

(2004/C 70E/213)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3019/03
by Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(14 October 2003)

Subject: Community funding and maintaining jobs

Soflusa is a river transport company operating between Lisbon and Barreiro/Moita, and is proceeding to modernise its fleet with an eligible global investment of Euro 9 819 608, for which joint funding of 50 % from the ERDF was scheduled, and partially paid in 2002.

In the project submitted with the purpose of obtaining the funding, the undertakings given by Soflusa included maintaining their 254 existing jobs and creating a further 50.

Now, according to a statement issued by the company's workers' trade unions, Soflusa's administration has stated that this undertaking to maintain the jobs and create new ones is not going to be met, claiming in the media that this undertaking was an oversight, and thus rubbishing the social undertakings given in order to obtain Community funds, which is simply inadmissible.

What measures is the Commission going to take to ensure that Soflusa's administration meets its social commitments, and specifically those concerning job creation, which were taken as read when the Community funding was awarded?

Answer given by Mrs Diamantopoulou on behalf of the Commission

(25 November 2003)

The Commission would like to inform the Honourable Member that the President of the Commission is already aware of the problem, following a letter dated 6 October 2003 from the employees' trade union representatives. As mentioned in the reply to the trade unions, the Commission requested further information from the national authorities on 3 November 2003.

In addition, the Commission can confirm that no European Social Fund assistance was granted to the firm Soflusa.

(2004/C 70E/214)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3022/03
by Anna Karamanou (PSE) to the Commission

(14 October 2003)

Subject: Funding of research into accident prevention

According to data produced by the European Accident Prevention Network, one third of fatalities in developed countries are caused by accidents, and young people are particularly affected.

In Greece, the number and frequency of fatal accidents of various types stand at extremely high levels.

In spite of this extremely worrying situation, the Commission recently cut the appropriations allocated to research into and prevention of accidents in European Union countries by 30 %, with the result that it has become considerably more difficult for the competent bodies to carry out their work.

Will the Commission support the proposals and requests made by the European Accident Prevention Network? What further steps will it take to reduce the number of fatal accidents and improve public safety?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(14 November 2003)

The Commission did not recently cut the appropriations allocated to research into and prevention of accidents in the Union by 30 %.

The proposals for financial support regarding accident and injury prevention received in the framework of the 2003 funding round of the Community public health programme are currently being evaluated. A decision on selection of projects to be financed is expected shortly. Several projects dealing with accidents and injuries have been presented in the selection process.

(2004/C 70 E/215)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3024/03

by Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(8 October 2003)

Subject: The need to suspend and revise the Stability Pact

Since 2000, the EU has been suffering from major economic downturn and rising unemployment. Forecasts for 2003 are not optimistic, strengthening the belief that the only way out of the recession is an expansionist budgetary policy, which would help to stimulate economic growth and employment, and this is confirmed by the Commission's acceptance of the so-called 'Initiative for Growth'. On top of the real facts of the situation came the summer heatwave which destroyed thousands of hectares of forest as well as urban areas, wiping out lives, property, infrastructure and social facilities, particularly in Portugal, 5 % of whose national territory was devastated, thus heightening the impact of the economic recession facing the country.

And over against this ever more tangible real state of affairs, we have the application of the irrational criteria of the Stability Pact, which despite protests from various sides, remains rock solid in terms of its objectives, while countries like Germany and France find themselves unable to meet the 3 % deficit limit for the third year running.

This policy has led to disinvestment in social public spending, encouraged the blind privatisation and selling off of the public heritage and inspired a dazzling array of creative accounting practices rendering public accounts less transparent. The Sapir report itself admits that the 'Stability Pact' has been responsible for the EU's weak economic growth. There are voices within national governments and within the Commission pointing out the need to modernise the Stability Pact and make it more flexible.

The Commission:

- Does it not believe that the application of the Stability Pact is worsening the factors underlying the EU's economic recession and penalising economic growth, and for this reason, should be suspended forthwith, as a matter of urgency, with a view to a global revision of the economic guidelines which will guarantee the requisite stimulus for economic growth and increased employment?
- Does it not believe that the implementation of the Stability Pact since 1997 has undermined public services and the social responsibility of the Member States for their citizens?
- Does it not believe that public investment spending should not be included when calculating the deficit? And, in the specific case of Portugal, given the current economic situation, does the Commission not believe that the investment spending arising from this summer's forest fires should be excluded when calculating the country's budgetary shortfall?