

In the end, the implementation of the Corridor VIII, which has been signed only recently, depends on the countries concerned in the first place. As the Honourable Member may know, the whole alignment of the Corridor VIII on rail is also mentioned in the Report of the TEN-T High Level Group as an important project for territorial cohesion.

(2004/C 78 E/0455)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2819/03
by Proinsias De Rossa (PSE) to the Commission

(19 September 2003)

Subject: Environmental impact assessments in Ireland

On 22 July, the Commission announced (IP/03/1070) that it was referring Ireland to the European Court of Justice concerning the possibility, inter alia, that Irish authorities allow a decision to be made before rather than after an environmental impact assessment has been fully assessed in line with the EIA Directive.

What specific cases in Ireland is the Commission concerned about in this regard?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission

(28 October 2003)

The Commission's concerns derived from its examination of the way in which the impact of the Kildare Bypass motorway project on an internationally important wetland, Pollardstown Fen, and an associated aquifer were assessed.

More specifically, despite advice from the statutory nature conservation authority that the information provided by the developer was seriously deficient, certain important studies on the likely impacts were only undertaken after the decision approving the project was already taken.

Whilst the Commission did not challenge the specific project, it decided to challenge the underlying approach taken on the basis that it was not compliant with the requirements of Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 175, 5.7.1985, p. 40.

(2004/C 78 E/0456)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2826/03
by Kathleen Van Brempt (PSE) to the Commission

(23 September 2003)

Subject: Eco-driving

Introducing a new, more environmentally friendly driving style using electronic equipment in cars, known as 'eco-driving', has been a topic of discussion in Europe for some time now. I would like further information from the Commission regarding the practicalities of eco-driving.

Can the Commission state what measures it intends to take to introduce a more environmentally friendly driving style?

What is the Commission's opinion of the proposal by the Netherlands Government that all new cars in Europe be equipped with cruise control and an on-board computer? According to the Netherlands, this could reduce fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions by around 10%. Is this proposal feasible?

Belgium has seen many accidents involving lorries caused by the use of cruise control. Can the Commission provide clarification of the safety guarantees that accompany the installation of electronic equipment, and cruise control in particular, in cars?

Answer given by Mrs de Palacio on behalf of the Commission

(13 November 2003)

There is a wide range of conceivable measures to reduce the environmental impact of road vehicles. In this connection, voluntary agreements on CO₂ emissions and technical improvements to vehicles will have an important role to play.

Driving style is an equally important factor. Results show that ecodriving makes it possible to cut fuel consumption by around 10% and at the same time to reduce accidents and pollution. The Commission has provided its support to a number of projects in this area (see www.ecodrive.org). The STEER programme, which is an element of the Intelligent Energy Europe programme, will offer the possibility of supporting other projects.

In the technological field, a significant number of research projects in progress under the 5th Framework Programme for RTD aim to make vehicles more environmentally friendly. Generally speaking, their main objective is to develop new engine technologies which are both more fuel efficient (CO₂) and cleaner. For example, a great deal of work has been carried out in the DEXA (Diesel Engine Exhaust particles After treatment) projects, in order to eliminate particle emissions from diesel engines and in the VCR (Variable compression ratio for CO₂ reduction for gasoline engines) project which allows a significant reduction in consumption and hence CO₂. This work is continuing in the 6th Framework Programme where new projects should allow further advances, whether for conventional engines or fuel cells in the longer term.

The Commission is planning to propose a Directive on energy services in the months to come. This proposal could require energy suppliers to help their customers to use energy products more efficiently. In the field of transport, customers would be advised on how to manage their energy costs more effectively, check tyre pressures and undergo ecodriving training.

As regards the announcement by the Netherlands of a proposal making it compulsory to fit cruise-control devices, given that the type approval of vehicles is an area where the Community has competence, the Commission would have to receive a specific draft in order to assess its actual impact and the suitability of a proposal with two co-legislators. In any event, this is one of a number of innovative technologies which could improve environmental protection and safety. The effects of the various options will have to be carefully weighed to ensure that the most effective solution is chosen.

Finally, as regards accidents involving heavy goods vehicles equipped with cruise control in Belgium, the Honourable Member is requested to refer to the answer to written question E-1501/03⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 70 E, 20.3.2004, p. 48.

(2004/C 78 E/0457)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2827/03

by Kathleen Van Brempt (PSE) to the Commission

(23 September 2003)

Subject: Isolation units in hospitals

Europe escaped the SARS virus. According to virologists, however, there is a significant risk of a renewed outbreak of the SARS virus before the end of the year. Biological terrorism can also never be ruled out. In order to prevent the spread of viruses such as SARS, work needs to be done on isolation units in hospitals. Now that the threat of the SARS virus appears to have subsided, however, no such work is being carried out in Member States.