

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

(11 December 2003)

The Commission is aware of the debate that is taking place in the Netherlands regarding national policy on cannabis, in particular relating to 'coffee shops'.

In line with the subsidiarity principle, it would not be appropriate for the Commission to participate or intervene in debates taking place at national level regarding Member States' policies on this subject.

The Commission will, however, undertake the appropriate action in case of a possible infringement of the Treaties.

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(2004/C 78 E/0249)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3268/03****by Christopher Huhne (ELDR) to the Commission**

(4 November 2003)

*Subject:* Commission employees

Will the Commission state the proportion of employees by nationality in each of the top ten grades within the Commission establishment plan?

Will it further state the number of employees by nationality in each of the top ten grades within the Commission establishment plan?

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

(8 December 2003)

The Commission interprets the question as referring to the entire A category (grades 8 to 1) and the two highest grades in the B category (grades 1 and 2) to be the 'top ten' grades of its career system.

Table 1 which is sent direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat shows the number of personnel in the A category together with the two highest grades of the B category by nationality. Table 2 which is also sent direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat gives the proportion of this personnel against the total of each grade within the establishment plan for operation and research budgets.

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(2004/C 78 E/0250)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3273/03****by Bart Staes (Verts/ALE) to the Commission**

(5 November 2003)

*Subject:* Emissions of refrigerant gases from (Dutch) ships

On 27 August 2003 the Netherlands Ministry of Spatial Planning, Housing and the Environment (VROM) presented a study on leakage of refrigerant gases from cutters and trawlers ([http://www.vrom.nl/docs/milieu/koudemiddelen\\_het\\_schip\\_in\\_juni2003.pdf](http://www.vrom.nl/docs/milieu/koudemiddelen_het_schip_in_juni2003.pdf)). These are said to leak ten times as many such gases as refrigeration systems on land. The refrigerant gases attack the ozone layer and contribute to the greenhouse effect.

The study shows that on average, refrigeration systems on trawlers lose half their refrigerant gases each year. In the case of cutters the rate is as high as 80 %. This is far more than the average leakage rate of 4,5 % from refrigeration systems on land. In comparison with refrigeration systems on land, therefore, shipping generates a disproportionately high proportion of refrigerant gas emissions, with all that this implies. Refrigeration systems on ships represent only 5 % of the total quantity of cooling agents in the Netherlands, but are responsible for 35 % of total leakage.

Can the Commission say whether this problem is confined to the Netherlands fleet, or whether it also occurs in other Member States?

Does the Commission consider that adequate measures have been taken in the case of shipping with regard to emissions of the greenhouse gases mentioned in the annex to the Kyoto Protocol – carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>)? To what extent do the VROM's measurements indicate that Article 17 ('Leakages of controlled substances') of Regulation (EC) 2037/2000 is being violated?

What steps will the Commission take to reduce emissions of ozone-degrading substances and greenhouse gases in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent from shipping?

#### **Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission**

*(22 December 2003)*

The Commission welcomes the study undertaken by the Netherlands on leakage rates of refrigeration fluids from cutters and trawlers, especially if it is the basis for further action to prevent emissions of refrigerants. Under Article 17 of Regulation (EC) No 2037/2000 of the Parliament and of the Council of 29 June 2000, on substances that deplete the ozone layer<sup>(1)</sup>, Member States have the responsibility to take 'All precautionary measures practicable to prevent and to minimise leakages of controlled substances. In particular, fixed equipment with a refrigerating fluid charge of more than 3 kg shall be checked for leakages annually.'

The Commission does not have information at this stage on the leakage rates from refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment installed in similar vessels that are operated in other Member States. There are no standards relating to specific leakage rates of ozone depleting substances from such equipment in Regulation (EC) No 2037/2000, although there are provisions in the Regulation establishing minimum qualification requirements for personnel dealing with such equipment. The Commission believes that using qualified personnel to service refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment can be an important element in Member States' efforts to minimise leakages of ozone depleting substances. Moreover, Member States have the obligation to report to the Commission on initiatives put in place to minimise leakages of ozone depleting substances. On the basis of accurate information on Member States' programmes, that could include leakage rates of ozone depleting substances from air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment, the Commission will be in a better position to promote European standards regarding leak rates in equipment in accordance with the provisions of Article 17 of Regulation (EC) No 2037/2000.

The Commission, under Article 17 of Regulation (EC) 2037/2000, is taking a number of steps to reduce emissions of ozone depleting substances from shipping. In this area the most effective mechanism is to phase out the use of such substances. Commercial shipping in the Union can no longer install air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment using chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) or service their air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment using CFCs. Existing leaky equipment using CFCs would, therefore, necessarily have to be replaced when it ceases to function due to lack of refrigerant. Furthermore, the Union shipping industry while they can continue to service air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment using virgin hydrofluorocarbons (HCFCs), a temporary replacement for CFCs, up to 2010 and recovered up to 2015, there is a use ban on the installation of new equipment using HCFCs. Possibly more important, given their

high ozone depleting potential, is the phasing out of halons in fire-fighting equipment in ships. Fire protection systems containing halon have to be decommissioned before the 31 December 2003 and the halon recovered in accordance with Article 16 of the Regulation.

More generally, as regards reducing ship emissions of greenhouse gases listed in the Kyoto Protocol, the Commission believes that much remains to be done. A recent ship emissions quantification study for the Commission estimated that ships in Union seas emitted 157 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in the year 2000 – more than land-based emissions in nine individual Member States. The Kyoto Protocol does not directly address emissions from shipping, instead its Article 2.2 calls for parties to pursue the limitation or reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from international ships' bunker fuels working through the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

The IMO has, therefore, taken responsibility for this issue, and its Marine Environment Protection Committee has finalised a draft resolution on an IMO Greenhouse Gas strategy, which will be considered at the 23rd IMO Assembly in December 2003. The Union Council of Ministers has urged the IMO to adopt a concrete, ambitious strategy on greenhouse gases, and the Commission and a number of Member States, including the Netherlands, are actively participating in discussions on the IMO resolution, with a view to ensuring the resulting strategy is indeed concrete and ambitious.

As regards Union measures to reduce emissions of greenhouse gas emissions from shipping, the 6th Environment Action Programme requests the Commission to identify and undertake specific actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from marine shipping if no such action is agreed within the International Maritime Organization by 2003. This commitment is echoed in the Commission's more recent Communication to the Parliament and to the Council on a European Union Strategy to reduce atmospheric emissions from seagoing ships<sup>(1)</sup>, which proposes an Union objective to reduce ships' unitary emissions of carbon dioxide, and which commits the Commission to consider Union action to reduce ship greenhouse gas emissions if no concrete measures are agreed at the IMO in 2003.

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<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 244, 29.9.2000.

<sup>(2)</sup> COM(2002) 595 final, Vol I.

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(2004/C 78 E/0251)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3278/03**

**by José Ribeiro e Castro (UEN) to the Commission**

(5 November 2003)

*Subject:* Macao – Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation

The Ministerial Meeting of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries was held in Macao on 12, 13 and 14 October this year.

It was referred to explicitly in the EP resolution, adopted on 8 April 2003, on the report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the Macao Special Administrative Region: First and Second Annual Reports, in which the EP pointed out that 'Macao, because of its history and long-standing links with Europe, in particular through Portugal, is well placed to act as a bridge between the European Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC)' and that 'the governments of the MSAR and the PRC have both recently laid down and have been implementing a policy seeking to capitalise on Macao's position as a hub for China's relations with the entire Portuguese-speaking world'.