same period. The magistrate justified his decision arguing that 'the whole framework or project is supposedly managed and generated by ETA and responds to a terrorist strategy'. The charge that the newspaper is part of the project and of the economic and cultural framework of the etarra cupola is based on documents that had been seized from terrorists during 1992 (date of foundation of the newspaper).

Egunkaria was the only newspaper published completely in Euskera. The legal and political decision to close it can entail a breach of freedom of expression if there is no specific evidence. Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU on freedom of expression and information reads as follows: 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. 2. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected.

On 26 March the 'Association of minority daily newspapers in Europe', which includes 32 newspapers, gathered in Brussels. The Spanish authorities banned the director of Egunkaria, Martxelo Otamendi, from attending.

Only two years ago the EU held the European Year of Languages, of all languages, with the aim of promoting linguistic diversity. Today, in view of this situation, we regret that a minority language such as Euskera is suffering an additional problem and is encountering difficulties with expressing its identity after the closure of the only newspaper published completely in this language at that moment. I would like to point out the special importance that having a newspaper in your own mother tongue has for this type of minority communities.

In view of this situation I would like to know: has the European Commission so far asked the pertinent Spanish authorities for explanations, or is it planning to do so in the near future, in order to make sure that no fundamental right is being violated and that this action has not been contrary to the EU policy of promotion and respect for linguistic diversity in the Member States?

**Answer given by Mr Vitorino on behalf of the Commission**

*(4 June 2003)*

The Commission would refer the Honourable Member to its joint answer to Written Questions E-0641/03 and E-0672/03 by Mr Ebner and others <sup>(1)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> See page 75.

(2003/C 280 E/160)

**WRITTEN QUESTION P-1424/03**

**by Bert Doorn (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

*(15 April 2003)*

*Subject:* Reserve funds for European inland waterway transport

Reserve funds have been set up in recent years in the European inland waterway transport sector with the aim of providing a cushion in the event of crises affecting the sector. The funds are financed by contributions from the inland waterway transport sectors in the current EU Member States.

Following the forthcoming enlargement, the inland waterway transport sectors in the new Member States would also be able to benefit from the reserve funds, despite having to date made no contribution to the establishment of the funds.

Will the inland waterway transport sectors in the new Member States have access to these reserve funds following the forthcoming enlargement?