

a whole many women have gone back to work outside their homes. A very positive step was the ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women on 5 March 2003.

However, the Council agrees with the Honourable MEP that the situation of women remains unacceptable regarding education and work possibilities, legal protection and their full and equal participation in public life. In addition, women are the primary victims of insecurity, which threatens their lives and their dignity. A lot of work remains to be done, subject to the allocation of sufficient resources.

5. For details on specific gender-oriented programmes, the Honourable MEP might wish to apply to the Commission and the relevant ministries of the Member States.

(2004/C 84 E/0029)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2482/03

by Daniel Varela Suanzes-Carpegna (PPE-DE) to the Council

(24 July 2003)

Subject: Prevention against the risk of forest fires: Regulation (EEC) No 2158/92

Regulation (EEC) No 2158/92⁽¹⁾, which made provision for the funding of measures to prevent against the risk of forest fires, expired on 31 December 2002. The fact that Regulation (EEC) No 2158/92 acted as an incentive for regional and national fire prevention policies has been amply demonstrated over the past 10 years. During that period, the average area of forest damaged by each fire fell in the south of France, Spain and Portugal. Nevertheless, the fresh Commission proposal for a regulation (Forest Focus) and the new rural development regulation represent a renationalisation of policy on forest fires which entails the disappearance of a Community financial arrangement for prevention against the risks of forest fires such as that provided for in Regulation (EEC) No 2158/92. At the same time, this proposal does not accord with the arguments brought by the Court of Justice of the European Communities to the effect that policy on protection against forest fires is to be seen as a Community policy within the framework of environment policy which is to be financed by funds drawn from the EU budget.

The Council:

1. Is it aware that the proposal for a Forest Focus regulation does not tally with the recent case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Communities, which opposes the renationalisation of policy on combating fires and argues that it should be dealt with under the codecision procedure with Parliament? What arguments justified the Council's rejection at first reading of all Parliament's amendments seeking to reintroduce fire prevention as part of Community environment policy following the stance taken by the Court of Justice?
2. Is it aware of the adverse consequences which the proposal for a Forest Focus regulation might have as regards combating forest fires at Community level?
3. Will it change its standpoint and accept Parliament's requests in this matter at second reading, particularly as regards restoring specific funding devoted solely to prevention and management activities to protect forests against the risk of fire?

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 217, 31.7.1992, p. 3.

Reply

(8 March 2004)

The Council would refer the Honourable Member to the public deliberation which took place at the Council meeting on 6 November 2003 on the draft 'Forest Focus' Regulation and to the conclusions reached. At that time the Council approved the amendments adopted by the European Parliament at second reading on the proposal for a Regulation concerning monitoring of forest and environmental

interactions in the Community. Consequently, and since the EP's amendments correspond to a compromise agreement reached by the Council, the Regulation is adopted in the form of the Council's Common Position thus amended.

The Regulation provides a multiannual framework covering initially a 6-year period from 2003 to 2008. It aims at adapting the scope of existing Council Regulations (EEC) No 3528 /86 and (EEC) No 2158/92 to provide a flexible monitoring scheme to assess forest ecosystem conditions in a broader context. It also simplifies existing activities by regrouping elements of both Regulations under a single framework Regulation covering the protection and monitoring of forests.

(2004/C 84 E/0030)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2498/03

by Christopher Huhne (ELDR) to the Commission

(25 July 2003)

Subject: Investment

Further to the Commission's very interesting answer to my question E-1350/03⁽¹⁾ on 22 May 2003 concerning foreign direct investment into the eurozone countries and the non-eurozone EU Member States, is the Commission now in a position to update those figures given in its tables to include last year (2002)? If not, when will it be able to do so?

⁽¹⁾ See page 8.

Answer given by Mr Solbes Mira on behalf of the Commission

(3 September 2003)

Updated tables are sent direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat. The data for 2002 are preliminary estimates sent by Member States to Eurostat in June 2003 together with revised 2001 data. For Denmark and Spain, data exclude reinvested earnings. For Greece and Sweden, data exclude reinvested earnings in some cases. Aggregates include estimated reinvested earnings in all these cases. Preliminary data for 2002 and revised data for 2001 are not available for partner 'Eurozone countries'.

(2004/C 84 E/0031)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2515/03

by Herbert Bösch (PSE) to the Commission

(29 July 2003)

Subject: Opinion of the OLAF Supervisory Committee on the Eurostat Task Force

On 9 July 2003 the Commission decided to set up a Task Force to investigate the complaints against Eurostat. The Task Force is intended to speed up the internal and external enquiries previously managed by the OLAF Anti-Fraud Office alone.

This infringes OLAF's powers to conduct investigations independently, which Parliament and the Council expressly guaranteed in Regulation (EC) 1073/1999⁽¹⁾ of 25 May 1999.

Before the decision of 9 July 2003, did the Director and/or the Commission consult the OLAF Supervisory Committee, which has the task of safeguarding the independence of the Anti-Fraud Office?

If not, why not?

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 136, 31.5.1999, p. 1.