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Information and Notices

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(Information)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

WRITTEN QUESTIONS WITH ANSWER

(96/C 345/01)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0134/96

by Honório Novo (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(1 February 1996)

Subject: Environmental impact assessment of the IP1 between Freixo and Vilados Carvalhos

In reply to my questions Nos 2804/94 ([1])and 1861/95 ([2]), Commissioner Bjenegard claimed on 21 September 1995 that the Commission had examined the observations forwarded by the Portuguese authorities and believed that 'further information was necessary'. As a result, the Commission had contacted the Portuguese authorities 'once more'.

Has the Commission received further explanations in connection with the possible violation of Directive 85/337/EEC ([3]) with regard to the way in which the environmental impact assessment of the building work on the IP1 between Freixo and Vilados Carvalhos was carried out? If so, are these explanations satisfactory?

If they are not, what is the Commission going to do?

([1]) OJ C 139, 5.6.1995, p. 32.
([2]) OJ C 311, 22.11.1995, p. 19.
([3]) OJ L 175, 5.7.1985, p. 40.

Additional answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(25 June 1996)

In addition to its answer of 19 April 1996 ([1]), the Commission is able to inform the Honourable Member of the following.

Under Directive 85/337/EEC ([2]) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, projects likely to have significant effects on the environment must be assessed for their impact before being granted authorization.

Additional information supplied by the Portuguese authorities indicates that building work for the IP1 project between Freixo and Carvalhos was started before the completion of the environmental impact assessment procedure provided for in the abovementioned Directive.

The Commission will bring these facts to the attention of the Portuguese authorities and will ask them to take all appropriate measures to ensure that the principles laid down in the Directive are fully respected.

([1]) OJ C 185, 25.6.1996, p. 39.
([2]) OJ L 175, 5.7.1985.

(96/C 345/02)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0288/96

by Olli Rehn (ELDR) to the Commission

(15 February 1996)

Subject: Support for the construction of a motorway on the Costa del Sol

A toll motorway is under construction on the Costa del Sol in Spain which I understand the EU is helping to fund. According to my information the Spanish transport ministry has adopted a route which will bisect Calahonda, a community of 18 000 people belonging to the town of Mijas. The planned route will devastate the value of the community, damage the countryside and the municipal infrastructure and cause additional noise and pollution. There are many inhabitants of Calahonda who come from other parts of Europe who are seriously worried about the Spanish transport ministry's obstinacy. The Mijas town authorities have proposed an alternative route which is just as good in terms of the operation of the motorway and would avoid dispersing a community of people and causing significant environmental problems.

Given that the EU is contributing to the funding of the motorway through Calahonda, I would ask the Commission whether an environmental impact assessment has been carried out on the motorway and whether it indeed conforms with the purposes of the EU to participate in a scheme which does not meet the objectives of the structural funds such as the protection of communities and environmentally sustainable development.

Supplementary answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(8 July 1996)

Following its answer of 9 April 1996, [1] the Commission would inform the Honourable Member that the Spanish authorities have replied to the request for information on the matter raised in this question.

The 'Costa del Sol' toll motorway project (Málaga-Estepona section) has undergone environmental impact assessment in accordance with Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. [2] In view of the many assertions made during the public consultation required by the Directive, a further study was made of the project. The public was also given an opportunity to express opinions on this additional study. An environmental impact statement, along with adjusting measures, was published in the Spanish official journal (BOE) of 28 September 1994.

On the basis of the information in its possession, the Commission can find no infringement of Directive 85/337/EEC.

(1) OJ C 217, 26.7.1996, p. 20.
(2) OJ L 175, 5.7.1985.

(96/C 345/03)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0362/96

by Markus Ferber (PPE) to the Commission

(22 February 1996)

Subject: EU programmes SAVE and SYNERGIE

The Commission is calling for financial resources for two programmes which clearly overlap with the THERMIE programme (see also the decisions of the European Parliament and the Bundesrat). Can the Commission provide precise information on certain aspects of the SAVE and SYNERGIE programmes and their links with THERMIE.

1. What appropriations have been provided for the EU programmes THERMIE, SAVE and SYNERGIE over the past five years?

2. How is the funding distributed between energy saving, renewable energy, fossil fuels and international cooperation?

3. How has the EU support funding for the THERMIE, SAVE and SYNERGIE programmes been distributed over the past five years among the individual Member States of the European Union?

4. What personnel costs have there been over the past five years for the administration of the THERMIE, SAVE and SYNERGIE programmes?

5. To what extent are the SAVE and SYNERGIE programmes complementary to the THERMIE programme? In which areas are the three programmes complementary and in which do they overlap?

6. Can the Commission provide the current cost-benefit analysis for each of the THERMIE, SAVE and SYNERGIE programmes?

Supplementary answer given by Mr Papoutsis on behalf of the Commission

(26 July 1996)

Following its answer of 9 April 1996 [1], the Commission is now able to provide the following information:

1. The THERMIE, SAVE and SYNERGY programmes have received the following funding over the last five years:

(million ECU)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995 (*)	Total
THERMIE	145	161	174	182	145	807
SAVE	4	5	10	10	7	36
SYNERGY	5	6	6	7	9	33

2. The table below gives the sectoral breakdown of funding over the same period:

THERMIE:

(million ECU)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995 (*)	Total
RUE [1]	47	45	59	58	43	252
RES [2]	42	43	43	54	41	223
FF [3]	56	73	72	70	61	332
International Cooperation (indicative)	[4] (3.5)	[4] (8)	[4] (7)	[4] (7)	[4] (1.5)	[4] (27)
	145	161	174	182	145	807

(*) 1995 refers to the demonstration part of the Non-Nuclear specific programme (JOULE-THERMIE) of the IV Framework Programme of RTD.
[1] RUE = Rational Use of Energy
[2] RES = Renewable Energy Sources
[3] FF = Fossil Fuels
[4] Not included in total.

Funding for the SAVE programme concerned only energy efficiency.

Similarly, funding for the SYNERGY programmes was used only within the framework of international cooperation.

3. The Commission is sending directly to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat the recent evaluation reports on these three programmes. These contain relevant information on the allocation of funding for the different programmes.

Regarding distribution between Member States, however, it must be borne in mind that the Commission takes no account of the nationality of applicants when selecting projects. Moreover, a large number of projects are carried out within the framework of international partnerships involving partners from several Member States.

4. The evaluation reports also contain information on the analysis of the human resources needed for programme administration.

5. Two remarks may be made on programme complementarity.

The three programmes operate at different levels:

- THERMIE is based on Decision 94/806/EC [2] and the 4th framework programme of research and technological development, and operates only in the pre-competitive phase of energy technology promotion, i.e. upstream of SAVE and SYNERGY;
- SAVE is confined essentially to legislative and regulatory activity; where it gives financial backing to market studies and the dissemination of technology and information it operates downstream of THERMIE;
- SYNERGY facilitates international cooperation in the field of energy policy. This rules out any action eligible for the THERMIE programme.

The three programmes are complementary in the field of energy efficiency:

- THERMIE finances the demonstration of technologies and their dissemination upstream;
- SAVE helps to remove non-technological barriers and to facilitate promotion through the creation of an appropriate legislative and regulatory framework;
- SYNERGY helps third countries define and implement their energy policy (technical assistance, institutional cooperation, contacts between operators and investors).

For this complementarity to work it is essential that industry and policy-makers alike are familiar with the results of the various programmes and with real market needs. Seminars and other information events are therefore organized, sometimes jointly — though this does not mean there is any duplication of effort.

6. Concerning the cost-benefit analysis, SAVE was selected for an action to evaluate the cost effectiveness of various Community programmes. A consultant, the Evaluation partnership, was selected and a cost and benefit study was carried out during 1992 and 1993. The consultant concluded that there was a great deal of difficulty in measuring the cost and benefit of a legislative programme such as SAVE. In general, legislative actions have a rather limited cost but if they are applied effectively by the Member States they can have a very high benefit (not only in terms of energy saved but in CO_2 reduction as well). The consultant's report will be sent directly to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat.

The Commission has made a detailed study of the cost-benefit analysis of the THERMIE programme and will be sending it directly to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat.

Lastly, the evaluation report also tackles this problem in detail in respect of SYNERGY.

(1) OJ C 183, 24.6.1996, p. 26.
(2) OJ L 334, 22.12.1994.

(96/C 345/04)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0490/96

by Gerardo Fernández-Albor (PPE) to the Commission

(1 March 1996)

Subject: Endorsement by the Community of the Franco-Spanish agreement on fishing for anchovies with mid-water trawl nets

The announcement by the seamen's union of the Basque coast in France (CFDT) to the effect that it rejects the recent Franco-Spanish agreement on anchovy quotas signed by the relevant French and Spanish ministers and that French fishermen will continue the fishing season after 20 March despite the explicit ban on fishing with mid-water trawl nets between 20 March and 1 June, has naturally led to a protest by the head of the equivalent Spanish fishermen's association, who has called on the governments in question to enforce the agreement.

Given the powers of the European Union as regards fisheries, what is the Commission's position regarding the endorsement of bilateral fisheries agreements between Member States and in what way could it support condemnation of the defiant posture adopted by the French fishermen's union referred to above, which is threatening to provoke a 'hot spring season' and not to comply with the above intergovernmental agreement?

Can the Commission also say whether it is prepared to subsidize the conversion of the French high-seas fleet, which is oversized and has exhausted its resources?

Answer given by Ms Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(2 April 1996)

The agreement between France and Spain referred to by the Honourable Member was approved by the Council in 1991 and renewed the following year to the satisfaction of both parties.

It is up to the two Member States themselves to ensure compliance with this bilateral agreement, which is quite compatible with Community law. The Commission can only encourage them to take the necessary steps and will not be pushing for the terms of the agreement to be incorporated into Community law unless both sides so request.

Under the structural fisheries policy, the multiannual guidance programmes for fisheries fleets set targets for bringing catches into line with available stocks. Funding for this comes from the financial instrument for fisheries guidance (FIFG). However, these targets are of a general nature and do not affect the specific case of French trawlers fishing for anchovies in the Bay of Biscay.

(96/C 345/05)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0503/96

by Cristiana Muscardini (NI) to the Commission

(1 March 1996)

Subject: Break-down of goods transport by form of transport used

The statistics annexed to the Commission's communication on the future development of the common transport policy show that, in 1990, the transport of goods within the Community could be broken down as follows:

- rail: 15.4%;
- road: 69.9%;
- waterways: 9.2%,

and that the proportion of goods transported by road increased steadily from 50.6% in 1970 to 69.9% in 1990, while the proportion carried by rail declined from 27.8% to 15.4% over the same period.

This trend is probably due to the railways' slow and bureaucratic administrative procedures, which mean that goods take longer to arrive by rail than by road. The result is increased environmental pollution from toxic exhaust gases and, on certain days of the week, heavily congested motorways, with the ever-increasing number of heavy goods vehicles causing hold-ups and delays for other road-users.

Does the Commission:

1. consider that it would be advisable to proceed as soon as possible with the harmonization of technical characteristics of road vehicles, particularly with regard to combined transport?
2. intend to propose interoperability for high-speed trains with a view to modernizing and speeding up the transport of goods?
3. consider that reducing the proportion of goods transported by road and promoting rail transport is a priority for the development of the common transport policy to ensure a sustainable transport system?

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(7 May 1996)

The Commission is aware of the importance which should be given to intermodal transport within the common transport policy and more particularly of the need to develop the transport of goods by rail. To this end, the Commission has already proposed numerous action plans to the Council, and launched others on its own initiative. For example, Directive 91/440/EEC (1) and the Pilot Actions for Combined Transport (PACT) provide for greater access to railway infrastructure. Such action plans, aimed at improving the quality of combined transport services and creating new intermodal routes, are proving very successful.

As regards harmonizing the technical specifications of road vehicles, the Council has adopted numerous legislative measures proposed by the Commission concerning the type- approval of motor vehicles, the regular checking of vehicles and restrictions on the use of vehicles like maximum weight and size limits, speed governors and equipment for monitoring driving and resting times. More particularly, weight and size limits have influenced the development of technical standards for combined transport equipment, such as containers and swap bodies. The Commission will be considering whether further harmonization is necessary in order to promote combined transport in Europe.

Following a second reading in Parliament on 16 April 1996 and the common position adopted by the Council, (2) the Commission is currently re-examining its proposal on interoperability for high-speed trains. (3)

The Commission fully recognizes the need to encourage a shift in the transport of passengers and goods by road to other modes of transport. Promoting rail and combined transport, and inland waterway transport, which is one of the principal aims of the common transport policy, will certainly help to optimize the transport system and achieve sustainable mobility, particularly as a result of greater respect for the environment, improved safety and the freeing-up of the road infrastructure.

(1) OJ L 237, 24.8.1991.
(2) OJ C 356, 30.12.1995.
(3) OJ C 203, 8.8.1995.

(96/C 345/06)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0556/96

by Gianni Tamino (V) to the Commission

(11 March 1996)

Subject: Illegal imports into Italy of fighting dogs for illegal betting purposes

The police in Trieste and Udine are investigating dogfights organized in their respective provinces for betting purposes, which is a breach of Italian law. Some of the dogs, which can cost up to Lit 5 million each, apparently come from Slovenia and Croatia.

Is the Commission aware of this?

Will it make representations to the Italian authorities to put an end to imports from third countries, albeit provisional, of Rottweilers, pit bull terriers and other dogs commonly used by criminal organizations for dogfights?

What can the Community Veterinary Inspectorate do?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(1 April 1996)

The Commission is not aware of police investigations into dog fights organised for clandestine betting purposes in Italy. Questions concerning the general welfare of dogs as opposed to their welfare during transport remain the responsibility of Member States.

The Commission deplores all forms of cruelty to animals and, in particular, organised dog fights. The Commission has, however, no plans to introduce proposals to ban the import of any particular breed of dog.

The Commission can only repeat its earlier call upon Member States to eliminate these disgraceful practices (see its answer to Written Question n° 2995/92 ([1]) by Mrs Muscardini).

([1]) OJ C 86, 26.3.1993.

(96/C 345/07)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0592/96

by Anita Pollack (PSE) to the Commission

(11 March 1996)

Subject: Cadmium recycling

According to the Council of Europe pamphlet 'Cadmium in Food', only around 5% of cadmium is recycled in Europe as opposed to 15-20% in the United States.

Why is this rate so low and can the Commission suggest any way to encourage improved recycling of cadmium?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(24 May 1996)

As far back as its communication to the Council in 1987 ([1]) the Commission said that the exposure of human beings and the environment to cadmium had increased and even reached worrying levels in certain regions, and that cadmium pollution would have to be controlled and reduced.

The Commission has no detailed information in its possession on cadmium recycling.

The Commission is not convinced that a policy of encouraging cadmium recycling would be an effective means of protecting the environment. There do not seem to be any scientifically reliable methods of distinguishing recycled from new cadmium, so the provisions of Community law that are intended to restrict the cadmium content of products can be circumvented by an illicit use of new cadmium. Recycling of the cadmium contained in products is acceptable only if these products are circulating in a closed circuit on the market. It should be noted here that in the case of batteries cadmium recycling is carried out under Council Directive 91/157/EEC of 18 March 1991 on batteries and accumulators containing certain dangerous substances ([2]).

The Commission does not, therefore, have a general policy of encouraging cadmium recycling. However, within the framework of European Parliament and Council Directive 94/62/EC of 20 December 1994 on packaging and packaging waste ([3]) it is going to look into harmonisation of the national provisions concerning the recycling of various packagings such as beer crates which contain cadmium, and in 1998 it will be examining the possibilities of recycling certain cadmium-containing products the use of which is restricted by Council Directive 91/338/EEC ([4]).

([1]) COM(87) 165 final.
([2]) OJ L 78, 26.3.1991.
([3]) OJ L 365, 31.12.1994.
([4]) OJ L 186, 12.7.1991, amending Council Directive 76/769/EEC of 27 July 1976 on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States relating to restrictions on the marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations (OJ L 262, 27.9.1976).

(96/C 345/08)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0631/96

by Jaime Valdivielso de Cué (PPE) to the Commission

(15 March 1996)

Subject: Future VAT regime and deficit in the application of the existing transitional regime

The creation of the single market in the EU, effective as from 1 January 1993, introduced a new regime for VAT in respect of trade between the Member States.

This regime was intended to be transitional, with the tax payable at the point of use. The legislation required the Commission to submit proposals for a permanent regime by the end of 1994, with a view to its introduction at the beginning of 1997. However, the Commission has still not published any such proposal. As things stand, there is no chance of fulfilling the timetable for adoption of the permanent regime sketched out in the sixth VAT directive: it cannot now come into force before 1998 at the earliest. When does the Commission intend to submit a final proposal?

The transitional regime is characterized by a substantial deficit, in spite of harmonization; those Member States which are net exporters and suppliers of goods in the Union are at a serious disadvantage vis-à-vis those which are not. Exporters are owed the sums paid in VAT by their tax administrations. This situation is aggravated as the tax administrations are obtaining a certain amount of revenue from VAT, thanks to the international activity of the enterprises of their own countries.

One of the proclaimed virtues of VAT is its neutrality: this aspect should be extended and made a reality. It is essential to eliminate the effective distortion and deficit caused by the present transitional regime to those Member States and territories which make the greatest contribution to the internationalization and interrelatedness of the EU economy, by endowing the legislation governing taxation with the requisite mechanisms.

What plans, if any, does the Commission have regarding VAT, and what mechanisms has it in mind to prevent distortion of this kind?

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(29 May 1996)

The very principle of the transition to a definitive system of taxation is formally set out in Article 28L of the Sixth VAT Directive, [1] which expressly states that 'the transitional arrangements shall be replaced by a definitive system for the taxation of trade between Member States based in principle on the taxation in the Member State of origin of the goods or services supplied'.

In its report on the operation of the transitional arrangements for charging VAT in intra-Community trade, [2] the Commission clearly demonstrated the constraints and limits of the current system, to which it fully intends to provide an answer in its proposals on the definitive VAT arrangements.

It very rapidly became clear that those proposals could not be limited simply to a revision of the taxation rules introduced for the transitional period and that in-depth work had to be carried out on the very principles underlying the operation of the common VAT system as a whole.

That work has been of such a scale that the Commission was unable to present its proposals by 31 December 1994 as initially required by Article 28L. It was necessary to explore all possible channels in order to be able, on a fully informed basis, to identify the one most likely to lead to a VAT system that was suited to the needs of the internal market.

Under these circumstances, the Commission intends shortly to present a document setting out the broad lines of the system it proposes to put forward and its programme of work for introducing the definitive arrangements.

(1) Council Directive 77/388/EEC (OJ L 145, 13.6.1977), as amended by Council Directive 91/680/EEC (OJ L 376, 31.12.1991).
(2) COM(94) 515 final.

(96/C 345/09)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0746/96

by Carl Lang (NI) to the Commission

(26 March 1996)

Subject: Relocations and closures

The Danone group, which has been operating at a profit for several years, recently announced the closure of its factory in Seclin in northern France, also a profitable undertaking, with a resulting 169 job losses.

Not only is this closure apparently a relocation, but the company in question is asking for State aid to carry out what it describes as 'restructuring'. Furthermore, it is preparing to invest almost 400 million francs in South Africa, attracted perhaps by the news that a free trade area is to be established between that country and the Union. And, finally, the factory is situated in a region eligible for ERDF Objective 2 funding.

1. Does the Commission's competition policy allow State subsidies for healthy businesses and public funding for policies pursued by private groups with a view to increasing their own competitiveness?

2. Can the Commission give figures on the real impact on employment of the structural funds granted in the sector in question, since they are obviously not fulfilling their aim of halting industrial decline and attracting businesses?

3. Is it true that the European Union is on the point of concluding a free trade agreement with South Africa, and then with other countries and geographical areas, without first studying the overall and sectoral impact on the economies of the Member States and on Union policies?

Answer given by Mr Van Miert on behalf of the Commission

(24 April 1996)

The Commission authorizes aid for firms only in the context of the derogations provided for in the EC Treaty. As a matter of course, it publishes in the form of guidelines the conditions governing the application of such derogations. In particular, aid to firms can be approved only if considered necessary for the pursuit of a recognized Community objective, such as environmental protection, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and regional policy.

As regards Structural Fund assistance in regions experiencing industrial decline, the Commission would point out that such assistance is intended essentially for independent SMEs, and not for the restructuring of large groups. Such assistance has had a significant impact on the Objective 2 region of Nord/Pas-de-Calais despite the difficult economic situation. For instance, the rate of job losses in industry has been reduced (-1.2% in 1994 compared with an average of -2.9% between 1990 and 1993), while service sector employment has risen appreciably (+3.2% in 1994 compared with a national average of +2.6%).

Lastly, it is not true that the European Union is on the point of concluding a free trade agreement with South Africa. The agreement in principle to open such negotiations has been reached, but the negotiations themselves have not yet started. However, the Commission, acting in accordance with the conclusions adopted in June 1995, has sent to the Council a detailed analysis of the impact of such an agreement on Community policies and its compatibility with the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This initial analysis will be followed by more in-depth sectoral studies as and when the negotiations take place.

(96/C 345/10)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0847/96

by Iñigo Méndez de Vigo (PPE) to the Commission

(12 April 1996)

Subject: Financing of the Cohesion Fund

In the course of the current year the Commission is to examine the final 1995 budgetary reports of the Member States which receive money from the Cohesion Fund in order to ascertain whether or not they have achieved the public deficit management objectives set by the Council for that year. If a given Member State has not fulfilled the objective set by the Council for 1995 the Commission will suspend payments from the Cohesion Fund for

new projects or further stages of existing projects. Will the Commission's examination be carried out in strict accordance with the economic indicators or will account be taken of the fact that the Member States in question may have made progress even if they have not fulfilled all the criteria exactly?

Answer given by Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(25 June 1996)

In September 1994 the Council decided in accordance with Article 104C, paragraph 6, EC Treaty that of the four Member States benefiting from the Cohesion fund Greece, Portugal and Spain had excessive government deficits. The Council fixed the annual objective for the 1995 deficit ratio to gross domestic product (GDP) for each Member State as follows:

Greece	10.7%
Portugal	5.8%
Spain	5.9%

The Commission has examined the budgetary performance of these Member States for the year 1995 taking into account data transmitted by the Member States in March 1996 and reached the conclusions set out below.

Greece

On 14 May 1996, in the framework of its spring economic forecasts, the Commission presented a government deficit of 9.2% of GDP for Greece in 1995. For 1995 it can therefore be concluded that the Greek government deficit was inside the target recommended for that year by the Council.

Portugal

On 14 May 1996, in the framework of its spring economic forecasts, the Commission presented a government deficit of 5.4% of GDP for Portugal in 1995. For 1995 it can therefore be concluded that the Portuguese government deficit was inside the target recommended for that year by the Council.

Spain

On 14 May 1996, in the framework of its spring economic forecasts, the Commission presented a government deficit of 5.8% of GDP for Spain in 1995. For 1995 it can therefore be concluded that the Spanish government deficit was inside the target recommended for that year by the Council.

Hence the Commission will continue to approve new projects or, in the case of large multistage projects, new phases of projects in Greece, Portugal and Spain, until a new assessment of the deficit performance of those Member States is carried out as scheduled in autumn 1996.

(96/C 345/11)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0858/96

by Alfred Lomas (PSE) to the Commission

(12 April 1996)

Subject: Nuclear reactors

How many nuclear reactors using highly enriched uranium (HEU) are currently in operation in EU States and, for each such reactor, what is the location, quantity of HEU used, year of first operation, expected number of further years of operation and operating authority (e.g. company, university)?

What is the aggregate quantity of HEU in the programme, has any HEU at any of the reactors gone missing in the past and have all the reactors operated under safeguards for all of their lives?

Answer given by Mr Papoutsis on behalf of the Commission

(3 July 1996)

In the Community, 50 research reactors and critical assemblies are subject to the safeguards specified in Chapter 7 of the Euratom Treaty.

Among these facilities, 23 were originally designed to use uranium with an enrichment above 20% (highly enriched uranium-HEU). It should be noted however, that in the course of the US sponsored reduced enrichment for research and test reactors programme (RERTR), the objectives of which are widely supported by research reactor operators in the Community, many have already been or are in the process of being converted for the use of low enriched uranium.

The quantity of nuclear fuel contained in the cores of these facilities depends on their size and purpose, but is typically of the order of several kilogrammes of uranium.

All these facilities have been subject to safeguards under the Euratom Treaty since it became applicable to each of them and, as applicable, to International atomic energy agency (IAEA) safeguards. The Commission is satisfied that no HEU used in them has been diverted from its intended uses in the period they were under Euratom safeguards (Article 77(a) of the Euratom Treaty) and therefore that HEU has not gone missing from them during that period.

Details of the name, operator and location of these facilities are given in the table below:

Name of facility	Operator	Location
Harmonie	CEA Cadarache	Saint Paul lez Durance (F)
Scarabee	CEA Cadarache	Saint Paul lez Durance (F)
Minerve	CEA Cadarache	Saint Paul lez Durance (F)
Ulysse	CEA Saclay	Saclay (F)
Orphee	CEA Saclay	Saclay (F)
RHF	Institute Lane Langevin	Grenoble (F)
Siloe, Siloette	CEA Grenoble	Grenoble (F)
University Strasbourg	University Strasbourg	Strasbourg (F)
Imperial College	Imperial College	Ascot (UK)
Ri. Sar. Graz	Argonaut Reaktor Graz	Graz (A)
BR2	SCK Mol	Mol (B)
FRJ2	Forschungszentrum Jülich	Jülich (D)
FRG-1/2	GKSS	Geesthacht (D)
FRM	TU München	Garching (D)
BER-2	Hahn-Meitner-Institut	Berlin (D)
STR	PTB Braunschweig	Braunschweig (D)
ZLFR	Hochschule Zittau/Görlitz	Zittau (D)
Tapiro	ENEA	Casaccia (IT)
IRI HOR	TU-IRI Delft	Delft (NL)
CCR-HFR	ECN	Petten (NL)
ECN-LFR	ECN	Petten (NL)
R2-0	Studsvik Nuclear	Studsvik (S)
LNETI	Laboratório Nacional de engenharia e tecnologia industrial	Sacavém (P)

(96/C 345/12)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0869/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(12 April 1996)

Subject: Telematics applications for transport

The purpose of Commission communication COM(94) 0469 on telematics applications for transport in Europe is to define measures for the development of telematics infrastructure in all modes of transport, together with proposals for deployment which can:

- secure more efficient, safer and less polluting transport operations,
- open the transport market for telematics services and products benefiting industrial efficiency,
- encourage the promotion of new public-private partnerships for implementing telematics applications in the transport sector.

Telecommunications technologies with European standards are already available that, as has been demonstrated, are best suited for concrete telematics applications in the transport sector. In order to promote safety, reduce environmental pollution, avoid congestion and improve the use of vehicles, does the Commission not consider it essential to create a proper political framework and develop the requirements for such applications at European level as soon as possible and then entrust the development of systems to private initiative wherever possible?

Cost-benefit analyses at micro-economic level favour the development of private initiatives while those at macro-economic level entail political and social imponderables; the objectives, means and implications should be discussed as objectively as possible, taking account of the views of all the parties concerned.

Answer given by Mr Bangemann on behalf of the Commission

(24 May 1996)

The Commission is confident that telematics applications in the transport sector provide considerable benefits to society and the European economy, as demonstrated by the results of the research and technological development (RTD) in the third framework programme.

The Commission has already initiated the political debate on the topic in its white paper on 'growth, competitiveness and employment' ([1]), whilst the group of personalities on the information society applications ([2]) have identified telematics applications for road and air transport within the 10 priority areas. The European Council in Corfu endorsed these recommendations and the European Council in Essen supported the report by the high level group on transport and energy ([3]) which included management of the networks by use of information and communication technologies of European interest.

As a follow-up to these political developments, the Commission, in its communication on the topic, provided an outline action plan consisting of 4 main items namely the technical harmonisation, legal and organisational actions required for the development of telematics infrastructure and services, the description of projects of common interest which could be supported in the framework of the Trans-European Networks, the pursuit of actions on research and development, and the coordination of efforts by all interested parties.

Both the Parliament and the Council have reacted positively by adopting three resolutions ([4]). In addition the Council, in its common positions on the definition of guidelines for transport ([5]) and telecommunications networks ([6]), has included the complementary aspects of telematics for management of networks (transport) and for value-added information services (telecoms). In addition, the fourth RTD framework programme has included, within the Telematics applications programme ([7]), a substantial share of telematics applications for transport.

The Commission's recent proposal on the strengthening of the fourth framework programme has included the telematics element in all transport-related task forces ([8]).

It is therefore evident that the political debate and the political framework — as well as financial support and RTD support — are well advanced. In addition, the Commission, in the framework of its action plan on the information society ([9]), has announced its intention to propose harmonisation and other legislative measures which will create a stable environment for the private sector.

Also, following the last Council Resolution; the Commission set up a high level group of officials from the Member States which, through interaction with all other interested parties will assist in the identification of the required priority measures for support of the deployment of telematics in the short — and medium-term. To

facilitate this debate the Commission will soon report on the findings of its RTD and other actions on a technical, economic and social level.

(1) COM(93) 700.
(2) 'Europe and the Global Information Society — Recommendations to the European Council' — final report of the Bangemann group, May 1994.
(3) 'Tran-European Networks — the Group of Personal Representatives of the Heads of State or Government — Report to the Essen European Council' — final report of the Chrtistophersen group, December 1994.
(4) – EP Resolution, 29.6.1995 (PE 212.659/fin).
– Council Resolution on telematics in the transport sector, 24.10.1994 — OJ C 309, 5.1.1994.
– Council Resolution on development of telematics in the road transport sector, 28.9.1995 — OJ C 264, 11.10.1995.
(5) Common position guidelines on trans-European transport networks, 23.9.1995 — OJ C 331, 8.12.1995.
(6) Common position guidelines on trans-European telecom networks, 21.3.1996.
(7) OJ L 334, 22.12.1994.
(8) COM(96) 12 final.
(9) COM(94) 347.

(96/C 345/13)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0902/96

by Roberta Angelilli (NI) to the Commission

(23 April 1996)

Subject: Delays in implementing the Structural Funds in Italy for the period 1994-1999

During a visit to Brussels by Italian Budget Minister Mr Mario Arcelli, Commissioner Mrs Wulf-Mathies said that the use made by Italy of its Structural Fund appropriations for 1994 and 1995 is abnormally low.

It also seems that only 2.5% of the appropriations for the Mezzogiorno for the period 1994-1999 have been utilized whereas 30% should have been used by this stage.

Can the Commission provide a table showing all the expenditure committed under the various Structural Fund objectives in Italy?

What, if any, action does the Commission intend to take vis-à-vis Italy?

Answer given by Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(25 June 1996)

According to the most recent information supplied by the Italian authorities regarding the current programming period, the global levels of structural funds co-financed expenditure by implementing agencies for the period 1 January 1994 to 31 December 1995 is as follows:

	MECU (1)	% (2)
Objective 1	1849	5.9
Objective 2	7.9 (3)	0.4
Objective 3	218.6	7.5
Objective 4	11.7	1.3
Objective 5a	169.5	7.7
Objective 5b	23.6	0.5
Financial instrument for fisheries guidance	4.3	3.8

(1) These figures do not include Community intiatives.
(2) The % figure relates to the total expenditure programmed for the period 1994-1999 (1994-1996 for Objective 2).
(3) Up to 28.2.1996.

For some time now the Commission has expressed concern about the poor implementation of structural fund programmes in Italy. For this reason already in 1995 it concluded an agreement with the Italian central and regional authorities on a package of measures to improve the management of structural fund programmes. The Commission considers this package crucial to the improved use of structural funds in Italy and is keeping the implementation of the agreement under close review.

(96/C 345/14)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0903/96

by Nel van Dijk (V) to the Commission

(23 April 1996)

Subject: Bicycles on high-speed trains

Of the two high-speed train prototypes for the Amsterdam-Cologne-Frankfurt route, both the Netherlands railways and the German railways chose a type of train (ICE 2.2M) which has no area reserved for transporting bicycles. At present there are facilities on EC trains for carrying bicycles, so this would be a retrograde step.

It is even more remarkable as the need for intermodal transport is increasingly being recognized, an in the Green Paper by Commissioner Kinnock which states that the goal of a European transport policy 'must be the achievement of networks of public passenger systems which fit together so that passengers can change easily from train to bus to tram, from car or bike to public transport, which interconnect links long-distance and local transport'. The high-speed trains which form an important part of the Trans-European Networks now seem to be disregarding this goal.

1. Does the Commission share my view that the railways' plan to dispense with facilities for transporting bicycles in future high-speed trains is at variance with the Commission's plans to set up transport networks in which various forms of transport can be combined?

2. Does it share my view that such a move is unwise as long-term investment is involved and the importance of environmentally-friendly means of transport, including bicycles, is increasingly being recognized?

3. Will it urge the European railways federation, the Netherlands railways and the German railways to amend the plans to provide adequate capacity for transporting bicycles in high-speed trains?

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(28 May 1996)

The Commission believes it essential to develop integrated networks of passenger transport so that passengers can change easily from mode to mode. As the Honourable Member knows, this is a major theme of its green paper on the Citizens' Network (1), which recognises the importance of integrating the use of bicycles with public transport. It is important that transport operators, including railway enterprises, pay greater attention to this dimension of transport. In this respect, Dutch railways should receive credit for their operation of bicycle centres at many railway stations.

At the same time, the Community seeks to ensure the management independence of the railways precisely so that they can respond to customers' needs, improve their quality of service and raise their efficiency. Council Directive 91/440/EEC on the development of the Community railways (2) contains clear provisions on independent management, which the Commission considers to be essential to the future development of the railways. Consequently, while it has great sympathy for the Honourable Member's concerns and communicates its views about the desirability of making provision for bicycle carrying in railway trains, it considers that the relevant policy decisions are most appropriately left to railway management.

(1) COM(95) 601 final.
(2) OJ L 237, 24.8.1991.

(96/C 345/15)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0917/96

by Josep Pons Grau (PSE) to the Commission

(23 April 1996)

Subject: Presidential elections in Mauritania

On 11 October 1996, parliamentary elections are to be held in Mauritania.

What action is the Commission intending to take in order to help ensure that the elections proceed smoothly?

Answer given by Mr Pinheiro on behalf of the Commission

(24 May 1996)

The Commission has received a request for financial aid from the Mauritanian authorities for the organization of a general election in October 1996. Consultations are currently taking place between the Head of the Commission Delegation in Mauritania and the representatives of Member States with a residency in Nouakchott to see whether the various types of assistance requested from the Community and other potential donors could be made available jointly and in coordination.

In the light of these consultations, the Commission will indicate the likelihood of an eventual favourable response. Having said that, because of the large number of applications for assistance, the Commission gives priority to elections, which mark a transition to democracy and the rule of law. The Commission made an important contribution to the 1992 elections in Mauritania on that basis and will look very carefully at ways of ensuring effective coordination with other potential donors before reaching a decision with regard to aid for the forthcoming poll.

At all events, any new financial assistance must be reflected in procedural improvements which will help to ensure a significant qualitative improvement in the election process.

(96/C 345/16)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0919/96

by Ulpu Iivari (PSE) to the Commission

(23 April 1996)

Subject: Simplification of export subsidies for food products

Food products are exported from Finland to Russia with EU export subsidies. The consignments concerned can be very small, particularly in the case of those despatched to neighbouring regions, for example those supplied by meat processors direct to individual shops. Each consignment must be notified separately, which involves considerable paperwork. For example one Finnish food supplier had to complete a form concerning a consignment on which 1.43 Finnish marks was paid in export subsidy. The cost of processing the form is many times greater than this.

In view of the above, what will the Commission do to simplify the inconvenient and costly bureaucracy involved in exporting foodstuffs to neighbouring areas of third countries so as to avoid the necessity of submitting a separate notification for each consignment?

Supplementary answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(10 July 1996)

Further to its answer of 30 May 1996 (1), the Commission is now able to provide the following information.

It is possible for a Member State to allow the use of the simplified procedures in export declarations. With regard to such procedures, Article 76 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2913/92 establishing the common customs code (2) and Articles 253 and 279 to 287 of Commission Regulation (EEC) No 2454/93, laying down provisions for the implementation of the common customs code (3), establish the rules for incomplete declarations, simplified procedures and local clearance procedures.

Article 289 of Regulation (EEC) No 2454/93 goes further, offering to the Member States the possibility of the use of commercial or administrative documents and, where the whole of an export operation takes place on the territory of a single Member State, to provide for more simplification.

An 'approved exporter' may be allowed by the customs authorities to carry out export procedures at his premises and to use commercial documents to forward the goods to the external border.

As regards export refunds, there should be no difficulties between the procedures mentioned above and the requirements prescribed in Article 3 of Commission Regulation (EEC) No 3665/87 ([4]).

In connection with its work on simplification of the common agricultural policy, the Commission is currently reflecting on the possibilities to simplify further the provisions concerning export restitutions.

([1]) OJ C 217, 26.7.1996, p. 128.
([2]) OJ L 302, 19.10.1992.
([3]) OJ L 253, 11.10.1993.
([4]) OJ L 351, 14.12.1987.

(96/C 345/17)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0920/96

by Peter Pex (PPE) to the Commission

(23 April 1996)

Subject: Lack of a uniform post code in the European Union

The question of a uniform post code in the European Union has been under discussion for a number of years, but with no prospect of the issue being resolved, let alone of a date being set for implementation.

This is undesirable, in my opinion, because the current differences in the way post codes are structured mean that publishers of greetings cards have to preprint different spaces. EU post codes currently vary from four to eight figures and letters. The result is that any publisher wishing to service the foreign market, too, must print a different space for the post code for each Member State. This naturally involves additional expenditure.

What progress has been achieved towards adopting uniform post codes in the European Union? Is it not a matter of European interest for the Union, as an entity, to be able to adopt a uniform post code? What is the Commission planning to do about the lack of a uniform post code?

Answer given by Mr Bangemann on behalf of the Commission

(31 May 1996)

Since early 1986 the Commission has regularly reviewed the situation with regard to the post codes used by public post operators and endeavoured to ascertain whether the postal community (comprising the regulatory authorities, business users, private consumers and service providers) feel that a uniform European post code is needed.

In this connection, the Commission had a study carried out into the mechanization and automation of mail. One of the study's conclusions was that consumers and users of postal services did not regard the adoption of uniform European post codes as an urgent priority.

The Commission has since adopted an overall approach to matters concerning the harmonization and standardization of services, giving the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) the task of drawing up a list of standards to be established for the postal sector as a matter of priority. The Postal Programming Committee, comprising the various parties concerned (business users, consumer associations, public and private operators), has agreed on the advisability of drawing up standards on the content and general positioning of information printed on envelopes, including post codes. The work in question will be carried out in the near future, the CEN's Technical Committee having recently endorsed the report drafted by the Planning Committee.

The Commission will carefully monitor how the situation develops, to see whether any action of benefit to European users is called for.

(96/C 345/18)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0927/96

by Edith Müller (V) to the Commission

(23 April 1996)

Subject: State aid to Bremer Vulkan in Germany

Will the Commission, considering the fact that it is already inquiring into the misuse of approved state aid to Bremer Vulkan, inform Parliament fully on the outcome of this investigation?

Which other 'state aid cases' in Germany are under investigation by the Commission?

What steps will the Commission take to increase and improve controls on possible misuse of approved state aid?

Answer given by Mr Van Miert on behalf of the Commission

(20 May 1996)

It is current practice that the Commission informs the public on all state aid cases on which a formal investigation procedure under Article 93(2) of the EC Treaty is opened by publication of the decision in the Official journal. At the end of the formal investigation the Commission takes a final decision either to authorize the Member State to grant the aid or to prohibit it from doing so. The final decision is again published in the Official journal. This practice will be applied in the Bremer Vulkan case (case n° C 7/96).

In addition, the Commission informed on 20 March 1996 the budget committee of the Parliament on the case and answered questions. If the Parliament requests further information after conclusion of the formal investigation the Commission will be happy to give it, within the limits set by the necessity to respect the confidentiality of commercial information.

The review of state aid cases is a constant obligation of the Commission under Article 93 of the EC Treaty, and the Bremer Vulkan case has to be seen in this context. In 1995 the Commission was engaged in handling of 1279 state aid cases concerning all Member States. Statistics by Member State are not established. The Commission would like to clarify that the review of state aid cases and the opening of formal investigations cannot be considered in general as an indication of suspected illegal practices of a Member State or an enterprise.

As the Bremer Vulkan case is still in an early phase of investigation, it is too early to indicate whether the Commission will take steps to intensify the controls on the correct use of approved state aid. The German government informed the Commission that the enterprise violated its reporting obligations by providing incorrect data and, therefore, the Commission was misinformed as well. Consequently, the German authorities have started investigations under the German penal law.

(96/C 345/19)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0930/96

by Jonas Sjöstedt (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(23 April 1996)

Subject: Transport of foodstuffs between Norway and Sweden

Swedish membership of the EU has caused problems as regards the transport of foodstuffs between Norway and Sweden. Since the EU has approved only three inspection points for foodstuffs on the Norwegian/Swedish frontier, one between Narvik and Kiruna, one between Trondheim and Östersund and one in Värmland, it is now not possible to transport fish and meat across the frontier on the E 12. It used to be possible to transport foodstuffs on the E 12 from Mo i Rana in Norway via Tärnaby and Umeå in Sweden and on through Finland to the Russian border.

What measures does the Commission intend to take in order to remedy the above difficulties which have arisen as regards trade between Norway and Sweden?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(20 June 1996)

When Finland and Sweden joined the EU, transitional measures were adopted governing veterinary inspection of animal products (Commission Decision 94/958/EC (1), as amended by Decision 95/82/EC, (2) and Commission Decision 95/157/EC (3)). As a temporary measure, they designate a number of border crossing points linked to inspection facilities and approve selected frontier inspection posts, the aim being to keep problems arising from Norway's non-membership to a minimum.

Norway is eventually expected to take over the acquis communautaire in the field of veterinary controls, which would effectively do away with these problems. The matter is currently under discussion within the forums of the European Economic Area.

(1) OJ L 371, 31 December 1994.
(2) OJ L 66, 24 March 1995.
(3) OJ L 103, 6 May 1995.

(96/C 345/20)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0932/96

by Shaun Spiers (PSE) to the Commission

(23 April 1996)

Subject: Animal feed products

What are the EU regulations regarding the feeding of animal and poultry by-products to:

1. ruminant farm animals
2. other farm animals
3. poultry
4. farmed fish?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the commission

(3 June 1996)

Intracommunity trade in animal feedingstuffs is subject to strict rules concerning labelling, use of additives and raw materials, the presence of contaminants and the approval and inspection of establishments producing feedingstuffs. These rules are applicable to all feedingstuffs produced for species destined for human consumption.

With regard to animal and public health, the requirements for the production of feedingstuffs of animal origin are set out in various Community provisions:

- Council Directive 90/667/EEC (1) laying down veterinary rules concerning the processing of animal waste for its placing on the market and for the prevention of pathogens in feedstuffs of animal or fish origin. This Directive establishes detailed hygiene requirements for the collection and transport of animal waste, hygiene requirements for animal-waste processing plants and microbiological requirements concerning the products after processing;
- Commission Decision 92/562/EEC (2) on the approval of alternative heat treatment systems for processing high-risk material;
- Commission Decision 94/382/EEC (3) (as last amended by Commission Decision 95/29/EC (4)), on the approval of alternative heat treatment systems for processing animal waste of ruminant origin, with a view to the inactivation of spongiform encephalopathy agents. In particular this Decision prohibits the use of one rendering system (the continuous vacuum added fat system) and sets new time and temperature parameters for all the other systems approved according to the Decision 92/562/EEC for the processing of ruminant material;

- Commission Decision 94/381/EC [5] concerning certain protection measures with regard to bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the feeding of mammalian derived protein. This Decision prohibits the feeding of protein derived from mammalian tissues to ruminant species;
- Commission Decision 91/516/EEC [6] establishing a list of ingredients the use of which is prohibited in compound feedingstuffs. This list includes materials like faeces and urine, leather and leather waste.

(1) OJ L 363, 27.12.1990. Directive as last amended by the Act of Accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden.
(2) OJ L 359, 9.12.1992. Directive as last amended by the Act of Accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden.
(3) OJ L 172, 7.7.1994.
(4) OJ L 38, 18.2.1995.
(5) OJ L 172, 7.7.1994.
(6) OJ L 281, 9.10.1991.

(96/C 345/21)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0937/96

by Shaun Spiers (PSE) to the Commission

(23 April 1996)

Subject: Financial provision for veterinary inspectors

On the occasion of the Council agreement on Directive 95/29/EC [1] on the transport of animals in June 1995, reference was made to the importance of extra veterinary inspectors to be taken on by the Commission for the purpose of monitoring the implementation and enforcement of this Directive.

Would the Commission confirm that proper financial provision has been made in the budget for these additional inspectors and, if so, how many have alrady been appointed and how many will be employed in the near future?

(1) OJ L 148 of 30.6.1995, p. 52

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(28 May 1996)

The Commission has not decided, within the framework of the means foreseen in the 1996 budget, to increase the staff of the directorate general for agriculture including the veterinary units. The restrictions on recruitment of additional personnel faced by the Commission also make it difficult to get extra staff.

(96/C 345/22)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0945/96

by Cristiana Muscardini (NI) to the Commission

(26 April 1996)

Subject: Tax harmonization

The tables in the Commission communication on taxation clearly show that the tax pressure brought to bear on all Italians, be they employed or self-employed, increased between 1980 and 1993.

Furthermore, the tax burden varies from one country to another, there is no consistency in the rates applied, and salaried employees and the self-employed have to pay different amounts of tax.

1. Does the Commission not believe that superfluous distinctions in taxation prevent the internal market from operating and indirectly distort competition?

2. Would it not be desirable to lay down ceilings, along the lines of the minimum VAT limits, for the purpose of taxing small firms and craft businesses?

3. Does the Commission not consider that the heavy, highly variable tax burden and the plethora of attendant red tape imposed on SMUs and craft businesses in Italy pose a great obstacle to recruitment and job creation?

4. If so, what will it do to move more rapidly towards harmonization and hence completion of the internal market?

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(4 June 1996)

The tables on the structure of taxes and social charges in the Community drawn up by the Commission show that the burden of taxation falling on labour (employed) increased between 1980 and 1993. However, using the available data, it is not possible to draw the same conclusion for the taxation of the self-employed, at least in the current stage of the analysis.

It is precisely when the differences in the national tax and social security systems of Member States represent obstacles to the smooth functioning of the single market or a distortion of competition that the Commission has most reason to propose that those differences should be reduced. However, differences in tax rules do not necessarily in themselves produce such effects, in particular when one takes into account not only all taxes and social charges but also their counterpart such as the quality of infrastructure or education.

Tax or social security barriers within the single market do exist in specific areas, such as in the treatment of cross-border workers and in the cross-border income flows of businesses. These barriers, and the need to eliminate them, were highlighted in the document on taxation in the Community presented by the Commission to the informal meeting of economic and finance ministers in Verona on 12 and 13 April.

In its communication of 25 May 1994 on the improvement of the tax environment of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) ([1]), the Commission stated that, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, it had no intention of harmonising the tax regimes of SMEs. It would not therefore be appropriate for the Commission to propose a maximum rate for the taxation of SMEs or enterprises in the craft sector. The level of taxation of such enterprises is entirely a matter for Member States. However, the Commission has made recommendations to Member States to encourage specific improvements in the tax environment of SMEs ([2]).

From the point of view of job creation, the increasing taxation of labour appears to be more damaging than the taxation of businesses. However, a bureaucratic and complex tax system, in any Member State, is particularly damaging for SMEs. That is why, in its report to the Madrid European Council on SMEs ([3]), the Commission recommended that Member States should develop a bold strategy of administrative and regulatory simplification, including a simplified VAT system. Furthermore, recognising that relatively high taxes and social security contributions hit SMEs hardest, the Commission takes the view that Member States should vigorously pursue the reduction of non-wage labour costs to promote employment in SMEs.

Finally, the Commission underlines the importance of taking forward the work on taxation set out in the document on taxation in the Community discussed by Economic and Finance ministers in Verona. The document proposes a new global approach to taxation and social security issues which takes into account the objectives of the single market, economic and monetary union and the fight against unemployment. A high level group of personal representatives of Economic and Finance ministers headed by the Commission will pursue the consideration of taxation along the broad lines of that document.

The Commission has recently announced, in an appearance of one of its members at the Committee for economic and monetary affairs and Industrial policy, the wish to have regular exchanges of views on this topic with the Parliament.

([1]) COM(94) 206.
([2]) OJ 177, 9.7.1994.
([3]) CSE(95) 2087.

(96/C 345/23)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0965/96

by Christine Oddy (PSE) to the Commission

(26 April 1996)

Subject: European fish stocks

Is the Commission aware that the UN has banned large-scale drift nets (those longer than 2.5 km) but certain European countries continue to use them?

What steps will the Commission take to protect fish stocks in the future?

Answer given by Ms Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(25 June 1996)

In accordance with Article 9a of Regulation (EEC) No 3094/86, (1) drift-nets must not exceed 2.5 km in total length; the only exception to this rule is the Baltic Sea, where, in accordance with the measures agreed under the Convention on Fishing and Conservation of Living Resources in the Baltic Sea, large nets may be used for salmon-fishing under certain conditions.

The steps taken by the Commission to ensure observance of the above Article are described in the report on the use of large drift-nets under the common fisheries policy in 1995. (2) The Commission has adopted provisions similar to those adopted in 1995 for 1996.

Generally speaking, in order to conserve fisheries resources, the Commission has proposed a set of measures covering the protection of juveniles under what are termed technical measures, the reduction of exploitation rates under MGP IV, and also increased use of satellite-based position monitoring, and it has proposed to the Council that drift-nets be completely banned, a position accepted by Parliament. (3)

(1) Council Regulation (EEC) No 3094/86 of 7 October 1986 (OJ L 288, 11.10.1986), as last amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 3071/95 of 22 December 1995 (OJ L 329, 30.12.1995).
(2) SEC(95) 2259 of 14 December 1995.
(3) OJ C 118, 29.4.1994.

(96/C 345/24)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0991/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(26 April 1996)

Subject: Mainstreaming of disabled people's projects in European Social Fund programmes

What proportion of ESF funding is provided to support disabled people's projects under the Youthstart, Now and Euroform Community initiatives, by number, cost and percentage?

Since the European Parliament insisted that 2/3 of funding from HORIZON is allocated to disabled people's projects, is it true that the Commission has directed applications from disability projects to this programme, as an alternative to the other Community initiatives? Is this not a violation of the principle of mainstreaming of disability initiatives within all programmes of the European Union?

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(8 July 1996)

The Employment Initiative was launched in 1994 in all the Member States around three strands – NOW, which consists of measures to promote equal opportunities between women and men in the labour market, Youthstart, in favour of completely unqualified young people aged 16 to 25, and Horizon, in favour of the disabled and other disadvantaged groups.

In May 1996 the Commission decided to add a new strand to the initiative, called 'Integra', covering the 1996–1999 planning period. Horizon is now exclusively focused on projects for the disabled, while Integra supports actions in favour of the other disadvantaged groups.

The Employment Initiative supported over 2 500 projects in the Member States after the first selection round. Since the process of selecting the projects and the agreements with the promoters takes place at the level of the Member States, and since not all these procedures have been completed, the Commission does not yet have definitive data.

As regards Horizon, at the time the first call for proposals was launched (1995), this strand of the Community Employment Initiative envisaged two main target groups, namely the disabled and other disadvantaged persons. An initial analysis shows that the percentage of projects targeting the disabled ranges from 55% to 65% depending on the Member State. There are 650 projects for the disabled, i.e. 57% of the Horizon projects submitted in 1995.

The Community contribution to Horizon-disabled is 513 million ecus for the 1995–1999 period.

First indications show that only a fraction of the projects in the two other strands (NOW and Youthstart) mentions the disabled as a target group, namely 3% of the Youthstart projects and 0.5% of all the NOW projects. The Commission does not yet have consolidated figures concerning the budgets of the projects selected which have the disabled as their target group.

A provisional directory of projects selected for the Horizon strand was published in March 1996, containing an initial description of projects for the disabled (Volume 1) and other disadvantaged groups (Volume 2). A copy of this provisional directory (disabled) is being sent directly to the Honourable Member as well as to the Secretariat-General of the Parliament.

The Commission, which has no say in the project selection procedure, has never channelled requests submitted for projects in favour of the disabled towards the Horizon initiative as an alternative to the other Community initiatives. Moreover, the Commission is not aware of any regional or national practices that might favour the tendency mentioned by the Honourable Member.

(96/C 345/25)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0992/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(26 April 1996)

Subject: Study on the urban phenomenon under the Italian presidency

Will the Commission ensure its study on the Urban Phenomenon, requested by the Italian Presidency, includes specific assessment of the need for an urban competence in the Treaty on European Union?

Will it also ensure it prepares a specific text for such a Treaty amendment, to help inform Member States at the Intergovernmental Conference?

Answer given by Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(6 June 1996)

On the initiative of the Italian Presidency, the study 'Cities and Metropolitan regions between globalisation and sustainability: towards new goals of territorial development and increased employment' was carried out by the Politecnico di Milano. The formal report was presented at the informal meeting of ministers of regional policy and spatial planning which took place in Venice on 3-4 May 1996.

The Commission has not been directly involved in the study.

No assessment of the need for an urban competence in the Treaty is envisaged within the scope of the study and there are no indications at this stage that this issue will be discussed during the Intergovernmental conference.

(96/C 345/26)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1006/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(26 April 1996)

Subject: Participation by 'Thames Gateway' region in EU regional projects

What discussions has and will the Commission undertake with the British Government and with representatives of local authorities and social partners regarding the participation of the Thames Gateway sub-region (formerly East Thames Corridor) in European Union regional programmes?

Does the Commission accept that this project represents 'the largest regeneration project in Europe' and what initiatives does it plan in this respect?

Supplementary answer given by Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(4 July 1996)

The Thames Gateway falls within a number of United Kingdom standard regions. Areas within it are eligible for a number of programmes cofinanced by the structural funds, such as objective 2 in East London and Konver in Essex. The Commission has had numerous contacts with representatives of the relevant regions and the British government in the context of these programmes. However, this has been without any specific reference to the Thames Gateway.

(96/C 345/27)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1011/96

by Johanna Maij-Weggen (PPE) to the Commission

(26 April 1996)

Subject: Certification for sustainable timber production

1. Is the Commission aware of the activities with regard to sustainable timber production of the British certification institute SGS Forestry and the principles and criteria of the Forest Stewardship Council?

2. Is it aware of the extent of sustainable and certified timber production of the SWIFT producer association (Solomon Western Islands Fair Trade) and if so is it willing to support an expansion of this project?

3. What criteria does the Commission use when it writes about sustainable timber production, for example in the environment clauses in treaties and legislation and also with regard to the construction of its own buildings?

4. What recognized quality marks does the Commission operate and is it willing to investigate whether a single European quality mark can be operated in order to prevent consumer confusion?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(24 June 1996)

1. The Commission is aware of the Forest stewardship council (FSC) principles of forest management and the associated criteria. As published by FSC these principles relate to compliance with laws and FSC principles, to tenure and use rights and responsibilities, to indigenous people's rights, to community relations and workers' rights, to benefits from the forest, to environmental impact, to management plans, to monitoring and assessment, to maintenance of natural forests and to plantations.

The Commission is also in general aware of the activities of SGS forestry which is a certification body operating in the field of sustainable forest management certification, accredited by FSC. However, the Commission is not necessarily aware of each single operation of a private company.

2. The Commission is aware of the project of the Swift producer association which has received an environmental award in the Netherlands. The Commission is in a process of drawing up a contract of a Community-based tropical eco-timber project involving Swift-Icco.

3. At international level the concept of sustainable forest management has been basically defined in the 'Non-legally binding authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests' as adopted by the United Nations conference on environment and developemnt (UNCED). At the European level, the concept has been further detailed within Resolution n° H1 of the ministerial conference of the protection of forests in Europe (Helsinki 1993). This resolution was signed by the Community and its Member States. Within the follow-up process to the Helsinki conference, a number of criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management were adopted in 1994 at pan-European level. These criteria and indicators however only apply to the national level, i.e. not at the management unit level. The possibilities for the development of sub-national criteria and indicators are currently being considered in the same context. The Commission is also aware of several other international and national, private and public, initiatives and activities related to sustainable forest management, among others the FSC activities, the activities in connection with the technical committee 207 of the International standardisation organisation (ISO), the International tropical timber agreement, the Nordic forest certification project, the Canadian standard association (CSA) standards and various emerging sustainable forest management (SFM) certification schemes.

As regards adopted Community legislation, reference has been made to the UNCED statement on forest principles and Resolution H1 of the ministerial conference on the protection of forests in Europe in the context of the implementation of Council Regulation (EEC) No 880/92 on a Community eco-label award scheme (1) (Commission Decision No 94/924/CE and 94/925/CE of 14 November 1994 establishing the ecological criteria for the award of the Community eco-label to toilet paper and kitchen rolls (2)), and to the standards of the International tropical timber organisation (ITTO) in Article 8 of the Council Regulation (EC) No 3281/94 of 19 December 1994 applying a four-year scheme of generalized preferences (1995 to 1998) in respect of certain industrial products originating in developing countries (3).

The Commission usually rents the buildings it uses. Environmental clauses with regard to subtainable timber production are not used in the leases or construction contracts.

4. The Commission does not operate any quality mark as regards sustainable timber production and sustainable forest management. The Commission has recognized the emergence of various SFM certification and timber labelling initiatives and is aware that the proliferation of schemes may cause confusion among consumers. The Commission is discussing with the Member States the policy options including the possibility of a Community scheme with regard to SFM and timber certification.

The issue of voluntary certification of forests is also currently being discussed, at international level, by the Intergovernmental panel on forests established by the Commission on sustainable development. In addition to the discussions taking place in the sessions of the panel there are intersessional activities, organized by certain governments, in relation to the work of the panel. In particular, these include the International conference on certification and labelling of products from sustainably managed forests in Brisbane on 26-30 May 1996 and the expert working group meeting on trade, labelling of forest products and certification of sustainable forest management in Bonn on 12-16 August 1996.

(1) OJ L 99, 11.4.1992
(2) OJ L 364, 31.12.1994.
(3) OJ L 348, 31.12.1994.

(96/C 345/28)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1031/96

by Reimer Böge (PPE) to the Commission

(3 May 1996)

Subject: European dimension to education in the European Schools

The European schools were founded to provide suitable educational opportunities for the children of officials and other staff of the European institutions. However, one declared aim of the European schools is to provide a European dimension to education and to teach in multinational groups. The education provided should ensure that the process of European integration begins at school. These schools provide an ideal opportunity to win over a considerable number of young people (over 15 500 in the 1996 academic year) as 'ambassadors' for the unification process.

Since around 2/3 of the schools budget is funded from European Community appropriations (the EU contribution for 1996 was around ECU 99m), the schools are presumably subject to EU inspection regarding (inter alia) the fulfilment of their objectives.

I should therefore like to ask the Commission:

1. Are European topics given appropriate consideration in the syllabuses of the European Schools?

2. Is there a guarantee that these syllabuses are adhered to, that the pupils have a detailed knowledge of European topics by the time they leave school, and that they (for example) have a good grounding in the structure and operation of the European Institutions?

3. Does the Commission have sufficient opportunity to represent the interests of the Community in European schools, given that the EU has only one representative on the Board of Governors, who has the same voting rights as each representative of a Member State or the representative of the European Patent Office?

Answer given by Mr Liikanen on behalf of the Commission

(3 June 1996)

1. Since the European Schools were set up in 1953, syllabuses have been based on European themes. There has been considerable development in education, and inspectors from each Member State continue to meet regularly, as they always have done, to adjust syllabuses to European ideas.

2. The inspectors, individually or in teams, supervise the application of the current syllabuses, in particular with regard to the structures and operation of the European institutions. Maximum information on their European origins is given daily to the pupils in the schools.

3. The structure of the European Schools is unique in that it combines the responsibility of the Member States for education with the Community concern for the smooth operation of its institutions. It enables management and the breakdown of cost between the Member States and the Community to be based on the various areas of responsibility involved.

Commission participation in the highest body of the European Schools — the Board of Governors — is very important and not devoid of complexity in view of the threefold role it plays and the need to harmonize the various interests in question. Firstly, the Commission, although it has no power to take action on matters such as educational certificates, which are the exclusive responsibility of the Member States, is a full member of the Board of Governors. It is a party to decisions with its right to vote, which can become a right to veto when decisions must be taken unanimously. Secondly, the Commission is the employer of a large number of the parents of the pupils, towards whom it owes a duty of care although they have their own legitimate representatives. Lastly, the Commission, while representing all Community institutions on the Board of Governors, does not neglect its institutional role and acts as the defender of Community interests by ensuring the smooth operation of the institutions.

Here, the Commission attaches great importance to the promotion of Community interests in the various bodies of the European School on which it sits and, for that purpose, it employs all the means at its disposal.

(96/C 345/29)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1061/96

by Carlos Robles Piquer (PPE) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Imports of non-Community oranges into the United Kingdom

In January 1996 the Commission authorized, exceptionally, the importation of 12 000 tonnes of non-Community oranges for the production of fresh juice. The measure was to be valid only until the end of March and was based on an apparent shortage of Community oranges.

Can the Commission say how this authorization was applied and whether it does not consider that it may have prejudiced orange producers in the Member States, whom the principle of Community preference is supposed to benefit?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(4 June 1996)

On 11 January the Commission adopted a temporary derogating measure allowing 12 000 tonnes of oranges intended for processing to be imported at a reduced entry price.

This measure, which was essential to ensure the immediate supply of freshly squeezed orange juice to the Community industry, was based on the specifications for oranges used to produce juice of this type and in particular on their limonin content (a bitter substance) and degree Brix (sugar content).

The Commission has undertaken an enquiry to ascertain whether oranges produced in the Community during the period 1 December to 31 March possessed the appropriate technical qualities to make them suitable for the manufacture of freshly squeezed juice.

As the industry concerned is a traditional importer of oranges from third countries, no substitution of Community oranges by imported oranges has in fact occurred.

(96/C 345/30)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1063/96

by Carlos Robles Piquer (PPE) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Disasters and consistency

According to a brief news item probably originating with the Commission (the Spanish edition of Europe, No 3673 of 26.1.1996, page 11) the Commission intended to contact the authorities of the European Parliament to remedy the alleged contradictory behaviour on the part of the latter in that it requested emergency aid for natural disasters after abolishing the relevant budgetary item.

Did these contacts take place and, if so, what was the outcome?

Answer given by Mr Santer on behalf of the Commission

(28 June 1996)

In December 1995, the Parliament, at second reading, voted to give budget Item B4-3400 (Emergency aid to disaster victims in the Community) only a token entry for 1996. Since the beginning of 1996, Parliament has passed several resolutions requesting the Commission to grant emergency aid to victims of disastrous floods in several Member States.

Against this background the Commission was indeed in contact with Parliament in order to clarify its wishes with regard to emergency aid. Following these contacts the Commission proposed to the budgetary authority an exceptional transfer of ECU 1 million to Item B4-3400 so that it can respond to a very small number of exceptionally serious and extensive disasters in 1996. The Commission is now waiting for the Council and Parliament to approve this transfer. Parliament's Committee on Budgets has already stated that it wishes to reduce the amount of the transfer to ECU 300 000.

(96/C 345/31)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1071/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Fishing issues in Essex and Kent

Does the Commission accept that the common fisheries policy rules are giving incentives for the building of 70 — 80 foot 'Eurocutters' in order to employ intensive 'factory fishing' techniques, but which are allowed

access to fish up to three miles off shore? Does the Commission also agree that small under-10m boats are being built precisely because they can avoid the limits altogether? If so, what actions are proposed to rectify these blatant distortions in the markets, and attempts to evade proper conservation targets?

(96/C 345/32)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1072/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Fishing issues in Essex and Kent

Why are decommissioning monies paid to owners on resale of boats not on retirement, when many take the money and use it to purchase another boat with an allocation? Is this not contrary to a proper use of public money to assist people to leave the industry, rather than to subsidize their increasing profitability with a newer vessel?

(96/C 345/33)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1073/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Fishing issues in Essex and Kent

Is it true that with British Government capital gains tax regulations as they stand, instead of making a contribution towards EU decommissioning, the British Government is actually making a profit? If so, why does the Commission not insist that this money is reallocated to aid impoverished fishing communities?

Joint answer to Written Questions E-1071/96, E-1072/96 and E-1073/96
given by Mrs Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Community aid is provided for measures adopted in Community programmes for fisheries within the framework of Regulation (EC) No 3699/93 of 21 December 1993 [1]. Individual fisheries projects, including construction or modernisation of fishing vessels cited by the Honourable Member are considered by the Member State in accordance with the programme indicated above and having regard to the capacity reduction targets fixed in the multiannual guidance programmes (MAGP) for the United Kingdom fishing fleet.

The Commission does not feel that the above-mentioned measures favour construction or modernisation of vessels of a particular length, design or type of fishing gear. Also, it is not correct to say that incentives are used to finance new constructions under 10 metres in length to avoid conservation or territorial limits.

The purpose of a measure such as decommissioning is to reduce fishing capacity in line with MAGP targets. The United Kingdom decommissioning scheme requires the surrender and suppression of the licence attached to the decommissioned vessel. The fleet capacity is, therefore, reduced irrespective of whether the owner purchases another existing licence or not. The measure satisfies the purpose for which it was introduced by reducing the size of the United Kingdom fishing fleet.

Provided that national legislation does not contravene the fundamental principles of the EC Treaty, in particular the prohibition of discrimination, and provided that exemptions from taxation do not amount to unlawful state aids, Community law cannot interfere with the autonomy of a Member State in matters of taxation. Member States can apply their own social and fiscal law in relation to matters of income, as long as they are in conformity with the Treaty and the aims of the common fisheries policy are not impeded.

[1] OJ L 346, 31.12.1993.

(96/C 345/34)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1077/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Fishing issues in Essex and Kent

What actions has the Commission taken in Europe to ensure that all Member States observe the ban on the illegal use of 30ml 'blinders', through which smaller fish are continuing to be caught? What steps should be supported in order to ensure more effective monitoring and policing of quota adherence overall?

Answer given by Mrs Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(11 June 1996)

It is the responsibility of Member States to control fishing in general and the respect of technical measures in particular.

Community legislation has been adopted which facilitates disclosure of the use of blinders through regulation of the minimum mesh sizes in certain fisheries and zones and the legal attachments that could be used. Thus Council Regulation (EEC) No 3094/86 (1), as currently amended, incorporates a wide range of technical measures primarily intended for the conservation of fish stocks. Furthermore, Commission Regulation No 3440/84 (2), as amended, describes the devices that may be attached to trawls, Danish seines and similar nets.

Member States should have the necessary means and sufficient staff to carry out inspections at sea and ashore. The new control Regulation (3) establishes the obligation of cross-checking logbook estimations, landing declarations and sales notes and its full implementation by the Member States will help to achieve more effective monitoring of TACs and quotas. Furthermore, the establishment of a system for the management of fishing effort relating to certain Community fishing areas and resources (4) (ICES divisions Vb, VI, VII, VIII, IX and X and CECAF areas 34.1.1., 34.1.2. and 34.2.0.) and the system of hailing (5) in and out of different fishing areas will help the detection of some inconsistencies in the registration of the catches by fishing skippers.

Council Regulation (EC) No 847/96 of 22 April 1996 introducing additional conditions for year to year management of TACs and quotas (6) establishes some level of flexibility (+/— 10%) in the uptake of annual quotas by Member States and provides for the reduction of Member States quota in the event that their fishermen exceed national quotas. The Commission continues to monitor catches and up take of quota and does not hesitate to initiate proceedings against Member States which fail to manage their quotas properly. A recent example of this is the decision of the Court of Justice in Case C-52/95 Commission v. France (7).

(1) Council Regulation (EEC) No 3094/86, 7.10.1986, OJ L 288, 11.10.1986 last amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 3071/95, 22.12.1995, OJ L 329, 30.12.1995.
(2) Commission Regulation (EEC) No 3440/84, 6.12.1984, OJ L 318, 7.12.1984 last amended by Commission Regulation (EEC) No 2122/89, 14.7.1989, OJ L 203, 15.7.1989.
(3) Council Regulation (EEC) No 2847/93, 12.10.1993, OJ L 261, 20.10.1993.
(4) Council Regulation (EC) No 685/95, 27.3.1995, OJ L 71, 31.3.1995.
(5) Commission Regulation (EC) No 2945/95, 20.12.1995, OJ L 308, 21.12.1995.
(6) OJ L 115, 9.5.1996.
(7) OJ C 46, 17.2.1996.

(96/C 345/35)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1119/96

by Brian Crowley (UPE) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Applications for co-financing under R&D framework programme

What are the minimum and maximum staff rates charged by company participants/consultants under the EU third and fourth R&D framework programmes for (i) engineers, (ii) senior managers/administrators and (iii) researchers?

Could the Commission also indicate an approximate average figure for the Cohesion countries and the four biggest Member States?

Answer given by Mrs Cresson on behalf of the Commission

(1 July 1996)

As set out in Article 7 of the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in research, technological development and demonstration activities of the Community (Council Decision 94/763/EC of 21 November 1994) (1), the Community financial participation usually consists of the reimbursement of a proportion of the actual costs of the research project including indirect overhead costs.

As staff costs of a project, although important, are only an element of the total cost, and given the different criteria applied by participants as to the categories of staff, the Commission does not distinguish in its existing data base between the various elements of the total project cost and is thus not in a position to provide minimum or maximum staff rates or average staff rates by Member States or groups of Member States. It should however be noted that where possible contractors use rates accepted by Member State authorities with suitable adjustments to take into account any differences in funding arrangements.

The appropriateness of the cost of the various elements which go to make up a project proposal, and the corresponding level of Community financial support, is however assessed during the evaluation of the proposal by independent experts, and is the subject of detailed examination during contract negotiations between the consortium participants and the Commission. In addition the Commission uses both its own staff and external organizations to audit both contracts and contractors.

(1) OJ L 306, 30.11.1994.

(96/C 345/36)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1121/96

by Josu Imaz San Miguel (PPE) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Possible American sanctions on imports of Italian fish

The decision by the International Trade Tribunal in New York may mean an immediate ban on imports of Italian fish products and products derived therefrom due to that country's breach of United Nations rules on the use of drift nets.

The possible ban on American imports of Italian fish may lead to an imbalance in the European market due to the threat of an excess supply which may adversely affect the market balance and harm producers in other Community countries.

One of the Commission's legal obligations as guarantor of the EU Treaty, specifically by virtue of Article 39(1)(c), is to stabilize markets for fish products. The Commission should not wait for this imbalance to come about without taking action on the causes of the American boycott of Italian imports, which, in economic terms, may represent an additional supply amounting to Ptas 150.000 millions.

If the ban on imports approved by the New York tribunal is due to the use of illegal drift nets by the Italian fleet, the Commission should consider the fact that illegal fishing has continued despite the great efforts made to monitor drift nets during the past summer. This appears to indicate that the solution is to be found in a total ban on such nets.

Will the Commission take any measures in response to the possible US boycott of Italian fish imports?

Will the Commission raise this question at the Fisheries Council meeting on 22 April 1996, in its capacity as the body responsible for stabilizing the markets for fish products in accordance with the Treaty?

Answer given by Ms Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(1 July 1996)

The value of exports of fishery products from Italy to the United States is not around Ptas 150 000 million but around Ptas 300 million. If the figure of Ptas 150 000 million includes products other than those covered by the common organization of the market in fishery products, those other products which were also covered by an embargo would have no effect upon the stability of the market in fishery products. A list of exports from Italy to the United States of the products covered by the common organization of the market in fishery products is being sent direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat (1994 figures: quantity exported: 455 tonnes; value exported: ECU 1.7 million).

If the United States adopts unilateral trade sanctions against imports of products from Italy, the Commission will in any event react on the basis of the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules.

The matter was not raised at the Council meetings on 22 April or 10 June.

(96/C 345/37)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1125/96

by Cristiana Muscardini (NI) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: New foodstuffs and ingredients

The scope of the Community regulation on new foodstuffs and ingredients is to be extended to matters which are already the subject of current legislation and it is to become impossible to use biotechnology in order to produce new varieties.

Furthermore, it is to become compulsory to label products obtained from raw materials which are genetically modified but are essentially the same as those obtained from the equivalent raw materials obtained by traditional farming methods, and this will lead to serious problems in identifying and separating genetically modified raw materials.

Can the Commission intervene to secure the speedy adoption of the proposal with a view to avoiding these problems?

Answer given by Mr Bangemann on behalf of the Commission

(24 June 1996)

The common position for a regulation on novel foods and novel foods ingredients (1) covers all foods and food ingredients not hitherto used for human consumption in the Community, provided they fall under the categories which have been listed under article 1 (2) (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f) of the common position. However, products having to undergo a more specific authorization procedure — such as additives, flavourings and extraction solvents — will require no additional authorization under the regulation. As far as new cultivating methods are concerned, the common position does not prevent the use of biotechnology and the benefits of biotechnology.

The Commission has always argued in favour of extensive labelling which provides meaningful information to the consumer and which is enforceable at the different stages of processing. This is the reason why the Commission endorsed article 8 (a) of the common position that is based on the concept of significant difference which establishes the need for specific labelling.

The Commission examined the amendments adopted by the Parliament in its second reading on 12 March 1996, aiming at modifying the common position. The Commission transmitted its opinion on 23 May 1996 (2) to the Parliament and the Council.

(1) OJ C 320, 30.11.1995.
(2) COM(96) 229 final.

(96/C 345/38)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1130/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Gaseous pollutant emissions

The Commission is to be commended for its proposal for a directive COM(95) 350 (1) on the emission of gaseous pollutants from non-road mobile machinery, which is intended to reduce the pollution caused by these machines and is the first proposal for an EU directive tackling this major problem.

Does the Commission not agree that it would be beneficial to ensure that alternative fuels, which are ecological and biodegradable, are used, on the basis of the experience of using eco-diesel fuel, which results in a total reduction of CO_2 emissions into the atmosphere of 2.3 kg for each litre used?

(1) OJ C 328, 07.12.1995, p. 1.

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(22 July 1996)

The proposal (1) would regulate requirements on engines with regard to their emissions rather than to environmentally friendliness of certain fuels.

The Commission is committed to encourage the development of more environmentally friendly fuels as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from mobile sources. Alternative fuels such as bio-fuels appear to present some advantages in this regard but these must be balanced against other factors such as the environmental impact associated with crop cultivation methods. The net CO_2 emission reduction is often less than indicated by the Honourable Member and this reduction is only achieved at a much higher cost than those associated with other measures reducing CO_2 emissions.

(1) COM(95) 350.

(96/C 345/39)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1131/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Gaseous pollutant emissions from non-road machinery

The proposal for a directive COM(95) 350 (1) sets emission standards and provides for the introduction of a type-approval procedure for engines installed in non-road machinery, for example excavators, fork-lift trucks and bulldozers. However, this sector, which has until now been entirely unregulated, must be regulated by economically efficient instruments based on a calculation of the cost per tonne of reducing the gaseous pollutant emissions. The market for this type of engine is huge, with countless applications, and there is considerable interest in the industry in the rapid regulation and harmonization of the sector in accordance with the standards in force in the USA so that certificates may be recognised as valid in both areas.

Will the Commission press for the mutual recognition of certificates issued by the US and the European authorities?

(1) OJ C 328, 07.12.1995, p. 1.

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(3 July 1996)

The proposal (for a Parliament and Council directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the measures to be taken against the emission of gaseous and particulate pollutants from internal

combution engines to be installed in non-road mobile machinery) is compatible with the relevant United States rule (adopted in June 1994) in terms of measuring procedures and limit values for Stage I. This is likely to be the first transatlantic compatible mobile source emission legislation.

The Commission has a mandate from the Council to negotiate with certain third countries, such as the United States, with regard to mutual recognition of tests and certificates of conformity issued by competent bodies. Once the directive is adopted, this topic could be included in the negotiations. In any case this is not a subject of this directive.

(96/C 345/40)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1132/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Gaseous pollutant emissions from internal combustion engines

In connection with the proposal for a European Parliament and Council Directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the measures to be taken against the emission of gaseous and particulate pollutants from internal combustion engines to be installed in non-road mobile machinery (COM(95) 350 [1],

Will the Commission reach a firm decision on the penalties to be imposed on manufacturers who, once they have obtained type-approval for an engine, continue to manufacture engines of the same family which fail to comply with the characteristics registered and approved under the type-approval procedure?

[1] OJ C 328, 07.12.1995, p. 1.

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(2 July 1996)

The proposal (for a Parliament and Council directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the measures to be taken against the emission of gaseous and particulate pollutants from internal combustion engines to be installed in non-road mobile machinery) lays down procedures in the case of non-conformity of the engines with the approved type (Article 13). It is up to the Member States to take the necessary measures to ensure that the engines in production conform to the approved type. The measures may extend to withdrawals of type-approvals (penalties).

Therefore a decision of the Commission on the penalties to be imposed is superfluous.

(96/C 345/41)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1143/96

by Elly Plooij-van Gorsel (ELDR) to the Commission

(13 May 1996)

Subject: Eureka evaluation report not available in all official languages

The Eureka evaluation report is available from the Commission in five languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

1. Why has this report not been translated into all 11 official languages?

2. Why is the Commission issuing the report in Spanish and Italian, but not in Dutch?

Answer given by Mrs Cresson on behalf of the Commission

(2 July 1996)

It is normal for EUREKA documents to be available in five languages (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish). However, the assessment report drawn up by the French Presidency in 1993 is available only in French and English, and the assessment reports drawn up under the Dutch (1991) and Swiss (1995) presidencies are only available in English by the decision of those same presidencies.

The Honourable Member is reminded that EUREKA is not a Community programme but a 25-member inter-governmental initiative where the Commission represents the Community. Thus the Commission is not involved in selecting the languages in which those reports are published but may, like any other EUREKA member, be contacted where documents and reports are requested.

(96/C 345/42)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1149/96

by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Use of banned pesticides

According to consumers' associations, three types of pesticide included in the list of 12 pesticides whose use is banned in the Community are regularly available in Greece, despite the ban.

The products concerned are the weed-killer Paraquat, which is highly toxic, the fungicide ethylene bromide, which is carcinogenic, and the insecticide Listene, which is highly carcinogenic and which has recently been found in samples of mothers' milk in Greece.

1. Is the Commission aware that the toxic products described above are in circulation in Greece and, if so, will it say what quantities have entered the Greek market since the legislation was introduced?

2. Which authority is responsible for the control of these products and their withdrawal from the market in Greece?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(5 July 1996)

One of the pesticides mentioned in the question, ethylene dibromide (1,2-dibromethane), is prohibited, as a plant protection product, throughout the Community under the provisions of Directive 79/117/EEC [1] prohibiting the placing on the market and use of plant protection products containing certain active substances, as amended. The other two, paraquat and lindane (gamma-HCH), are not prohibited by Directive 79/117/EEC but are currently under review in the first stage of the programme of work referred to in Article 8(2) of Directive 91/414/EEC [2] concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market. The review will lead to a decision on whether or not they are listed in Annex I of this Directive as active substances authorized for incorporation in plant protection products. Member States are then responsible for reviewing their national plant protection product authorizations.

1. The Greek authorities have informed the Commission that ethylene dibromide was withdrawn as a plant protection product from the market by ministerial decision of 5 January 1988. However, this compound also has industrial uses (chemical and petroleum industries). As far as paraquat and lindane are concerned, the Greek authorities have informed the Commission that they are authorized in Greece as active substances of plant protection products. Information on quantities of plant protection products containing paraquat and lindane entering the Greek market is not available to the Commission. For lindane as a chemical, Eurostat data indicate that in 1992-1993-1994 Greece imported a total of 10 tonnes from Community sources and 0 tonnes from outside the Community for all uses. There are no Eurostat data for ethylene dibromide and paraquat.

2. The Greek authority for the placing on the market of plant protection products, and the inspection and control of their use, is the department of pesticides of the ministry of Agriculture.

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(1) OJ L 33, 8.2.1979.
(2) OJ L 230, 19.8.1991.

(96/C 345/43)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1150/96

by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Misuse of antibiotics for preventive purposes

According to consumers' associations, antibiotics are being widely used in stock-farming for preventive rather than therapeutic purposes, with the result that they are having adverse effects on human health via the food chain.

Is the Commission looking into these reports and what measures does it intend to take?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(14 June 1996)

The Commission has no knowledge of any recent complaints from Greek consumer associations about widespread misuse of antibiotics for preventative purposes in stock herds.

However, a new Council Directive, 96/23/EC, adopted on 29 April, which lays down measures for monitoring certain substances and residues thereof in livestock and animal produce, (1) enables Member States to tackle any such misuse by stepping up checks on the illegal use of veterinary medicines in stockbreeding.

The measures aim to protect consumers by stopping any meat or meat products with more than the authorized level of residues from being eaten by humans or animals. They also include severe penalties for farmers or businesses issuing or administering authorized substances for purposes other than those prescribed by national or Community law.

(1) OJ L 125, 23.5.1996.

(96/C 345/44)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1159/96

by Robin Teverson (ELDR) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Directive 88/166/EEC on battery cages

What steps has the Commission taken to ensure that Member States are implementing Directive 88/166/EEC (1) on battery cages?

Given that there is only one EU inspector on animal welfare, it is apparent that the Commission is not in a position to undertake inspections itself.

How many national inspections have been carried out in each Member State and have penalties been imposed for failure to comply with the rules?

Does the Commission intend to employ further EU inspectors to cover animal welfare, as one inspector is clearly insufficient?

(1) OJ L 74, 19.3.1988, p. 83.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(7 June 1996)

So far, the Commission has only one veterinary expert working in the field of animal welfare. His efforts and visits focus on the protection of animals during transport.

Thus the Commission has not yet been able to start on-the-spot inspections in the field of the protection of laying hens in battery cages. The Commission is, however, ready to employ further veterinary experts to fulfil its obligations in the many other domains of animal welfare, if the necessary budgetary funds are made available.

The Commission has no information about the number of inspections carried out concerning the protection of laying hens kept in battery cages nor about the penalties that have been imposed, as such activities fall within the competence of the Member States.

(96/C 345/45)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1162/96

by Spalato Belleré (NI) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Recognition of pilots' licences

Is the Commission aware that a pilot's licence for passenger aircraft which has been issued in one Member State is not valid in the others?

While it would be useful for a pilot to attend a course on the legislation of the Member State in which he wishes to have his original licence recognized, requiring him to sit a new test in order to be granted a new licence valid only in the country of issue certainly would not.

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(3 July 1996)

Mutual acceptance of pilot licences within the Community is regulated by Council Directive No 91/670/EEC of 16 December 1991 [1]. Under the provisions of this Directive acceptance of licences can be by general authorisation (recognition) or by express consent (validation). Validation of licences can be granted either on the basis of equivalence or experience.

The purpose of the Directive is to promote the free movement and establishment of personnel within the Community. A Member State must, when accepting a licence issued by another Member State, respect the general provisions of the EC Treaty (Articles 48, 52 and 59) on freedom of movement and right of establishment as well as the general principles and case law of the Court of Justice on mutual recognition. A Member State may not therefore, without infringing its obligations as laid down in the Treaty, 'require a national of a Member State to obtain those qualifications, which in general it determines solely by reference to its own national education and training system, where the person concerned has already acquired those qualifications in another Member State'.

[1] OJ L 373, 31.12.1991.

(96/C 345/46)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1163/96

by Marie-Paule Kestelijn-Sierens (ELDR) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Glasshouse horticulture

Does the Commission intend to grant demolition premiums to glasshouse horticultural businesses facing financial difficulties? If so, what sum is involved and what proportion will go to businesses in Flanders?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(5 June 1996)

At present the pulling down of glasshouses is not subsidized by the Community. The Commission is currently preparing a report on the situation in the tomato sector. In this framework, the present difficulties in the sector will be analysed and possible solutions will be considered.

(96/C 345/47)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1173/96

by Gerhard Schmid (PSE) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Transposition in Germany of Directive 89/686/EEC

Directive 89/686/EEC (1) on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to personal protective equipment has been transposed in Germany though the regulation implementing the Safety of Equipment Law of 10 June 1992. On the initiative of the Bundesrat this implementing regulation has been amended in such a way that personal protective equipment manufactured specifically for the forces of law and order will no longer be covered (§ 1(5), first sentence). This is in accordance with the law pursuant to Annex I of the directive.

Following the amendment some Länder are of the opinion that personal protective equipment manufactured specifically for their professional fire services are no longer subject to the requirements of Directive 89/686/EEC since they regard fire services as 'forces of law and order'. Consequently, the protective clothing purchased for fire-fighting purposes includes clothing that does not satisfy the safety requirements of the Directive.

1. Is this compatible with the spirit of directive 89/686/EEC?

2. In the Commission's opinion are German fire brigades used for 'the maintenance of law and order' (the term used in Annex I of the directive), and is it therefore permissible to exempt from the Directive personal protective equipment specifically manufactured for fire brigades?

3. If so, why was standard EN 469 drawn up, on the initiative of the Commission, for protective equipment for fire brigades for fire-fighting purposes?

4. If not, what action does the Commission intend to take against this infringement of the law?

(1) OJ L 399, 30.12.1989, p. 18.

Answer given by Mr Bangemann on behalf of the Commission

(1 July 1996)

1-2. The Commission does not think that fire brigades can be regarded as 'armed forces or forces used in the maintenance of law and order'. The personal protective equipment (PPE) used by them is therefore deemed to be covered by Directive 89/686/EEC and is not excluded under point 1 of Annex I. This exclusion actually concerns equipment designed and manufactured 'specifically' for use by the armed forces or in the maintenance of law and order, i.e. equipment which may only be used by these people, meets particular requirements and may be subject to official secrecy regulations.

3. Standard EN 468 on protective equipment for fire brigades for fire-fighting purposes was drawn up by CEN on a mandate from the Commission because this equipment is covered by the Directive. The Honourable Member is reminded that only the Directive is enforceable and that manufacturers are thus required to comply with the essential health and safety requirements laid down in it. Manufacturing to harmonized CEN and Cenelec standards is simply a way of meeting these requirements and manufacturers must decide for themselves whether or not to apply them.

4. The fact that some Member States have decided to regard fire brigades, at least professional firefighters, as armed forces or forces used in the maintenance of law and order, as pointed out by the Honourable Member, will be examined at the forthcoming meeting of the Working Party set up under the Directive to assist in its practical application and, if necessary, the Commission will take the necessary steps vis-à-vis the Member States to ensure the uniform application of Community law.

(96/C 345/48)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1175/96

by Gerhard Schmid (PSE) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: The FAIR research programme

1. Who has received grants, how much and for what projects in the period up to 1994 under the FAIR programme drawn up as part of the agriculture and fisheries research programme?

2. What experts did the Commission consult when a decision was taken on providing support under the FAIR programme?

Answer given by Mrs Cresson on behalf of the Commission

(28 June 1996)

1. The programme FAIR, agriculture and fisheries (including agro-industry, food-technologies, forestry, aquaculture and rural development) is one of the specific Community research programmes implementing the Fourth framework programme. It was adopted by Council Decision of 23 November 1994 ([1]), and will run from the date of adoption to the end of 1998, with a total budget of 728 MECU.

The first call for proposals was launched on 15 December 1994 and closed on 15 March 1995. Therefore, there were no FAIR research projects funded during 1994. As a result of the first call, a total of 114 projects were selected for funding by the Commission during 1995 (see also the answer to the written question E-207/96 by Mr Méndez de Vigo ([2])). A list of all the selected projects with the titles and duration is sent directly to the Honourable Member and to the Secretariat General of the Parliament.

2. The experts consulted by the Commission, to evaluate the quality of the FAIR proposals submitted in response to the first call, were chosen on the basis of their scientific and technical quality from nominations suggested by the Member States, nominations from related industries, learned societies, and relevant associations, which make up the FAIR data base of experts.

The experts for proposal evaluation have to sign an agreement which binds them to work independently and to keep the results of their deliberations confidential. In return, they are assured of anonymity to allow them to give their opinion freely without the possibility of being lobbied beforehand or criticised afterwards.

Although, for these reasons, the allocation of proposals or programme areas to individual experts is not made public, the Honourable Member may ask to consult the full database of experts for the FAIR programme, if he so wishes.

([1]) OJ L 334, 22.12.94.
([2]) OJ C 173, 17.6.1996.

(96/C 345/49)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1181/96

by Robin Teverson (ELDR) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Specified Bovine Offal

Incidences of BSE are known to occur in other Member States in addition to the United Kingdom. Why is the Commission, then, not asking the other EU Member States to implement the same regulations on the removal of Specified Bovine Offal which the UK is responsibly following? If the UK is required to do this in the name of consumer confidence and protection, then surely every Member State should follow suit?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(24 June 1996)

The Commission has initiated a scientific evaluation of the situation as regards transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in all Member States. Based on this evaluation a risk assessment will be done by the scientific veterinary committee, and suitable measures will be decided in the standing veterinary committee in order to provide adequate protection measures for all European consumers.

(96/C 345/50)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1193/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Monitoring of air quality by affected residents

Is the Commission aware of, and does it provide any financial support for, the monitoring of air quality (and industrial air pollution) by affected residents themselves, rather than technical specialists, in any of the Member States? Could the Commission state precisely which European funding programmes are available which might finance such innovatory, community-based action in the field of environmental concern?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(5 July 1996)

Between 1992 and 1995 the Financial instrument for the environment (LIFE) supported numerous innovatory and demonstration projects to monitor air quality. The second phase of LIFE activity, still to be approved by the Council, encompasses measures to assist local authorities and could include demonstration projects in this area.

Within the structural fund programmes, the Community has co-financed measures to combat air pollution which were linked to regional development and business competitiveness. The final beneficiaries could be either residents or technical specialists. Only investment costs are eligible.

(96/C 345/51)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1195/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Threat of a major accident at Canvey Island, Essex

Is the Commission aware that the isolated island community of Canvey in my constituency is linked to the mainland by only a single carriage road, yet has been subject to major flooding from the sea in the early 1950s and could be threatened by a major accident involving oil and gas terminals sited on the island? Has the Commission taken action on the threat of major accidents to similar island communities in other Member States, and precisely which European directives and EU funding programmes are applicable in this case?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(1 July 1996)

Directive 82/501/EEC (the 'Seveso' Directive) on the major accident hazards of certain industrial activities (1) (implemented by the control of industrial major accident hazards (CIMAH) Regulations in the United Kingdom) will apply to oil and gas terminals on Canvey Island where the inventory of dangerous substances is above the levels prescribed in the Directive.

The Directive includes measures which require an emergency plan to be drawn up to enable an adequate response in the unlikely event of an accident. In addition, those liable to be affected by a major accident must be provided with information on safety measures and correct behaviour in case of an accident. In each case, it will be necessary to address any particular special features which prevail in the local community, such as at Canvey or other similar island communities.

The main funding mechanism for research in this area is through the Community's environmental and climate programme, which includes research on industrial safety and risk of flooding. The stated aim of industrial safety research within this programme is '... to improve the scientific basis for understanding industrial accidents, leading to better risk assessment and management and prevention'. In this context, one of the most

important goals of the research is to support Community legislation, and notably the Seveso Directive and its forthcoming revision. In the area of natural risk, flood research is included with the aim of '... development of procedures for the assessment of the risk of flooding... in coastal, flat, flash-flood prone areas'.

(1) OJ L 230, 5.8.1982.

(96/C 345/52)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1198/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Water treatment facility at Oikos plc, Canvey Island, Essex

Is the Commission aware of oil recycling from water technology applied in an industrial setting, and can it give examples from any Member States? Insofar as this process is being developed in an innovatory manner, precisely which European funding programmes are available for such a project?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(1 July 1996)

The Commission is not aware of a technology with such a name and so unfortunately no examples can be given. The nature of the technology is not clear from the terminology used in this question.

(96/C 345/53)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1201/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Redundant Jetty, Occidental oil site, Canvey, Essex

What action could the Commission take to remove the one-mile long oil jetty at the Occidental oil site in Canvay, Essex, which cost £9 m. to build, yet has never been used since it was built twenty years ago? Does the Commission agree that this eyesore is a visual symbol of the industrial decline of South Essex and that its removal is a prerequisite to restoring investors' confidence and to assisting economic development? Will the Commission further investigate this question and determine specific measures in response?

Answer given by Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(17 July 1996)

As far as the European regional development fund (ERDF) is concerned, no action can be taken by the Commission with respect to the oil jetty at the Occidental site in Canvey to which the Honourable Member refers.

The area concerned is not eligible under objective 2 of the structural funds. Moreover, in the United Kingdom objective 2 regions, the reclamation of former industrial sites is supported by ERDF only if it can be directly linked to the generation of new economic activities and employment.

The Commission has not had the occasion to study the site in detail and therefore cannot comment on its local impact.

(96/C 345/54)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1206/96

by Robin Teverson (ELDR) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Isles of Scilly

The Isles of Scilly, a group of small islands to the west of Cornwall, are not only designated as a 'less-favoured-area' (Directive 75/268/EEC) (1) but also part of an Objective 5b region. Is the Commission aware that no special assistance has been made available under these designations to help with the particular difficulties faced on the Isles, not to mention extra costs?

Does the Commission agree that, given these difficulties, further special assistance should and will be made available to the Isles of Scilly and other similar regions in the EU? Can the Commission also encourage the UK authorities to provide, through these existing designations, the additional assistance this area so badly needs?

(1) OJ L 128, 19.5.1975, p. 1.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(7 June 1996)

As part of the single programming document (SPD) for the objective 5b area of the south west region of the United Kingdom, specific provision has been made to address the particular problems facing the isles of Scilly. A measure within the programme seeks to provide support for the fragile horticultural and agricultural industry through encouragement for a wider range of enterprises, developing the marketing of the islands' produce and support for local community initiatives. The total cost of this measure is indicated within the SPD at 2.7 MECU, of which 1 MECU of grant assistance will be provided from the European agricultural guidance guarantee fund. Such a specific geographical measure is unique within the context of objective 5b SPDs for the United Kingdom and is a clear demonstration that the special needs of this group of small islands are recognised by the Commission.

The isles of Scilly are also eligible for assistance from the other 5b measures within the programme which is the largest 5b programme within the United Kingdom with an estimated total value of 514 MECU of which the total Community contribution is approximately 219 MECU (at 1994 prices). In addition, the isles of Scilly fall within the West Cornwall Leader programme which is already operational. As such there is considerable scope both financially and in strategic terms to help the isles of Scilly.

In terms of encouraging the United Kingdom authorities to provide additional assistance to the islands, all applications under the SPD are assessed against core criteria and then assessed against individual measure criteria. These are determined by the partnership and agreed by the programme monitoring committee. Within the selection criteria there is no geographical provision, rather the criteria reflect the priorities of the SPD and place an emphasis on added value, partnership, economic impact and value for money. In addition, all SPDs are subject to interim evaluation. If the relevant United Kingdom authorities are able to undertake their interim evaluation by March 1997, any relevant findings can then be used to guide the monitoring committee with respect to the future implementation of the SPD where particular needs can be identified and addressed. It is through this process that the particular problems and needs of the isles of Scilly can be fully addressed.

(96/C 345/55)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1210/96

by Mihail Papayannakis (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Protection of agricultural land and renewable energy resources

Under Council Regulation (EEC) No 2080/92 (1), the European Union introduced incentives for the afforestation with eucalyptus, conifers and broadleaves of land set aside from agricultural production. However, despite specific European Union recommendations concerning the development of renewable energy resources, the regulation makes no reference to biomass crops. In view of this, does the Commission envisage:

1. extending the list of crops covered by the aid scheme for southern Europe to include:

(a) reed (arundo donax)

(b) wild artichoke (cynara cardunculus) and

(c) miscanthus gigandeus,

which provide raw material for biomass production;

2. increasing aid to encourage the production of crops which provide raw material for biomass production so as to encourage agricultural land set-aside schemes?

(1) OJ L 215, 30.7.1992, p. 96.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(2 July 1996)

With Council Regulation (EEC) No 2080/92 a Community afforestation scheme has been instituted in order to accompany the changes introduced under the market organization rules (reform of the common agricultural policy) through an improvement in forest resources and a countryside management which is more compatible with good environmental practices. At the same time the scheme aims to combat the greenhouse effect and the negative impact of erosion on agricultural land.

Although an improvement in forest resources could contribute to the development of renewable energy resources (wood), the afforestation scheme is not specifically established for the promotion of biomass crops. Regulation (EEC) No 2080/92 is therefore restricted to afforestation, and will not be extended with biomass crops such as reed, wild artichoke and miscanthus.

For the cultivation of non-food crops on set-aside land, the non-food set-aside scheme, Commission Regulation (EEC) No 334/93 (1), has been established. This scheme makes it possible for farmers to use their set-aside land for the production of non-food raw materials. The non-food set-aside scheme includes a broad range of biomass crops. Reed, wild artichoke and miscanthus are eligible under this scheme and have been produced under the scheme in various Member States.

For set-aside land which is used for non-food production under Regulation (EEC) No 334/93 the same amount of area aid is granted as for normal set-aside land. However, Member States are allowed to grant national aid to producers to help them to cover the costs of planting multiannual crops for biomass production. The aid may not be more than the equivalent of the interest rate on 5 years' set-aside premia.

(1) OJ L 38, 16.2.1993.

(96/C 345/56)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1212/96

by Carlo Ripa di Meana (V) and Gianni Tamino (V) to the Commission

(15 May 1996)

Subject: Intermodal centre in Olbia (Sardinia)

In its reply to a written question (E-0017/96) (1) on the Olbia intermodal centre, the Commission confirmed, on 9 April 1996, that it was prepared to participate in cofinancing the project in Enas in accordance with the agreement between the region, the railway authority and the commune of Olbia.

On 5 March 1996, the CORECO (regional control committee) suspended the decision of 12 January 1996, under which the commune of Olbia had approved the project, on the grounds that the proposed site did not meet the requirements of the regional transport plan, the Olbia construction programme (which was to have been altered under the decision), the development plan for the industrial zone of Olbia, or the environmental, archaeological and scientific protection requirements laid down in the regional rural programme, which provides for a rural environment compatibility study which has not yet been submitted.

Under the above-mentioned agreement with the region, the Italian State Railways stated their readiness to transfer all their freight activities currently carried out in the port of Olbia on condition that intermodal transport was developed and operating costs reduced; this condition would not have been met, given the distance between the Enas site and the industrial port and zone.

The Commission's reply of 9 April 1996 does not take into account CORECO's suspension of the decision of the commune of Olbia.

The project for an intermodal centre in Olbia, which was approved by the regional administrative technical committee in September 1993, failed even then to comply with the regional transport plan and the town-planning legislation in force and failed to win favourable opinions from either the Italian State Railways or the commune of Olbia.

Is the Commission still prepared, if the above observations are confirmed, to cofinance the Olbia intermodal centre in Enas? Does it not consider it necessary to seek a review of the centre's location in order to comply both with the terms of the current town-planning legislation and with the strategic goals set by the European Union in support of cabotage and three-way intermodal transport (water-rail-road)?

(1) OJ C 217, 26.7.1996, p. 6.

Answer given by Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(12 July 1996)

Further to the information provided in reply to the Honourable Members' Written Question E-17/96 (1) and in the light of information from the Italian authorities, the Commission can now inform the Honourable Members that on 5 March the regional control committee (CORECO) for Sardinia did in fact suspend the Olbia communal council's discussions on the project in question and its location.

At a meeting on 3 May, the commune of Olbia considered the explanations and the reply to be sent to CORECO, which, at a meeting on 11 June, rejected them, arguing that the communal act ought to have been passed by the communal council, not by the 'Giunta' (the executive body). The commune of Olbia should therefore comply with the administrative procedure laid down by regional law as decided by CORECO.

According to the agreement between the region of Sardinia, the Italian government and the railways, the construction of an intermodal centre would meet the economic and social needs of this part of the island and would facilitate the handling of goods and transport to Olbia. The decision on the location of the centre will be taken jointly by the regional and communal authorities and the railways. Needless to say, all the procedural requirements, including the environmental impact assessment, must be observed.

As the project is part of the multifund operational programme (MOP) for 1983-93 it is eligible for financing from the Structural Funds provided the expenditure is incurred before 31 December 1996.

(1) OJ C 112, 17.4.1996.

(96/C 345/57)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1222/96

by Martina Gredler (ELDR) to the Commission

(23 May 1996)

Subject: Transmission of BSE

In London it was recently established that in antelopes BSE can be transmitted from the mother to the next generation.

Can the Commission state categorically that the transmission of BSE to the next generation can be ruled out in the case of cattle?

If not, is it possible for milk to transmit this disease?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(9 July 1996)

In a London zoo several greater kudu have been affected with a form of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE). The disease has been diagnosed in 5 out of 8 animals in the zoo and the high incidence indicates that the species is highly susceptible. The pattern of incidence suggests that maternal transmission may have taken place, although later data suggests this may not in fact be the case. No further conclusions can, however, be drawn from these cases in relation to other spongiform encephalopathies.

Extensive epidemiological studies have been performed in order to investigate the possibility of maternal transmission of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in bovine animals. There is no evidence of BSE transmission from cow to calf.

Furthermore, transmission studies have shown no evidence that milk is likely to transmit BSE. This is in line with data on other TSEs such as kuru in man, where detailed study of the disease in the Fore tribe in Papua New Guinea also failed to show transmission by milk. This is also confirmed by the World health organisation which stated during a meeting on 2-3 April 1996 on Creutzfeld-Jacob disease (CJD) and BSE:

'Milk and milk products, even in countries with a high incidence of BSE, are considered safe. There is evidence from other animal and human spongiform encephalopathies to suggest that milk does not transmit these diseases'.

(96/C 345/58)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1234/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(23 May 1996)

Subject: Nuclear safety

In recent newspapers reports the Deputy director of the nuclear and radioactive safety department of the 'UKRITFE' Scientific Centre has raised the alarm about the possibility of the Chernobyl nuclear power station exploding at any time. The danger, it would appear, is of a chain reaction and the collapse of the cover that has been put over the fourth reactor of the Chernobyl power station. The fourth reactor has in fact been reduced to an uncontrolled mass of dangerous nuclear material and radioactive substances that do not meet safety requirements.

Will the Commission take immediate and appropriate action to avert further nuclear dangers?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(2 July 1996)

During the conference 'One decade after Chernobyl' in April 1996 scientists addressed concerns about the radiological pollution that could occur in the event of the collapse of the sarcophagus over what remains of the Chernobyl IV reactor. The conference concluded that, while a collapse could release radioactive dust and result in significant exposure to personnel at the reactor site, no widespread effects would be expected, in particular not outside the 30 kilometre exclusion zone around the reactor.

The Commission has always aimed to ensure that an accident like Chernobyl could never happen again and that the remaining units at the nuclear power plant should close as soon as possible. The governments of the Group of seven, the Commission and the government of the Ukraine signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in December 1995 concerning the closure of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by the year 2000. Included in the MoU was an agreement to 'continue to cooperate in the development of a cost effective and environmentally sound approach to the shelter for Chernobyl IV, including the definition, as soon as possible, of technical and cost options'.

It was recently agreed at the Moscow nuclear safety and security summit — between leaders of the Group of seven, including the President of the Commission and the presidents of Russia and the Ukraine — that discussions on a 'renewed sarcophagus' would be undertaken as soon as the latest TACIS funded study is completed. This should be before the end of this year.

(96/C 345/59)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1240/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(23 May 1996)

Subject: COM — Processed fruit and vegetables

In the proposal for a Council regulation on the common organization of the market in processed fruit and vegetables (COM(95) 434 final ([1])), the Commission does not tackle the question of processed fruit and vegetables in a homogeneous way.

With regard to processed tomatoes, will the Commission prevent a reduction of quotas in the whole of the Union and some Member States being put at a disadvantage by the distribution of these quotas.

The current quota should be increased by an amount corresponding to consumption in the three new Member States and attributed to the agricultural side, to allow effective planning of production which is consistent with market demands.

([1]) OJ C 52, 21.2.1996, p. 23.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(7 June 1996)

In the proposal for reforming the common organization of the processed fruit and vegetable markets, the quota for processed tomatoes remains the same at 6 596 787 tonnes. This will be shared out between the Member States according to the average of the quantities produced within the maximum price limit over the three previous marketing years.

The three new Member States already get much of their supplies from the Community.

Under the proposal, quotas will, as at present, be allocated to the industrial side.

(96/C 345/60)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1242/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(23 May 1996)

Subject: COM — Fruit and vegetables

Title IV of the proposal for a regulation on the COM in fruit and vegetables (COM(95) 434 final ([1])) deals with intervention arrangements in general and, in particular, withdrawals, which are eligible for direct financial intervention by the Community. Compared with the COM currently in force, the general position is unchanged: in the fresh fruit and vegetables sector, the protection of the producers' incomes or, in other words, market price support, is achieved through the quantitative control of supply, which is the responsibility of the producer organizations competent for withdrawals.

As for intervention arrangements, does the Commission not consider it appropriate to increase the limit on quantities for withdrawal, to 20% of the marketed production of the respective producer organizations, to extend the transitional period to six years and to calculate Community withdrawal compensation on the basis of the weighted average of monthly withdrawal prices applicable in the 1995/96 marketing year?

([1]) OJ C 52, 21.2.1996, p. 1.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(26 June 1996)

In its proposal for reform of the common organization of the fruit and vegetables markets, the Commission set a limit of 10%, both for quantities sold directly by the members of a producers' organization, and for the quantities to be withdrawn. This is consistent with the Commission's communication to the Council and to Parliament on the future of the fruit and vegetables sector which specified that producers' organizations should themselves market at least 80% of their members' production.

The proposal for reform is currently being studied by the Council. It is therefore too early to know what its final decision will be regarding the matter raised by the Honourable Member.

(96/C 345/61)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1243/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(23 May 1996)

Subject: COM — fruit and vegetables

Title V of the proposal for a regulation on the COM in fruit and vegetables (COM (95)434 final [1]) on trade with third countries contains only one addition compared with Regulation (EEC) No 3290/94. Article 31(2) now allows the entry price of products imported for processing to be verified by a procedure other than calculating the flat-rate import value. In order to avoid trade with third countries having negative consequences, will the Commission:

1. make effective and clear checks of entry prices;

2. make quality checks and provide information on the production and conservation methods used;

3. ensure that the labelling of products meets the requirements for similar products in the European Union?

(1) OJ C 52, 21.2.1996, p. 1.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(24 June 1996)

The proposal for the reform of the common organization of the market in the fruit and vegetable sector allows the entry price of products imported for processing to be verified by special procedures which may differ from those used for imports destined for the fresh produce market. In particular, the fruit and vegetables in question may be classified using a direct price recording mechanism rather than the flat rate import value.

Import prices are checked in accordance with existing customs procedures. In setting the reduced entry prices for sour cherries and cucumbers intended for processing (Regulation (EC) No 1306/95 [1] and Regulation (EC) No 1740/95 [2]), the Commission provided for the same control procedures as applied under the end-use rules laid down in Articles 291, et seq. of Regulation (EC) No 2454/93 [3] laying down provisions for the implementation of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2913/92 [4] establishing the Community Customs Code.

Furthermore, fruit and vegetables imported for processing in the Community must be accompanied, before being released for free circulation, by a 'processing certificate' in accordance with Regulation (EEC) No 2251/92. [5] This obligation also applies to Community products.

Community legislation does not require information to be provided on production and storage methods for these products, nor special labelling for fruit and vegetables intended for processing.

However, a certificate detailing production methods is required for organic produce imported into the Community under the procedure laid down in Article 11(1) of Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91. (6)

(1) OJ L 126, 9.6.1995.
(2) OJ L 167, 18.7.1995.
(3) OJ L 253, 11.10.1993.
(4) OJ L 302, 19.10.1992.
(5) OJ L 219, 4.8.1992.
(6) OJ L 198, 22.7.1991.

(96/C 345/62)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1249/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(23 May 1996)

Subject: Conservation of natural resources (fishing)

Regarding the conservation of natural resources and fishing rights, the main objective of the structural measures to prevent the depletion of fishery resources, generally attributed to a combination of excess capacity and over-exploitation, is to reduce the number of fishing boats. Such measures should be accompanied by socio-economic measures to cushion the effects of the restructuring of fishing and the fishing fleet on the communities concerned as far as possible.

The Community institutions and those of the Member States should therefore encourage and step up fisheries research as a matter of urgency, by promoting the dissemination of techniques and existing scientific data, collecting new data and carrying out research programmes both on fishery resources and on fishing techniques.

Will the Commission coordinate the various research areas, to avoid a duplication of efforts, promoting closer coordination between the existing research institutes and creating a data bank at Community level? This would contribute to improving the overall efficiency of the system.

Answer given by Mrs Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(11 July 1996)

The Fair programme (agriculture and fisheries, including agro-industry, food technologies, forestry, aquaculture and rural development), included in the fourth framework programme (1994-1998) was adopted in December 1994. The research activities in the field of fisheries and aquaculture cover the areas of impact of environmental factors on aquatic resources, ecological impact of fisheries and aquaculture, biology of species for optimization of aquaculture, socio-economic aspects of the fishing industry, improved methodology and upgrading of fishery products.

Moreover the studies in support of the fisheries common policy (budgetary line B2-181) are used to a great extent to co-finance and co-ordinate the collection of basic data. This collection of basic data (catches, biological sampling, fleet dynamics) is the basis for sound fisheries research but needs to comply with some basic requirements in terms of globality and duration. Although the budgetary line increased significantly in recent years it is highly desirable that better mechanisms are introduced, which could guarantee those requirements.

During recent years communications of the Commission on fisheries in the Community have covered maintenance, extension and creation of data bases appropriate to the implementation of the common fishery policy (1), European fisheries research — current position and prospects (2), data base for evaluation of biological impact of fisheries (3) and co-operation and coordination of the use of heavy equipment for fisheries research (4).

The communications have been discussed at the different levels of the Council, and the Commission has been invited to make a proposal which could help to improve the existing mechanisms.

(1) COM(93) 501 final.
(2) COM(93) 95 final.
(3) SEC(94) 1453.
(4) COM(95) 392 final.

(96/C 345/63)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1259/96
by W.G. van Velzen (PPE) to the Commission
(24 May 1996)

Subject: Scaling of the high-flux reactor in Petten

1. Are you aware of the scaling of the high-flux reactor (HFR) in Petten on 26 April 1996 by Greenpeace?

2. In the light of the previous action by Dutch marines at the HFR, has the Commission decided to undertake a thorough overhaul of security? Have these measures now been taken?

3. Do you believe that the Greenpeace demonstration shows that the security at the HFR in inadequate?

4. What action will the Commission take to prevent a repetition?

5. Has an integrated security plan been drawn up for the HFR to cope with all eventualities?

6. How is the Commission going to overcome the shock to public opinion caused by the lax security at the HFR?

Answer given by Mrs Cresson on behalf of the Commission
(1 July 1996)

1. Yes.

2. Yes.

3. No. The security measures are directed against all possible incidents concerning unauthorized interference with plant processes, materials and equipment. The internal Joint research centre (JRC) Petten security measures are fully in agreement with the measures to be taken by the Dutch police in case of alarm, and the response by the guards or police is dependent on the nature and gravity of the incident.

From the beginning of the Greenpeace incident the security measures worked in accordance with established procedures. There was no question of unauthorized interference with plant processes, materials or equipment, and the response by the police was in accordance with the nature and gravity of the incident.

4. The Commission is reviewing the incident and security measures with the Dutch authorities. If necessary, relevant decisions will be jointly taken but, as the Honourable Member is aware, such decisions have to be kept strictly confidential.

5. Yes.

6. The Commission invites the Honourable Member to take note of its answer to the Written Question P-1169/96 by Mrs Plooij-Van Gorsel (1). Furthermore, the Commission is not aware of a decreased confidence in public opinion concerning the security of the high flux reactor (HFR). The Commission continues to promote the HFR together with the other organizations with nuclear facilities in the Petten dunes, in particular in the field of nuclear medical applications.

(1) OJ C 322, 28.10.1996, p.37.

(96/C 345/64)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1261/96
by Kirsten Jensen (PSE) to the Commission
(24 May 1996)

Subject: Environment-friendly bananas

It has become very difficult to sell non-quota bananas since the Commission introduced the import quota system.

This is one of the reasons why not enough has been done to encourage the production of environment-friendly bananas.

Has the Commission thought of taking steps to promote the production of environment-friendly bananas by for instance allocating them a share of the import quota?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(20 June 1996)

Organic bananas enter the Community market under the same conditions as all other bananas. Before the creation of the single market, they were also imported into individual Member States according to the provisions in force for conventional bananas.

Organic bananas from a variety of sources including the Dominican Republic and Angola are imported and sold within the Community.

The Community and its Member States must abide by international law. Currently the World trade organization rules forbid discrimination between like products on the grounds of production methods, which means that it is not possible to create or reserve an import quota for organic products.

(96/C 345/65)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1271/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(24 May 1996)

Subject: COM in fruit and vegetables

Title III of the proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) on the common organization of the market in fruit and vegetables (COM(95) 434 final [1]) concerns interbranch organizations which are set up on the initiative of individual operators, or already exist, and which represent a significant share of the various professional groups in the fruit and vegetables sector. These interbranch organizations can help take greater account of market realities and facilitate the development of economic practices so as to increase knowledge and improve the organization of production and of the supply and marketing of produce. The proposed regulation provides that, once the types of measure have been defined, specific recognition shall be given to organizations which demonstrate that they are truly representative and are implementing positive measures in pursuit of the above goals.

In view of the market regulations, will the Commission take account of the specific situation of the individual Member States and make the application of interbranch agreements optional?

[1] OJ C 52, 21.2.1996, p. 1.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(21 June 1996)

Title III of the Commission's proposal for reform of the fruit and vegetable sector contains clauses referring to interbranch organizations and agreements. The machinery they set up was intended to apply across the board. When Title III was discussed in the Council, however, a number of delegations objected that the clauses did not reflect the present organizational arrangements in their own Member State.

Discussions on this matter are continuing.

(96/C 345/66) **WRITTEN QUESTION E-1280/96**

by Salvador Jové Peres (GUE/NGL) and Pedro Marset Campos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(24 May 1996)

Subject: Wine imports from third countries

Recently, the Community wine market has been stagnant, particularly in certain areas. Nevertheless, wine imports from third countries have been increasing, especially from Argentina.

These imports could produce a very difficult situation as regards this year's harvest.

How does the Commission plan to control these imports?

(96/C 345/67) **WRITTEN QUESTION E-1324/96**

by Encarnación Redondo Jiménez (PPE) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: European Union imports of wine from third countries

Is the Commission aware of the sheer scale of wine imports from third countries into the European Union? What measures should be taken to control this situation and guarantee Community preference rights?

(96/C 345/68) **WRITTEN QUESTION E-1328/96**

by Salvador Jové Peres (GUE/NGL) and Pedro Marset Campos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Imports of wine from third countries

There is a discrepancy between the quantity of imported wine registered by the customs and the volume of wine in the hands of traders. Most wine imports are of white wine, while in the commercial sector most imported wine is red. Imports of grape must considerably exceed the traditional trade flows and uses, and imported wines are regularly — and frequently — found masquerading as Community wines. Given that all this amounts to a serious distortion of the Community market in wine and has a damaging effect on winegrowers' incomes:

1. Does the Commission possess guarantees that in those Member States with the largest volume of imports, all due controls have been properly carried out?

2. Does the Commission intend to take special steps to verify the implementation of the controls and investigate the consequences of the situation created by these imports?

3. Will the Commission provide information as to the reliability of the controls carried out in each Member State?

Joint answer to Written Questions E-1280/96, E-1324/96 and E-1328/96
given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(18 June 1996)

The Commission has also noted that imports of wine from non-Community countries, and especially from Argentina to Spain, have increased considerably in the last year.

The Commission learnt from the press of rumours according to which certain irregularities had been committed in this respect. It would point out that Member States are responsible for import checks and that it has reminded them on a number of occasions of the need for national supervisory bodies to monitor imports closely.

Although to date the Commission has not received any official complaint concerning fraudulent imports, it has contacted the national supervisory bodies to draw their attention to these imports in particular and the subsequent use of the wine in the trade chain. The supervisory bodies have also been instructed to conduct a survey of these imports, the results of which are still pending.

(96/C 345/69)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1282/96

by Pedro Marset Campos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(24 May 1996)

Subject: Uncontrolled dumping in Fuente Alamo (Murcia, Spain)

The district of los Cànovas in the municipality of Fuente Alamo (Murcia) has been the site of uncontrolled dumping of plastic waste. An area of some 20 000 square metres has been filled with thousands of tonnes of plastic waste of various types, including common plastics, melamine, plastic containers, etc. all originating in different EU countries, mainly Germany and France.

This storage area does not meet even the lowest safety standards. Much of the waste contains large deposits of chlorine which, in the event of a fire, would do irreparable damage to human health and agriculture, through the release of dioxin and furans.

What representations will the Commission make to the Spanish authorities in order to ensure compliance with Community legislation on the environment and, in particular, with Directive 91/156/EEC on waste (1)?

(1) OJ L 78, 26.3.1991, p. 32.

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(1 July 1996)

The Commission is not aware of the points raised by the Honourable Member.

However, since these facts may constitute an infringement of the provisions of Directive 75/442/EEC on waste (as amended by Directive 91/156/EEC), the Commission will write to the Spanish authorities for information.

The Commission will inform the Honourable Member of the outcome of its enquiries.

(96/C 345/70)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1291/96

by Elena Marinucci (PSE) to the Commission

(31 May 1996)

Subject: Difference between aid for alcohol distilled from grape marc and alcohol distilled from wine lees

According to Article 18 of EC Regulation 2046/89, (1) Member States may decide to apply differentiated prices where the application of the standard price would or could make it impossible to have one or more of the by-products of wine-making distilled in certain regions of the Community.

Since the price of products distilled from grape marc is on average three times the price of products distilled from wine lees, the application of the standard price in all regions of Italy could act to the disadvantage of those who distil from wine lees.

This has created a crisis for the various companies which distil only from wine lees with serious social and employment consequences and the possibility that wine lees products will end up in the adulteration market.

In view of the above consideration, will the Commission say:

1. what is meant by 'would or could make it impossible to have one or more of the by-products of wine-making distilled'?

2. why such a state of affairs should occur in certain regions in particular?

3. which system is applied in the European States and their regions (standard or differentiated)?

4. whether it feels it should clarify the matter, possibly through an appropriate decision of recommendation which would ensure the equal application of the directives in force?

(1) OJ L 202, 17.7.1989, p. 14.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Under Article 18 of Council Regulation (EEC) 2046/89, the Commission sets standard aid levels for each marketing year along with assistance that varies according to the basic product distilled.

Under subparagraph 3 of Article 18(2), Member States may decide to apply the differentiated price if the flat-rate price could, because of the difference in distilling costs, lead distillers in certain areas to opt for a particular wine-making by-product instead of processing all of them.

1-2. The phrase 'could make it impossible to have one or more of the by-products of wine-making distilled' refers to the economic viability of the distilled by-products -the lower the demand for such products, the greater the risk. The transfer cost of wine-making by-products may make the alcohol produced by such distillation uneconomic.

3. Producer states apply one or other aid system depending on the above criteria and their own administrative structure.

4. The Commission is considering whether a draft regulation amending Article 18 could usefully be proposed to the Council in order to take account of the economic requirements of businesses in the sector.

(96/C 345/71)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1293/96

by Roberto Mezzaroma (UPE) to the Commission

(31 May 1996)

Subject: Blasphemous film

The company 'Modern People News' recently announced that it intended to produce a film in the United States on the sexual life of Jesus Christ.

In the film, Jesus Christ would be depicted as a homosexual, while the part of Mary Magdalene would be taken by a notorious French prostitute.

1. What can be done to prevent this blasphemous film being produced?

2. If the film is produced, what can the Commission do to prevent it from being shown in cinemas in EU countries?

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(24 July 1996)

The rules of the EC Treaty do not, empower the Commission, in general, to prohibit the production, distribution and possession of the products concerned. It should be noted that the Treaty rules on the free movement of goods and services (Articles 30-36 and 59) allow the Member States to ban the production, distribution and possession of such films on the grounds of public morality, public policy or public health, as long as such prohibitions do not constitute a means of arbitrary discrimination or a disguised restriction on the free movement of goods or services between Member States.

(96/C 345/72)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1300/96

by Gerhard Botz (PSE) to the Commission

(31 May 1996)

Subject: The Commission's participation in the Norwegian 'Maricult' research project involving the treatment of the sea with nitrogen

On page 223 of its 9/1996 edition the German news magazine Der Spiegel reported that the Commission is contributing ECU 1.8 m to the Norwegian 'Maricult' research project. This project includes the treatment of the sea with nitrogen.

Is the Commission in fact participating in this project? If so, can it explain what justifies its participation in so environmentally hazardous projects?

Answer given by Mrs Cresson on behalf of the Commission

(25 July 1996)

Maricult is a long-term research programme developed by Norwegian scientists as part of a multiannual process involving international expertise. The main purpose of Maricult is to improve our still very incomplete understanding of marine ecosystems in order to provide a basis for management decisions in future. The Maricult programme will be implemented in the form of separate national or international projects.

In the framework of the Specific Research and Technological Development Programme in the field of Marine Science and Technology, the Commission is providing MECU 1.85 over 3 years to support the Comweb project (Comparative analysis of food webs based on flow networks: effects of nutrient supply on structure and function of coastal plankton communities). The main aim of the project is to develop analytical, numerical and experimental methods to facilitate decision-making in the decades to come as to whether increasing the production of marine biomass is possible, feasible and acceptable from an environmental point of view. Comweb is therefore contributing to the overall aims of Maricult.

Comweb was set up on the basis of recommendations of outside experts in the framework of the normal authorization procedure which requires contractual assurances of conformity with all relevant, national and international environmental legislation. The experts considered the environmental risks of the project to be low and controllable, as most of the project is to be carried out in the laboratory, and the amount of nutrients to be introduced during the field experiments is very low. The project is being carried out by 7 partner-institutions from 5 countries (Belgium, Germany, Spain, Norway and Finland), with the Norwegian participants receiving only 23% of the grant.

Please also refer to the answer given by the Commission to written question E-748/96 from Mrs Alvoet (1) on the same subject.

(1) OJ C 322, 28.10.1996, p.6.

(96/C 345/73)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1301/96

by Klaus-Heiner Lehne (PPE) to the Commission

(31 May 1996)

Subject: German citizens may not own summer houses in Denmark

According to a press report (1), the Danish judicial authorities intend to force German citizens to sell their summer houses in Denmark. This is the authorities' reaction to growing complaints from several municipalities. Evidently, foreigners resident in Denmark — including EU citizens — are forbidden to purchase summer houses in the country. Many purchasers evade this prohibition by claiming that they intend to use the house as their permanent residence. Local residents and politicians are afraid that such purchases will result in municipalities becoming excessively foreign and in property prices rising to the disadvantage of Danish nationals.

In recent weeks 13 summer houses not occupied all year round are reported to have been detected. It is said that even the refuse of the occupants of summer houses has been checked in this context. In all 13 cases the persons concerned may be prosecuted and forced to sell their houses.

Does the Danish law contravene the EU Treaty, and especially the prohibition of discrimination?

Is the Commission aware of this law? Will it be taking any action to prevent discrimination against EU citizens in Denmark?

(1) Article in the Rheinische Post of 1 May 1996.

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(18 July 1996)

In accordance with Protocol No 1 to the EC Treaty, Denmark may maintain the existing legislation on the acquisition of second homes.

That legislation does not limit the purchase of second homes, and in particular summer houses, to Danish citizens but to any person living in Denmark at the moment of purchase or having lived there for at least five years, regardless of nationality.

As regards the particular problem raised by the Honourable Member, the Commission is carrying out a detailed study and will inform him of the result of its research as soon as possible.

(96/C 345/74)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1306/96

by Hiltrud Breyer (V) to the Commission

(31 May 1996)

Subject: Regulation on organic farming and the marketing of genetically modified seed

1. How does the Commission view the problem that, increasingly, EU-wide marketing applications are granted for genetically modified seed not indicated as such which put at risk the transposition and implementation of Regulation EEC 2092/91 (1)?

2. When genetically modified seed is not indicated as such, how can the organic farms in the EU be certain that they are not using it unintentionally? How does the Commission intend to solve this problem?

(1) OJ L 198, 22.7.1991, p.1.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(8 July 1996)

1. Article 6(2) of Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 on organic production of agricultural products and indications referring thereto on agricultural products and foodstuffs as last amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 1935/95 (1) establishes the principle that the seeds used in organic production must have been obtained from mother plants which have been grown for one generation in accordance with the organic production rules (as outlined in Article 6(1) (a) and (b) and the related annexes in Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91). As however such material is currently only very scarcely available, the Regulation provides also for a broad derogation permitting, until 2001, use of conventional seed under certain conditions.

The current rules in Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 do not exclude the use of seed originating from a variety obtained by genetic manipulation, to the extent that such variety has been authorised for marketing in general agriculture in accordance with the Community legislation in force. At the time of adoption of Regulation (EEC) No 1935/95, the Council and the Commission agreed however that the question of the use of genetically modified organisms in organic farming needed to be further explored and would be the subject of a report to be developed by the Commission. The preparatory work for this report is under way in the Commission.

2. The official acceptance of seed of genetically modified varieties and issues related to the marketing of seed are currently under discussion in Council on the basis of the Commission proposal (2) for amendment of the various Council directives concerning the marketing of seed. On this proposal the opinion of Parliament is still awaited. The Commission is convinced that with the implementation of the measures proposed the risk of unintentional use of seed of genetically modified varieties will be considerably reduced.

(1) OJ L 186, 5.8.1995.
(2) OJ C 29, 31.1.1994.

(96/C 345/75)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1321/96

by Felipe Camisón Asensio (PPE) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Community agreement with the USA concerning civil aviation

With regard to the current debate surrounding the guidelines for the European Union's external relations with the United States in the field of civil aviation:

1. What advantages does the Commission believe would result from establishing an agreement based on an all-embracing approach which would include not only the liberalization of trans-Atlantic traffic, but also the establishment of common standards regarding powers, state aid, air traffic control, safety and environmental protection?

2. How does it view the idea of a common EU-USA air space, in view of the proliferation of bilateral national 'open skies' agreements?

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(9 July 1996)

As the Honourable Member will know, the Council decided on 17 June to authorise the Commission on behalf of the Community, to open negotiations on civil aviation with the United States.

A global agreement between the Community and the United States would permit carriers to develop their activities in a regulatory environment that guarantees equal conditions for fair competition across and on both sides of the Atlantic.

Existing national bilateral agreements are too limited in scope in this respect on such important issues as competition rules, ownership and control and access to airports.

(96/C 345/76)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1322/96

by Felipe Camisón Asensio (PPE) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: The Tagus in Spain and Portugal: environmental requirements

The course of the Tagus through Spain and Portugal is affected by a range of environmental factors, from urban waste to the siting of 2 units of a nuclear power plant and the building of a new bridge in Lisbon.

Does the Commission believe that the river's environmental requirements are adequately respected?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(9 July 1996)

The question raised by the Honourable Member is not specific enough to allow the Commission to give a precise answer. There is no Community legislation on 'river environmental requirements' so the Commission is not in a position to assess whether these are adequately respected in this case.

The Commission is not aware of any problems caused to the Tagus by urban waste or nuclear plants.

The Commission has, however, information on the Tagus bridge project. The Commission is holding discussions with the Portuguese authorities on the environmental problems raised by the project. These problems concern wildlife rather than water issues because the area likely to be affected by the project is a special protection area classified by the Portuguese authorities pursuant to Article 4 of Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservatiion of wild birds (1).

(1) OJ L 103, 25.4.1979.

(96/C 345/77)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1323/96

by Felipe Camisón Asensio (PPE) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Prospects for air traffic control in the European Union

The data which appear in the White Paper on air traffic control show that the action undertaken by the various bodies responsible (European Civil Aviation Conference, Eurocontrol and ICAO) is inadequate, and the situation is steadily worsening. One result is that air traffic control delays are causing losses to airlines amounting to almost ECU 2000 m per year.

1. Does the Commission believe that the solution could be to strengthen Eurocontrol's regulatory powers, to the extent of making it the sole European body competent to regulate air traffic?

2. Would it be essential for the European Union as such to become a member of Eurocontrol?

3. When does the Commission think that these objectives will be achieved?

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(26 June 1996)

The Commission considers that good results have been obtained in the context of the European civil aviation conference strategy for improving the performance of European air traffic management systems. Despite this, a new institutional framework must be put in place at European level if we are to be able to deal properly with expected developments in air traffic in the coming years.

The Commission considers that this requires a strengthening of the powers of Eurocontrol, in order to bring about a single management of European airspace while leaving States to organise the actual provision of air navigation services according to their own national practices in conformity with specifications set down by Eurocontrol.

In order to have the authority and the means necessary to fulfil the proposed new role, the 'new Eurocontrol' must have competence which would overlap to a large extent with that of the Community. It is essential, therefore, that the Community should become a full member of that organisation. This would also enable the aeronautical community to benefit from the numerous contributions which the Community can bring to the improvement of the European air traffic management system.

The Commission considers that the objective set out in its White Paper 'Freeing Europe's airspace' (1) could be attained rapidly if there is sufficient political will, as this could be achieved by making appropriate changes to the proposed amendments to the Eurocontrol convention which are currently being developed.

(1) COM(96) 57.

(96/C 345/78)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1327/96

by Josu Imaz San Miguel (PPE) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Aid for French trawlers

French press reports indicate that the French Subdirectory for Fisheries has granted direct aid to shipowners using pelagic nets as compensation for the compulsory freeze on anchovy fishing until 31 May as the result of the Franco-Spanish fisheries agreement. This development could be the result of the threat made by the vessels to continue blockading the port of Bayonne.

I personally handed a copy of these reports to the Commission representative attending a meeting of Parliament's Committee on Fisheries on 24 April.

The existence of such aids would mean that subsidies are being given to a fleet which currently has the option of fishing for other species such as hake, and could involve unfair competition vis-à-vis other fishing fleets, in so far as fishermen working in the same fishing grounds, selling in the same markets and carrying a similar burden of costs would be facing an unfair situation in which their competitors were in receipt of unjustifiable public aid.

Does the Commission intend to initiate the necessary inquiry to ascertain whether these aids exist?

If their existence is confirmed, will the Commission take action against these aids and the apparent offender, namely the French Government?

Answer given by Mrs Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(16 July 1996)

Upon receiving this information, the Commission contacted the French authorities, who confirmed that this aid is to be provided to promote the diversification of fishing techniques used by trawlers from the Basque country within the framework of a programme linked to the Community PESCA initiative. Short-time allowances will also be given to the crews of boats affected by the cessation of fishing.

The Commission has asked the French authorities to notify them of aid programmes before they are implemented and in sufficient time for them to verify their compliance with the relevant regulations.

(96/C 345/79)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1332/96

by Cristiana Muscardini (NI) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Discriminatory selection criteria in recruitment competitions for the JRC Ispra establishment

In competition COM/R/A 114, the Italian woman who came closest to satisfying the requisite conditions was classed as one of only two candidates deemed to be suitably qualified but later rejected. No proper explanation was given, making it impossible to dispel suspicions that she suffered discrimination on account of her sex and, moreover, her Italian nationality.

Does not the Commission believe that the criteria observed by the Selection Board are in need of impartial review, since they seem in the case in question to be contrary to the much-vaunted commitment to equal opportunities?

Answer given by Mrs Cresson on behalf of the Commission

(11 July 1996)

In accordance with Commission rules, officials and temporary staff are recruited through general competitions or through selection of temporary 'research' staff, both of which procedures result in recruitment reserve lists.

In accordance with the statutory rules, such lists must, where possible, include at least twice as many successful candidates as there are posts to be filled. Thus no-one who has passed a competition is automatically guaranteed a job with the Commission; inclusion on a reserve list merely signifies eligibility for recruitment.

The Commission may, while the reserve list is still valid, offer a contract of service to anyone whose name appears on the list provided that person has the requisite training and experience for the job. Each time a post falls vacant a comparative examination is made of the files of all the candidates who have got through selection or passed a competition and whose professional profiles match the requirements of the post most closely.

With regard to procedure COM/R/A/114 for the selection of scientific staff specializing in operational radiation protection, there were six successful candidates on the reserve list, two of them women. With a view to filling a vacant post in the Joint Research Centre's Ispra establishment, all six files were examined, in the light of the specific requirements of the service, and the candidates with the most suitable profiles were invited for interview to determine which of them would be recruited.

(96/C 345/80)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1333/96

by Cristiana Muscardini (NI) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Meat meal and animal fats

The problems concerning meat meal and animal fats, which have made news on account of the BSE epidemic, could do severe harm to Italian stockbreeders unless the EU manages forthwith to ensure uniform enforcement of existing rules in the Member States.

Will the Commission issue a Directive whereby:

1. processing companies would have to vouch for their production process;

2. sterilization would have to be carried out before and after processing;

3. the necessary treatment systems for filtering plants would be made the subject of assessment;

4. unused materials would have to be disposed of in accordance with the arrangements laid down;

5. it would be forbidden to use animal proteins of any kind in the manufacture of feed for ruminants?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(15 July 1996)

There are several directives and decisions already in place which regulate the production and use of animal waste. These rules have been adapted in the light of the latest scientific knowledge in order to make the products derived from rendering safe.

1. The competent authorities of the Member States are responsible for ensuring compliance with the rules.

2. A new decision on the approval of alternative heat treatment systems for processing animal waste with a view to the inactivation of spongiform encephalopathy agents was given a favourable opinion by the standing veterinary committee on 2 July and is in the process of adoption by the Commission. This lays down the minimum parameters for processing animal waste ie 133°C for 20 minutes under a pressure of 3 bar in a continuous or batch system. This may be considered as a sterilisation phase. Member States may authorise the processing of animal waste by a method which does not achieve the parameters mentioned if such processing is preceded or followed by a process which achieves these parameters.

3. The scientific veterinary committee has made recommendations for the methods of checking that all plants are achieving the specified parameters. Member States use these methods when validating the plants on an individual basis.

4. All animal waste, except certain defined material for specific purposes (hides and skins, gelatine, glands and organs for pharmaceutical use, blood and blood products, milk and milk products, bones fit for human consumption and animal waste to be fed to fur animals) have to rendered in accordance with the above criteria. There are no by-products of the rendering process. Rendering results in tallow and meat-and-bone meal and these substances are safe as regards scrapie and BSE when produced in accordance with the legal requirements.

5. Commission Decision 94/381/EC has already banned the use of mammalian proteins for feeding to ruminants.

(96/C 345/81)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1340/96

by Per Gahrton (V) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: EU funding for cycle paths

Will the Commission state how much in total of the funding provided by the EU for various transport projects during the last five years has been used for the construction of cycle paths? Will it also state which projects in which countries have received such funding?

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(18 July 1996)

Community aid to cycle tracks would normally fall within structural funds operational programmes in eligible areas, with implementation primarily the responsibility of the individual Member States. Given that this type of project is usually small in scale and, moreover, contained within wider-ranging development measures such as tourism or environmental improvement, it is difficult to provide details on individual schemes.

On the general issue of promoting cycling as a mode of transport, the Commission is funding two research projects under the Transport research technology and development programme which study measures to make cycling and walking attractive alternatives to short distance car trips. In its efforts to promote cycling, the Commission works closely with the European cyclists' federation.

The Commission also recognized the benefits of cycling in its Green Paper 'The citizen's Network: Fulfilling the potential of public passenger transport in Europe' [1]. In particular better integration of the use of bicycles with public transport is particularly important, one example being the operation of bicycle centres at many Dutch railway stations.

(1) COM(95) 601.

(96/C 345/82)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1343/96

by Jean-Yves Le Gallou (NI) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Administrative appropriations of the European Institutions

Will the Commission state the total amount of appropriations allocated in 1995 under budget heading B7-410 (MEDA) to expenditure on:

- studies,
- experts' meetings,
- conferences and congresses and
- information and publications?

Can the Commission also say what proportion of the total amount of appropriations allocated to this budget heading is taken up by these four types of expenditure? Does it consider this proportion to be reasonable?

Answer given by Mr Marín on behalf of the Commission

(18 July 1996)

Total appropriations allocated under budget heading B7-410 (MEDA) to the categories of expenditure referred to in the question are as follows:

Studies: 959 742
Experts' meetings: 649 815
Seminars and colloquia (rather than conferences and congresses): 1 226 232
Information and publications: 1 301 901

The total MEDA budget was ECU 173.2 million in 1995. The four categories of expenditure listed above therefore account for some 2.4% of the budget. This is a reasonable proportion, bearing in mind the objectives of the programme.

(96/C 345/83)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1346/96

by Jean-Yves Le Gallou (NI) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Community subsidies to associations, NGOs and various bodies

Can the Commission provide a full list of the associations, NGOs and bodies receiving Community subsidies under budget heading B7-210 (Aid to help the populations of developing countries and others hit by disasters or serious crises)? Can it state the exact total of these subsidies at the close of the last financial year?

(96/C 345/84)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1347/96

by Jean-Yves Le Gallou (NI) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Community subsidies to associations, NGOs and various bodies

Can the Commission provide a full list of the associations, NGOs and bodies receiving Community subsidies under budget heading B7-211 (Emergency food aid for developing countries and others hit by disasters or serious crises)? Can it state the exact total of these subsidies at the close of the last financial year?

(96/C 345/85)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1348/96

by Jean-Yves Le Gallou (NI) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Community subsidies to associations, NGOs and various bodies

Can the Commission provide a full list of the associations, NGOs and bodies receiving Community subsidies under budget heading B7-217 (Operations to help refugees and displaced persons)? Can it state the exact total of these subsidies at the close of the last financial year?

Joint answer to Written Questions E-1346/96, E-1347/96 and E-1348/96 given by Mrs Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(15 July 1996)

The budget headings referred to by the Honourable Member concern humanitarian aid, which is aid for the victims of natural or man-made disasters, such as wars or other conflicts. Such aid goes directly to the victims, on an impartial basis and irrespective of ethnic origin and religious or political beliefs, and is generally channelled through the Commission's 'traditional' partner organizations.

Some 170 international and non-governmental organizations, including a number of United Nations institutions and Red Cross, are working with the Commission under the framework partnership contract which provides them with an appropriate framework to carry out humanitarian operations.

A table of appropriations allocated under budget headings B7-210, B7-211 and B7-217 to NGOs, international organizations and other partners that have carried out operations financed by the Commission, together with a full list of the humanitarian organizations that have signed the framework partnership contract with the Community will be sent directly to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat.

(96/C 345/86)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1363/96

by Jean-Yves Le Gallou (NI) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Community subsidies for associations, NGOs and various bodies

For Item B7-7000 (Programme for democracy in the countries of central and eastern Europe), can the Commission provide a full list of the associations, NGOs or other bodies benefiting from Community subsidies, together with the exact amount of such subsidies during the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed?

(96/C 345/87)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1367/96

by Jean-Yves Le Gallou (NI) to the Commission

(3 June 1996)

Subject: Community subsidies for associations, NGOs and various bodies

For Item B7-7040 (Subsidies for certain activities of organizations pursuing human rights objectives), can the Commission provide a full list of the associations, NGOs or other bodies benefiting from Community subsidies, together with the exact amount of such subsidies during the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed?

(96/C 345/88)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1368/96
by Jean-Yves Le Gallou (NI) to the Commission
(3 June 1996)

Subject: Community subsidies for associations, NGOs and various bodies

For Article B7-707 (Support for rehabilitation centres for torture victims and for organizations offering concrete help to victims of human rights abuses), can the Commission provide a full list of the associations, NGOs or other bodies benefiting from Community subsidies, together with the exact amount of such subsidies during the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed?

Joint answer to Written Questions E-1363/96, E-1367/96 and E-1368/96 given by Mr Van den Broek on behalf of the Commission
(10 July 1996)

The Commission seeks to ensure the greatest possible openness in the use made of the Community budget, including those parts of it covering human rights activities.

Specific information is provided for headings B7-7000, 7040 and 7070. At the end of the financial year, a report on the use these headings have been put to is sent to the President of Parliament and the Chairman of the relevant parliamentary committee along with full details of the recipient associations, NGOs and other bodies awarded grants and the amount of support each has received.

This year, a report on the use made of funding for all human rights budget headings was set out in a Commission communication. [1]

The Honourable Member will find all the information he requests in these reports.

[1] COM(95) 191 final.

(96/C 345/89)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1371/96
by Ilona Graenitz (PSE) to the Commission
(3 June 1996)

Subject: Restriction of services provided in dental outpatient departments

In Austria dentists employed in outpatient departments are forbidden by law to fit patients with fixed dentures. They are permitted to perform other services, such as orthodontic treatment.

Does such a prohibition comply with the freedom to pursue an occupation and free competition within an occupation group?

Do similar restrictions exist in other Member States in the sphere of dentistry?

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission
(31 July 1996)

Prohibiting dentists employed in outpatient departments from fitting patients with fixed dentures would not appear to be contrary to Community law. The Commission is not aware of similar restrictions in other Member States, but it is prepared to investigate the matter if the Honourable Member is able to supply further information.

(96/C 345/90)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1373/96
by Nikitas Kaklamanis (UPE) to the Commission
(6 June 1996)

Subject: Milk Quota

The press has recently been swamped by reports concerning an imbalance which is imminent in the EU milk and meat trade balance owing to the slaughter of over 3 million productive head of cattle in the UK due to spongiform encephalopathy.

Greece has for many years been calling on the European Community to approve a cow's milk quota that is close to the Community average (315 kilos on average in the European Union, compared to 60 kilos on average in Greece per inhabitant per year).

Is the Commission considering increasing the quota by 125 000 tonnes (from 625 000 to 750 000 tonnes at least) so as to enable Greece partly to meet its fresh cow's milk requirements, which are estimated at over 1 million tonnes?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(28 June 1996)

The Commission does not think that bovine spongiform encephalopathy will have short term consequences for the Community, leading to a shortage of milk products on the market. On the contrary, the trend of the past two years has now been reversed, with a fall in market prices and an increase in the quantities of butter and skimmed milk powder delivered to intervention.

In these circumstances, there is no justification for an increase in the guaranteed overall quantity for any Member State, especially as the supplementary levy system expires in the year 2000 and a review of the future organization of the common organization of the milk and milk products markets is already under way.

(96/C 345/91)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1383/96

by Miguel Arias Cañete (PPE) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Inspections of avocados from Mexico

The USA, Mexico's natural partner, have banned imports of Mexican avocados in order to protect domestic production and on the basis of plant health standards consistent with those of the GATT. Nonetheless, Mexican avocados enter the EU without any kind of inspection being carried out.

I would therefore ask the Commission whether it intends to take any steps to protect something as important as public health within the EU, and thus prevent diseases which could be due to this lack of health controls?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(5 July 1996)

The Commission is aware that the US has banned imports of Mexican avocados because Mexico is affected by a number of types of fruit fly and by seed and stem weevils.

As indicated in response to oral question No H-436/96 on a closely related matter, which the Honourable Member asked at question time during the June part-session of Parliament, (1) the Commission also recognizes the damage the oligonychus perseae mite does to Mexican avocado crops by stripping the tree of leaves — even though the fruit is left untouched.

Community plant health rules provide adequate protection for the EU as they include measures to prevent fruit flies affecting crops like avocado from entering and spreading through the Community. However, these measures are now being revised to take account of new scientific findings which show that avocados can transmit the organisms in question.

However, as these organisms pose no risk to either consumers or public health, the Commission has no plans to take any steps to deal with them.

(1) Parliament Debates, June 1996.

(96/C 345/92)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1388/96

by María Sornosa Martínez (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Restoring the Albufera de Valencia and providing it with environmental protection

The Albufera de Valencia is one of Europe's major wetlands, classified as meriting special protection under the Community Directive on the preservation of woodland birds, but it continues to remain subject to a range of threats and ongoing environmental deterioration.

With no respect whatever for the natural environment, several hundred industries discharge their waste into the Albufera, while the majority of the surrounding towns discharge their untreated sewage into this ecological reserve, the most important in the Valencian Autonomous Community and one of the largest lakeland areas in the Iberian peninsula.

In 1995, the Commission proposed to the regional authorities that the Albufera de Valencia should be classified as one of the wetlands benefiting from conservation measures, but the proposal was rejected.

1. In view of this situation, does the Commission not believe that Directive 92/43/EEC [1] on the preservation of natural habitats and woodland fauna and flora makes the need to implement a programme to safeguard and restore this major European natural heritage site more justifiable than ever?

2. Would the Commission be prepared, in conjunction with the new national and Valencian authorities, to investigate the possibility of co-funding a plan to restore and protect the Albufera de Valencia within the framework of the LIFE Regulation?

(1) OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(3 July 1996)

1. The Community importance of the Albufera de Valencia comes from the fact that it is classified as meriting special protection under Directive 79/409/EEC (the 'birds Directive'). [1] This area is therefore already part of the Natura 2000 network established by Directive 92/43/EEC (the 'habitats Directive').

It is therefore Spain which must introduce the management schemes needed to ensure conservation including, if necessary, specific management plans or plans that form an integral part of other management plans.

2. Plans to restore and protect the Albufera are potentially eligible under the LIFE Regulation. The Commission will carefully examine any proposals presented by the Spanish authorities in this framework.

(1) OJ L 103, 25.4.1979.

(96/C 345/93)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1389/96

by Gianni Tamino (V) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Minimum standards for the protection of calves

Directive 91/629/EEC lays down minimum standards for the protection of calves. [1] In Italy the Directive has been transposed by means of Legislative Decree No 533 of 30 December 1992. Article 6(2) of that Decree contains a stipulation whereby not later than 30 April 1996 and every two years thereafter, before the last working day in April, the Ministry of Health is required to inform the Commission of the findings of the inspections carried out in the two preceding years and the number of inspections compared to the number of holdings operating on national territory as a whole.

Has the Commission received the above-mentioned report from all the Member States?

What conclusions can be drawn from the data supplied?

(1) OJ L 340, 11.12.1991, p. 28.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(8 July 1996)

The Commission has not so far received any information on the results of inspections as laid down in Article 7.3 of Directive 91/629/EEC. The Commission has asked all Member States to supply the results of the inspections as soon as possible.

(96/C 345/94)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1397/96

by Konstantinos Hatzidakis (PPE) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Recruitment of technical coordination consultants by the Technical Assistance Management Company, EPE, in Greece

In December 1995, the Technical Assistance Management Company (TAMC), EPE, which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and manages European Union funding, advertised five posts for technical consultants to coordinate Community programmes in Greece. Once the candidates had established their credentials, they were then interviewed by the Ministry's monitoring committee for large-scale projects in the presence of EU representatives.

In a letter dated 18 March 1996, ref. 6913, the Director-General of EPE informed Mr Elias Fillipakopoulos, an A-grade surveyor and engineer with the Ministry of the Environment, Regional Planning and Public Works, that he had been selected to fill the post of technical coordination consultant by decision of the State Secretary for Economic Affairs, Mr Pakhtas. However, less than 24 hours later, the same Director-General wrote to Mr Fillipakopoulos (letter dated 20 March 1996, ref. 6928) informing him that the announcement of his appointment had been an administrative error and that his civil service pension rights were an obstacle to his appointment.

According to my information, the reasons for reversing the decision have nothing to do with pension rights, which do not constitute an obstacle to the appointment, but with the fact that Mr Fillipakopoulos is a leading member of the New Democracy Party. Will the Commission therefore say, inasmuch as it is concerned, whether the legal procedure for the appointment of the technical coordination consultants was followed and, if it was not, whether it can intercede to ensure that the irregularities are remedied, the legal procedure observed and similar incidents do not re-occur?

Answer given by Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(22 July 1996)

According to information at the Commission's disposal, the rules laid down in the procedure for assessing technical coordination consultants were followed and the candidate in question was ranked seventh out of eleven candidates. In addition, the invitation to tender did not state that five such consultants would be taken on but rather five or fewer.

(96/C 345/95)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1401/96

by Peter Crampton (PSE) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Structural assistance in the fisheries sector

Regulation 2719/95 [1] lays down the criteria and arrangements regarding Community structural assistance in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and the processing and marketing of its products. Could the Commission confirm that the measures are optional for Member States?

Which Member States have implemented the measures in the regulation, in particular the socio-economic accompanying measures assisting individuals in the sector?

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[1] OJ L 283, 25.11.1995, p. 3.

Answer given by Ms Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(25 June 1996)

The Commission confirms that the measures laid down in Article 14a of Regulation (EC) No 3699/93, (1) introduced into Community legislation by Regulation (EC) No 2719/95, (2) are optional for the Member States.

To date three Member States (Denmark, France and Spain) have explicitly stated that they intend to change the programming of structural aid for fisheries in order to introduce socio-economic measures.

(1) OJ L 346, 31.12.1993.
(2) OJ L 283, 25.11.1995.

(96/C 345/96)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1417/96

by Shaun Spiers (PSE) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Specified bovine offal (SBO) regulations

What steps is the Commission taking to ensure that abattoirs throughout the European Union are aware of the regulations concerning specified bovine offal recently introduced in the United Kingdom?

Does the Commission propose to introduce similar regulations throughout the European Union?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(28 June 1996)

The Commission directly notifies Member States of the measures that are to be taken concerning specified bovine offal as laid down in Community legislation. In addition, these measures are published in the Official journal. The United Kingdom has informed the other Member States and the Commission of the measures taken as regards bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). It is the responsibility of the authorities of the Member States to communicate with the abattoirs on their own territory.

The Scientific veterinary committee is at present drawing up an assessment of the need for measures regarding BSE in other Member States. Based on the recommendations from the Scientific veterinary committee, the Commission will propose any necessary measures to be taken.

(96/C 345/97)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1418/96

by Patrick Cox (ELDR) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Status of the Irish language

1. Could the Commission explain the precise status of the Irish language in the EU and its institutions and the basis on which that status is founded?

2. Since Ireland's accession negotiations, to the knowledge of the Commission has any Irish government ever sought to extend the status of the Irish language in the EU?

3. In view of the special status of the Irish language, would the Commission, in its recruitment policy, be prepared to recognize fluency in Irish and two other working languages of the Union as fulfilling its required linguistic qualifications?

4. In view of the special status of the Irish language, are there any circumstances in which the Commission would contemplate the use of the Irish language as a working language in respect of those Irish citizens who would wish to conduct their business with the EU through the medium of the first official language of the Irish Republic?

Answer given by Mr Santer on behalf of the Commission

(29 July 1996)

1 & 4. The Commission would refer the Honourable Member to the answers given to oral question H-205/91 by Mr Landa Mendibe ([1]) and written question E-896/86 by Mr Raftery. ([2])

2. No.

3. For the purposes of recruitment, a thorough knowledge of one of the officials languages of the Community is required and a satisfactory knowledge of another of these languages.

([1]) Debates of the Parliament 3-403 (March 1991).
([2]) OJ C 82, 30.3.1987.

(96/C 345/98)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1420/96

by Joan Vallvé (ELDR) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Management of solid urban waste in the Autonomous Region of Valencia

The Autonomous Region of Valencia (ARV) is facing a major environmental problem owing to its huge production of solid urban waste (SUW) and the lack of adequate facilities to manage it properly.

The lack of foresight by the regional authorities, which has not taken account of the provisions of Doc. SEC(89)0943 on a Community strategy for waste management, is generating problems on a huge scale, which, in the case of the rubbish dump of Basseta Blanca (Riba-roja, ARV), about 30 km from the city of Valencia, constitutes a potential threat to public health, according to technical reports drawn up by the municipal council of Riba-roja del Túria.

The dump, which opened in 1984 and was planned to take a total of 299 080 m^3 over 17 months of existence, has in fact received more than 3 932 000 m^3 of SUW which has not been treated in any way. There is some uncertainty as to when the dump will be closed.

Can the Commission say whether the government of the Autonomous Region of Valencia has submitted a plan to deal with the problem of solid urban waste and, in particular, to resolve the problem of the rubbish dump of Basseta Blanca?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(26 July 1996)

According to Article 7 of Council Directive 75/442/EEC ([1]) on waste, amended by Council Directive 91/156/EEC ([2]), Member States shall require their authorities to draw up one or more waste management plans and notify the Commission thereof.

To date Spain has notified only one plan, the national hazardous waste plan (1995-2000). No plan for other types of waste has been sent to the Commission. Consequently, no plan covering municipal waste in Valencia has been sent.

Proceedings against Spain for non-communication of measures to implement Directive 91/156/EEC have been initiated by the Commission and the case is now pending before the Court of Justice.

The Commission is not aware of the case of Basseta Blanca mentioned by the Honourable Member. To clarify the state of affairs the Commission will ask Spain for further information and on that basis consider the appropriate steps to be taken.

([1]) OJ L 194, 25.7.1975.
([2]) OJ L 78, 26.3.1991.

(96/C 345/99)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1421/96

by Joan Vallvé (ELDR) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Application of the ACNAT and LIFE programmes in the Autonomous Region of Valencia

In 1992 the Valencian Regional Government submitted to the Commission, pursuant to Regulation (EEC) 3907/91 ([1]) on action by the Community relating to nature conservation (ACNAT), a project for the acquisition of around 1300 hectares of land with a view to restoring the former marsh of 'Oliva-Pego' and creating a protected nature reserve.

The Autonomous Region of Valencia has received considerable aid under the LIFE Regulation. In 1994, the Valencian Cortes (the regional legislative body) adopted the declaration establishing a nature park.

The Environmental Councillor of the Valencian Regional Government stated before the Valencian Cortes on 7 May 1996 that the proprietors of the land did not know what to do. The Mayor of Pego, where part of the land is situated, has set in motion an agricultural project which may damage the ecosystem of the park, a situation which has been denounced by Seprona (the Environmental Civil Guard).

What measures has the Valencian Regional Government taken to comply with the aid received on the basis of the measures envisaged in the ACNAT and LIFE programmes?

([1]) OJ L 370, 31.12.1991, p. 17.

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(17 July 1996)

On the basis of scientific studies co-financed by the Community, the Spanish authorities classified the Pego-Oliva marshes as a special protection area under Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds ([1]).

The Commission learned recently that certain work, presumed illegal, of an agricultural nature has been carried out by the Pego municipal authorities. The Commission has approached the Spanish authorities for information. It is prepared to suspend LIFE financing and to take appropriate legal action if the response is not satisfactory.

([1]) OJ L 103, 25.4.1979.

(96/C 345/100)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1425/96

by Sérgio Ribeiro (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Action by the German police against Portuguese trade unionists

On more than one occasion I have asked the Commission about the situation of Portuguese workers in Germany, who either had been contracted by agencies 'trafficking in labour' or were fulfilling subcontracting arrangements involving obvious wage discrimination and dubious safety and hygiene conditions at work or had been victims of racist violence.

However, a recent incident gives more serious grounds for concern than the previous ones. In a context in which the free movement of workers has been institutionalized, and in which positive progress is being made through directives against unequal treatment arising from the posting of workers, it is unacceptable for violence to be perpetrated by representatives of the authorities. In one recent case, the victims were Portuguese trade unionists conducting a campaign to provide Portuguese workers with information, contacts and advice.

On 25 April 1996, in the hotel in Munich where they were staying, two trade unionists and an interpreter were accosted by a group of thirteen individuals who identified themselves as police officers, three of whom were in uniform. After they had identified themselves, they 'moved into action': jostling, behaving rudely and aggressively and confiscating photograph films and documents which the trade unionists had in their hotel room.

Is the Commission aware of these serious incidents and should it not ask the German Government to give an explanation for these events?

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(15 July 1996)

The Commission has no knowledge of the incidents referred to by the Honourable Member.

Community social policy guarantees the principle of equal treatment for migrant workers. Regarding posted workers, on 3 June 1996 the Council adopted a common position on a proposal for a Directive (1). The objective of this proposal for a Directive is to ensure that workers posted to another Member State are not deprived of protection afforded by certain mandatory rules of labour law in force in that Member State.

However, in the case in point, the complaints refer less to non-compliance with Community provisions than to the manner in which the trade unionists concerned were treated by police officers in Germany. The Commission feels that any act of violence is liable to infringe the fundamental values or liberties which are common to all Member States and that it is the duty of the authorities, in the context of the law and internal practices of Member States, and taking account of the specific nature of the situations in question, to ensure respect for those fundamental values or liberties, which form the basis for the rule of law.

(1) OJ C 187, 9.7.1993.

(96/C 345/101)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1427/96

by Klaus Rehder (PSE) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Adoption of EU standards by Central and East European countries

For some time the Central and East European countries have been adjusting their standards on veterinary, foodstuffs and plant health checks to those of the EU. They all complain that this adoption required rightly in the first White Paper is rendered more difficult because of the very differing standards in the individual EU Member States.

1. In connection with the current negotiations on equivalence, is the Commission able to draw up a uniform EU standard with a high level of safety in these areas and give it to these countries, and what would this standard be like?

2. Are the relevant WTO and SPS provisions enough to guarantee this high level of safety which is essential for all European consumers?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(15 July 1996)

1. The white paper contains (1), in the veterinary and phytosanitary domain, the main legislation which applies throughout Member States and was prepared to assist the central and east European countries in their understanding of Community law, with a view to gradual adaptation.

These countries are taking on board over a period of time the Community acquis based on the white paper and the relevant implementing legislation. In the discussions on equivalency on veterinary and phytosanitary matters with Central and East European countries, as well as with other third countries, the Commission is using these same standards as a basis for negotiations. For sectors for which the complete harmonisation has not been finalised, equivalency cannot be recognised. However, the Commission is pushing for the finalisation of the harmonisation of Community import rules in order that the equivalency of those measures can be recognised.

The different health requirements on imports from third countries applied by different Member States depends on the objective differences in the health status existing in their territory and on the different interpretation and application of the basic directives regulating such matters. The first set of differences is recognised in Community law and the Member States are allowed to request additional guarantees in intra-Community trade. The second is the object of continuing work by the Commission to bring about uniform application.

In its negotiations the Commission is taking as a basis Community legislation and therefore third countries will be asked to honour the additional guarantees recognised at Community level.

The Commission has concentrated on sanitary measures concerning trade aspects, and implementation will be monitored.

2. The sanitary and phytosanitary agreement (SPS) which resulted from the last Uruguay round multilateral negotiations does not establish sanitary or phytosanitary measures but rules which relate to the use of such measures. These include reference to international standards, guidelines or recommendations established by relevant international organisations such as the Codex alimentarius commission, and the International office of epizootics. Normally Community health provisions are consistent with these standards. However, the agreement also enables members to introduce or maintain higher standards if there is scientific justification or as a consequence of the level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection a member determines to be appropriate in accordance with the general provisions of the agreement. Naturally the decisions necessary to protect European consumers can only be taken within the framework of Community legislation.

(1) COM(95) 163.

(96/C 345/102)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1428/96

by Klaus Rehder (PSE) to the Commission

(6 June 1996)

Subject: Import quotas and prices for fruit from Hungary and other Central and East European countries

On his recent visit to Hungary the EU Agriculture Commissioner Mr Fischler promised that Hungary's traditional trade relations with the European Union would be maintained for fruit exports.

1. What practical measures has the European Union adopted to be able to keep this promise for this year's harvest?

2. Why are reference prices being set not only for fresh fruit, as in the past, but recently also for fruit intended for processing?

3. What reference prices have been set for both types of fruit and what are the reasons for the price set in each case?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(10 July 1996)

The reference price system applicable to Community imports of certain kinds of fruit and vegetables was replaced, as a result of Uruguay Round negotiations, by the entry price system, whereby prices are arrived at using mathematical formulae on the basis of the reference prices applied to the products in question over the period 1986-88. The new entry price system, like the preceding one, applies to the fruit and vegetables concerned regardless of their intended use, be it consumption as fresh produce or processing.

In the case of two products, namely sour cherries and cucumbers intended for processing, in view of their market characteristics and the supply needs of the Community industry, the Commission last year deemed it necessary to set reduced entry prices valid erga omnes on a provisional basis. At the same time it sent a proposal to the Council aimed at making such reduced entry prices permanent. The Council adopted the proposals. (1)

Future import arrangements concerning products from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are currently being negotiated. It is too early to predict the outcome of such negotiations.

(1) Council Regulation (EC) No 1191/96 of 26.6.1996 and Council Regulation (EC) No 1192/96 of 25.6.1996, OJ L 156, 29.6.1996.

(96/C 345/103)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1430/96

by Doeke Eisma (ELDR) to the Commission

(29 May 1996)

Subject: Commission's absence from the meeting of the forum for pan-European biodiversity strategy from 15 to 17 May 1996

A meeting was held from 15 to 17 May 1996 in Strasbourg of the forum for pan-European biodiversity and landscape strategy to which the 55 countries concerned, the Commission and some international organizations and NGOs were invited.

At this meeting tasks were allocated which also directly concern the European Union's policy on biodiversity.

Can the Commission explain why, despite this fact, it did not have a representative present?

Should it therefore be concluded that the Commission attaches little priority to this important pan-European initiative?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(27 June 1996)

The Commission wrote to the Council of Europe on 6 May 1995 to apologize for its absence from the meeting of 16 and 17 May 1996 and to ask about the outcome.

As regards priorities on nature protection, following the 1995 Council Resolution on the Sofia conference, the Commission considers that within the Community, the Natura 2000 network will represent the pan-European environmental network proposed in the pan-European biodiversity strategy.

In this context, the Commission's current priority is to concentrate the resources it has available on implementing Council Directives 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (1) and 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds. (2) Unfortunately, the Commission has found that these two Directives have been incorrectly applied by most Member States. Its priority is to concentrate on fully implementing the Natura 2000 network (preparation, procedures relating to disputes, implementation of the LIFE-nature programme, information, etc.).

Externally, the Commission has already informed the forum for pan-European diversity strategy of its intention to cooperate closely with Central and Eastern European countries in particular. To this end, it will organize an initial meeting in Slovakia where the Commission will be represented.

Finally, the Commission would like to point out that it was represented at the previous meeting organized in the context of pan-European biodiversity strategy held in Geneva.

(1) OJ L 206, 22.7.1992.
(2) OJ L 103, 25.4.1979.

(96/C 345/104)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1441/96

by Christine Oddy (PSE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Homeworkers and trade unions

Will the Commission take into account the recommendations in its publication 'Social Europe — Homeworking in the European Union' Supplement 2/95 and assist with a media campaign to provide basic

information about legal and social rights, and support a recruitment drive by trade unions?

(96/C 345/105)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1442/96

by Christine Oddy (PSE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Homeworkers and research

Will the Commission undertake to implement the recommendations in its publication 'Social Europe — homeworking in the European Union' Supplement 2/95 and ensure that Eurostat recognizes homeworking as a separate category of workers and records statistics accordingly, carry out detailed research on homeworkers on a sectoral basis into extent, nature, changing trends and conditions of homeworking, including the proportions of black and migrant women homeworkers and develop programmes of good practice?

(96/C 345/106)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1443/96

by Christine Oddy (PSE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Homeworkers and vocational training

Will the Commission give an undertaking to act upon the recommendations in its publication 'Social Europe — homeworking in the European Union' Supplement 2/95 and ensure that homeworkers are included in all European Union vocational training programmes?

Will the Commission also undertake to introduce special training programmes to upgrade homeworkers' skills?

(96/C 345/107)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1444/96

by Christine Oddy (PSE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Homeworking and legislation

What steps is the Commission taking to implement the recommendations in its publication 'Social Europe-Homeworking in the European Union' Supplement 2/95, in particular will the Commission extend the EC framework directive to cover homeworking?

Will the Commission introduce special legislation to cover:

The legal status of homeworkers, responsibilities of subcontractors,equal pay and fair wages, protection of children, access to social security benefits and effective enforcement procedures?

Joint answer to Written Questions E-1441/96, E-1442/96, E-1443/96 and E-1444/96
given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(31 July 1996)

The Commission has fully recognised the need to strive at European level to improve the working conditions of homeworkers and to increase the range of their employment options by including homeworking in the priorities for social policy in the Commission's medium term social action programme (1995-1997) [1].

In the light of the recently adopted international convention and recommendation on homeworking, the Commission is currently reviewing its policy to take account of the International labour organisation (ILO) texts. The work of the United Nations institution will be an excellent starting point in this respect.

(1) COM(95) 134 final.

(96/C 345/108)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1454/96

by Peter Skinner (PSE) to the Commission

(31 May 1996)

Subject: Organochlorides and organophosphates and their impact on agricultural workers and the public health of consumers

Along with my fellow MEP, Mark Watts, I would like to invite the comments of the Commission on the issue of organochlorides and organophosphates and their impact on animal health, the health of workers employed in the agricultural industry and the public health of consumers in the EU.

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(11 July 1996)

Organochlorine (OC) and organophosphorus (OP) compounds are, or have been used in agriculture in plant protection products and as ectoparasiticides (e.g. animal dips). Most of them are classified in the framework of Directive 67/548/EEC concerning the classification, labelling and packaging of dangerous substances (1) and others will be so classified.

With regard to their use as plant protection products, most persistent OC compounds are prohibited under Community legislation, in particular Directive 79/117/EEC (2). OP compounds have until 1993 been regulated under national legislation and their use made generally subject to requirements, inter alia, for protective clothing to protect agricultural workers. With the entry into force of Directive 91/414/EEC concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market (3), new active substances for plant protection products are subject to authorization at Community level and all old active substances, including OCs and OPs, reviewed under the Community programme. In these procedures all aspects of their safety, including operator safety and consumer protection, will be examined.

The Scientific advisory committee to examine the toxicity and ecotoxicity of chemical compounds has provided several opinions on the levels of temporary derogation from the maximum admissible concentration set for individual OCs and OPs in the context of Council Directive 80/778/EEC on the quality of water intended for human consumption (4). At the end of 1994, an opinion was delivered by the same committee on the health risks related to the use of OP compounds in sheep dipping solution, a problem which seems to be of particular importance in the United Kingdom.

There are no special rules in place at Community level relating to the use of these compounds at the workplace. However, several directives on safety and health at work do establish general rules, in particular the framework directive on the introduction of measures to encourage improvement in the safety and health of workers at work, including the provision of information and training.

The Honourable Member annexes to his question a copy of a letter which appears to concern a different substance, fluoroacetamide, which is neither an OC nor an OP compound. The Commission has already replied pointing out that no positive correlation between OP compounds and bovine spongiform encephalopathy has been found epidemiologically, and laboratory tests did not show any change in the prion related proteins following exposure to pesticides. However the British authorities will be asked to comment specifically on this case. In the event that a satisfactory explanation cannot be obtained, the Commission will ask the subgroup on bovine spongiform encephalopathy within the scientific veterinary committee to look into this matter.

(1) OJ L 196, 16.8.1967.
(2) OJ L 33, 8.2.1979.
(3) OJ L 230, 19.8.1991.
(4) OJ L 229, 30.8.1980.

(96/C 345/109)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1456/96

by Klaus Rehder (PSE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Savings in the EU budget for the milk products market

Over the past ten years expenditure in the EU's agricultural budget for milk products has decreased by 31%. Between January 1995 and April 1996 export refunds were cut by 12% for butter, by 34% for skimmed-milk powder, by 37% for Edam cheese and by 19% for Emmenthal cheese. The EU's 1997 preliminary draft budget, Guarantee Section, totals 3 738 million in the milk products sector, a saving of 11.1%.

1. To what are these cuts attributable

a. over the past ten years

b. between January 1995 and April 1996?

2. What were the specific reasons for reducing the preliminary draft budget for the finacial year 1997?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(26 June 1996)

1. During the last ten years, the Commission has adjusted export refunds in the milk sector taking into account the market situation within the Community, the market situation in third countries and, as appropriate, the need to respect the minimum export prices fixed in the context of the General agreement on tariffs and trade (GATT) International dairy arrangement. The reductions which have occured since the beginning of 1995 have reflected, in particular, the strength of prices on the world market. In addition, the implementation of the new world trade arrangements agreed in the context of the Uruguay Round requires the Community to respect certain annual quantitative and financial ceilings for subsidized export, as from 1 July 1995. The need to ensure that the volume and value of export licences respect these limits has therefore been reflected in the Commission's policy on export refunds.

Within the limits imposed by the new world trade arrangements, the Commission continues to determine export refunds, taking into account the market situation internally and in third countries. It should be noted that, on this basis, it was decided at the end of April 1996 to increase the refunds for butter and butteroil by approximately 9%.

2. For the milk sector, the preliminary draft budget for 1997 foresees total credits of 3 738 MECU, a reduction of 466 MECU compared with the credits in the 1996 budget of 4 204 MECU. This reduction reflects the expectation that, compared to the assumptions underlying the 1996 budget, the markets for milk and milk products will be firmer in 1997, enabling rates of export refunds and of certain aids for the internal disposal of butter and skimmed milk to be fixed for 1997 at significantly lower levels than was initially foreseen for the 1996 budget. Moreover, the degressive nature of the annual ceilings for subsidized exports, agreed in the context of the Uruguay Round, requires a reduction in the quantities of certain milk products which may be exported in 1997 compared to 1996. This particularly concerns cheese and the group 'other milk products' which includes whole milk powder, condensed milk and fresh products.

It should be noted that already for 1996, the existence of a much more favourable market situation than was initially foreseen in the budget will mean that actual expenditure in the milk sector is now expected to be well below the initial budgetary credits of 4 204 MECU. This is reflected in the preliminary draft supplementary and amending budget which the Commission adopted on 5 June 1996.

(96/C 345/110)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1457/96

by Carlos Robles Piquer (PPE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Marketing in Spain of guaranteed pension funds

The Spanish insurers' association has expressed emphatic opposition to the marketing in Spain of guaranteed pension funds by credit companies. Its stance has received unreserved support from the secretariat of the European Insurance Committee (EIC), which has written to the Spanish Finance Minister to express the insurance sector's concern at the marketing in Spain of guaranteed pension funds.

In the EIC's letter it is stated that schemes such as guaranteed pension funds traditionally fall within the scope of insurance activity, as an EU directive makes clear.

Can the Commission state its position on the matter, in the light of the relevant Community provisions and with a view to mediating in what has been called the 'guaranteed-fund war' in Spain?

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(31 July 1996)

Generally speaking, both insurance companies and other financial institutions (e.g. credit institutions) traditionally supply supplementary pension products in the Community that include certain guarantees or arrangements concerning the interest or benefits offered. Where they market such products, insurance companies, credit institutions and other financial institutions must always comply with the rules applicable to them regarding the taking-up and pursuit of their activities.

In the case of insurance companies, for example, Community law specifically recognizes the possibility that life assurance companies may manage group pension funds and that such management may be accompanied by insurance covering either conservation of capital or payment of a minimum level of interest (Article 1(2)(c) and (d) of Directive 79/267/EEC ([1])). Community legislation stipulates that life assurance companies carrying on such activities must have adequate financial resources, particularly in the form of technical reserves, and must also have a sufficient solvency margin that is calculated according to the rules laid down by Community legislation.

In this context, if such a guarantee regarding the interest accruing from the investment of pension fund assets is covered by insurance, Community law stipulates that such insurance may be provided only by life assurance companies that are licensed by the Member States of their head office, in accordance with the third life assurance Directive 92/96/EEC, ([2]) to carry on such insurance activities. However, if such guarantees are provided by means of other financial techniques used by other financial institutions, Community law permits such activities to be carried on by those institutions provided that the prudential rules relating specifically to them are consistently observed.

([1]) OJ L 63, 13.3.1979.
([2]) OJ L 360, 9.12.1992.

(96/C 345/111)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1462/96

by Jan Mulder (ELDR) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Protection of geographical designation of origin for agricultural products

I am grateful to the Commission for answering my Written Question E-0769/96 ([1]). Unfortunately, part of the question was not answered, and I therefore repeat it here:

1. Is the Commission prepared to enter Gouda and Edam on the list of products with a protected designation of origin, if so requested by the Member State in question?

I should also like to put the following supplementary question:

2. Can the Commission explain the answer it gave to the abovementioned question?

([1]) OJ C 280, 25.9.1996, p. 76.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(19 July 1996)

The Commission did not receive an official application to register the designations 'Gouda' and 'Edam' under Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92 until 7 June. [1] These applications are therefore still being examined.

Bear in mind, however, that all registration applications received by the Commission since 26 January 1994 fall under the procedure laid down in Articles 5, 6 and 7 of the Regulation. A designation cannot be registered just because the Commission feels like it. The Articles provide for a public procedure in which applications can be opposed. Only at the end of this procedure can a designation be registered.

The Commission wishes to stress that designations that have become generic within the meaning of Article 3 of the Regulation may not be registered.

(1) OJ L 208, 24.7.1992.

(96/C 345/112)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1463/96

by Undine-Uta Bloch von Blottnitz (V) to the Commission

(31 May 1996)

Subject: Brown bears in the EU

Brown bears in the wild are now rare in the European Union. Attempts are therefore being made in certain places, amid great difficulties, to reintroduce specimens of these animals. At the same time, brown bears are being bred year after year in Community zoos in order to attract the public with their loveable offspring. Once the animals have grown larger, the zoos dispose of these bears in a variety of ways. In Saxony-Anhalt (Germany) there is even a restaurant which breeds brown bears in order to put them on show in small cages and, later, slaughter them for consumption on the premises.

1. Where in the EU, and in precisely what ways, are brown bears currently being prepared for life in the wild?

2. Who is paying for these programmes, how much are they costing, and what is the EU's financial and/or moral commitment to such programmes?

3. How does the Commission view the fact that bear cubs are being bred in European zoos purely for the short-term gratification of the public?

4. How does the Commission view the fact that, on the one hand, attempts are being made, amid great difficulties, to reintroduce bears into the wild whilst, on the other hand, bears are being bred and kept under highly questionable conditions (as in Saxony-Anhalt, for example) for purposes of consumption?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(2 July 1996)

1-2. The Commission has no information in its possession on any plans to breed brown bears (ursus arctos) in captivity with a view to their reintroduction into the Community.

3-4. The Commission has put a recommendation to the Council on the keeping of wild animals in a zoological environment. [1] The matter of breeding in captivity is dealt with in Item 8.8.

In addition the boosting of the population that is jointly financed under LIFE-Nature Projects uses bears taken from a non-threatened wild population.

(1) COM(95) 619 final.

(96/C 345/113)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1470/96

by Hiltrud Breyer (V) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Phosphate ester poisoning due to the use of Tiguvon (Fenthion) manufactured by Bayer Leverkusen

1. Is the Commission aware that people who have repeatedly treated their pets with Tiguvon for fleas have suffered serious phosphate ester poisoning?

2. When was this agent authorized for use on small animals?

3. Does Tiguvon comply with the EU authorization directives?

4. To what extent has the effect of Tiguvon on humans and animals and its interaction with other cholinesterase inhibitors been investigated?

5. Which institution examines the mode of action of ethical and freely available antiparasitics, especially for their harmlessness to humans and animals and their compatibility with the environment?

6. Is it possible for the burden of proof in the marketing of Tiguvon and other neurotoxins to be reversed throughout Europe where injury is suffered so that those who suffer chronic damage to their health may be appropriately compensated?

Answer given by Mr Bangemann on behalf of the Commission

(19 July 1996)

The Commission is not aware of the problems raised by the Honourable Member. It is currently gathering the necessary information from the European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products.

(96/C 345/114)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1471/96

by Hiltrud Breyer (V) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Answers to Question E-0451/96 on the possible authorization of the fat substitute 'Olestra' in the EU

In its answer to the questions on the fat substitute 'Olestra' (E-0451/96 [1]) the Commission stated that it could not give appropriate answers to questions 2 to 6 because an application for authorization to market the fat substitute in the Community had not yet been submitted. As such an application has meanwhile been submitted in the United Kingdom, the Commission is this time asked to answer the following questions:

1. What is the Commission's view of the eight-year study of 'Olestra' by the US authorizing body and of the labelling of the product?

2. In the event of imports and/or authorization of marketing throughout the EU, would the Commission also seek appropriate warnings on the labelling?

3. Has the Commission had studies of its own carried out on 'Olestra' or does it intend to do so?

4. What is the Commission's view of the technological necessity of 'Olestra' in view of the health hazards, taking into account Proctor & Gamble's studies which showed that laboratory animals did not lose any weight as a result of consuming 'Olestra'?

5. In view of the dubious effects of 'Olestra', as referred to in question 4, is there any point in permitting the marketing of the product in the EU?

[1] OJ C 183, 24.6.1996, p. 32.

Answer given by Mr Bangemann on behalf of the Commission

(19 July 1996)

Until the proposal for a regulation on novel foods and novel food ingredients [1] has been adopted by the Parliament and the Council and has entered into force, applications to place novel foods on the market will continue to be dealt with by Member States in accordance with national procedures.

Since no dossier concerning this product has been submitted to the Commission, it remains inappropriate for the Commission to comment on the issues raised by the Honourable Member.

[1] COM(96) 229 amending COM(93) 631 and COM(92) 295.

(96/C 345/115)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1476/96

by Glyn Ford (PSE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Number of terrorists and drug traffickers apprehended at EU internal borders

Can the Commission indicate how many terrorists and drug traffickers have been apprehended at EU internal borders in each EU country each year over the last five years.

Answer given by Mrs Gradin on behalf of the Commission

(15 July 1996)

The Commission does not collect or have access to the statistics which would enable it to answer the Honourable Member's question in detail. In particular it has no information about arrests of terrorists at internal borders.

As far as drugs are concerned, detailed figures on drug seizures in each Member State and in the Community as a whole, also including developments over the last five years, are collected and published by the Europol drugs unit. The general situation report on drug production and drug trafficking (published in September 1995) indicates that in 1994 5 907 kilogrammes (kgs) of heroin (1993: 4 693 kgs), 28 968 kgs of cocaine (1993: 16 884 kgs) and 733 380 kgs of cannabis (1993: 517 062 kgs) were seized in the Community. The next general situation report is being prepared and is expected to be published in the autumn.

These figures do not, however, indicate which seizures or arrests took place at internal frontiers. In the view of the Commission, such indications would anyway not be especially revealing, since the place at which an arrest is effected can be determined by many different factors or considerations.

(96/C 345/116)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1477/96

by Glyn Ford (PSE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Number of rabies cases

Can the Commission indicate how many rabies cases there have been in each EU country each year over the last five years?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(28 June 1996)

Recorded rabies cases in the Member States in the years 1991 to 1995

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Belgium	29	34	2	61	213
Denmark	—	—	1	3	1
Germany	3599	1425	845	1378	856
Spain	8	12	5	3	6
France	2166	1285	261	99	40
Italy	4	23	82	36	11
Luxembourg	16	2	1	1	15
Netherlands	12	8	10	1	4
Austria	2460	1117	675	254	95

(96/C 345/117)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1487/96

by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Sheep and goat premiums for 1995

The Evvia Stockbreeders Association claims that farmers and producers have not yet received their sheep and goat premiums for 1995.

1. When were the sums in question approved?

2. When were they disbursed?

3. Should farmers have received them by now?

4. If there have been delays, will it be possible to pay the appropriate interest?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(3 July 1996)

The definitive amount of the Community premium for ewes and she-goats referred to by the Honourable Member was set by the Commission for the 1995 marketing year on 2 February this year at ECU 24.281 per ewe producing heavy lambs and ECU 19.857 per she-goat and per ewe producing light lambs. In accordance with the rules, Greece must pay this premium by 15 October.

The Commission would point out that at the end of June 1995 it offered Member States the option of making two advance payments of ECU 7 814 per ewe (heavy lambs) and ECU 6.251 per she-goat and ewe (light lambs). Since payment of these advances is optional, the decision has to be taken by the Member States' authorities, although a uniform rule must apply throughout a single Member State's territory.

According to the information available to the Commission, between February and April this year Greece started to pay advances on the premium for an amount of ECU 69.6 million and part of the balance, for an amount of ECU 46.8 million.

(96/C 345/118)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1497/96

by Vassilis Ephremidis (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Use of the fire brigade as a repressive force

The Greek fire brigade is called upon to act as a repressive force under police command to break up public gatherings as reinforcements for the special police units assigned to these duties.

Since the fire brigade's task is to protect the lives and property of the public from the threat of fire, disaster and accident and given that in Greece the ratio of fire-fighters to members of the public is currently more than 1:1 800, when the ratio in other European countries stands at 1:700, using them to put down demonstrations further undermines the effective performance of their duties.

1. Does the Commission think that the practice of using the fire brigade to break up gatherings and demonstrations should be stopped because it contravenes the role and nature of the service, distorts its aims and duties and contradicts and impedes its task of serving society?

2. Does it know which EU countries use their fire brigades for repressive purposes?

3. Are Community funds designed to strengthen fire-fighting resources and operations used for repressive police work instead of the protection of the public's lives and property?

Answer given by Mrs Gradin on behalf of the Commission

(18 July 1996)

1. The Commission is not competent to determine whether a Member State uses its fire-fighting services to maintain public order.

2. The Commission does not have any information on this matter.

3. In the past, the Commission has financed the equipping of fire-fighting services in Greece, but not the operation of these services. Such financing does not in any way strengthen the repressive role of the police but serves solely to provide better protection against fire.

(96/C 345/119)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1500/96

by Anita Pollack (PSE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Experiments involving animals

In reply to my written question E-0713/96 [1], the Commission did not explain what its policies on the frequency of meetings but simply explained how many have taken place since 1990 and when the next one takes place. Will the Commission explain if there is any policy on frequency of these meetings and what it is?

Is it true that the last meeting between the competent authorities and the Commission took place as long ago as October 1994?

Does the Commission know that the competent authorities are concerned about the irregularity of their formal contacts with the Commission and do not regard ad hoc meetings as substitutes for formal meetings?

[1] OJ C 183 of 24.6.1996, p. 48.

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(19 July 1996)

The Commission does not have a special policy on the frequency of its meetings with the competent authorities for Directive 86/609/EEC ([1]). The frequency of these meetings is guided by the amount of work to be carried out as well as the situation of the projects which require the guidance of these authorities. The Commission is aware of the concern of certain Member States and has organised a competent authorities meeting for the end of this year in order to address this and other issues.

Ad hoc meetings on statistics in October 1994 and June 1995 were attended by representatives of the competent authorities. These ad hoc meetings were organised to conclude on the reporting of statistical data on the number of animals used in experiments and to respond in particular to the request of the Parliament.

([1]) OJ L 358, 18.12.1986.

(96/C 345/120)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1502/96

by Gerardo Fernández-Albor (PPE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Compulsory use of reformulated petrol in the European Union

Unleaded petrol is being used throughout the European Union, and now reformulated petrol is being launched. Its use has been compulsory in 39 states of the United States since 1992. Of the Community countries Finland already uses it and the Swedish Government is in favour of it. The French law on air quality recommends its use.

Since this petrol has a higher proportion of oxygen in its composition than ordinary petrol and it significantly reduces carbon monoxide pollution (by up to 25%), it seems clear that it would be advisable to introduce it into the Community.

Can the Commission say what its current view is on the subject and whether it considers that the use of reformulated petrol should be introduced, whether on a voluntary or a compulsory basis, in order to make a useful contribution to ensuring that the air in our polluted cities is cleaner?

Answer given by Mr Papoutsis on behalf of the Commission

(1 August 1996)

The issues raised by the Honourable Member were the subject of a recent Commission Communication. ([1]) On 18 June 1996 the Commission adopted a new strategy to reduce emissions from motor vehicles in order to make it possible to respect rigorous air quality standards concerning pollutants such as carbon monoxide, benzene, nitrogen dioxide, particles and tropospheric ozone.

This strategy, which aims to reduce emissions from road transport vehicles by 60-70% in 2010 compared with the current situation, consists of two proposals for a directive. The first seeks to make the standards for emissions applicable to private cars stricter, while the second refers to quality standards for petrol and diesel fuels. This second proposal provides for oxygenated compounds among the other parameters considered for unleaded petrols in the Auto-Oil Programme. The Commission proposes that their maximum content be fixed at 2.3% in weight as higher proportions of oxygenated products in petrols can give rise to increases in other pollutants such as NOx and the aldehydes. That is the reason why, moreover, that the air quality targets adopted did not make it possible to raise this content to higher levels. The value proposed by the Commission is comparable to those adopted by California and Sweden.

In addition to this, other proposals for legislation deriving from the Auto Oil programme and concerning standards for emissions from light commercial vehicles and heavy goods vehicles, and on the regulation of inspections, annual and bi-annual maintenance checks are currently being prepared.

([1]) Doc. COM(96) 248.

(96/C 345/121)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1504/96

by Spalato Belleré (NI) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: The beach of Soverato

The Italian State Railways have started to build a barrier of stones to protect a stretch of railway track which crosses the beach of Soverato, one of the most beautiful beaches in Southern Italy.

This measure, apart from being of doubtful practical use, spoils the environmental features of an area of great natural beauty, for which tourism is the only means of ensuring a minimum of seasonal work for people in a region where unemployment is endemic.

Can the Commission take urgent measures to stop the work being carried out by the Italian State Railways and draft a directive for the protection of the environment of Soverato?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(10 July 1996)

The Commission has investigated whether the site mentioned (spiaggia di Soverato) has been classified as a special protection area under the terms of Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds (1), or proposed as a candidate site of Community importance under the terms of Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (2). This investigation has given negative results.

The Commission then further checked whether this site would qualify for one of the two designations above, again obtaining a negative result.

The Commission can therefore conclude that the matter raised by the Honourable Member is not relevant as far as Community legislation is concerned and therefore falls under the competence of the Italian authorities.

(1) OJ L 103, 25.4.1979.
(2) OJ L 206, 22.7.1992.

(96/C 345/122)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1510/96

by Sebastiano Musumeci (NI) to the Commission

(17 June 1996)

Subject: The ecosystem of the Eolian islands

The Institute of Veterinary Pathology at the University of Messina, whilst carrying out routine checks, discovered traces of chemical pollutants in the sea off the Eolian islands, particularly in the stretch of water off the town of Rinella in the district of Leni on the island of Salina and the village of Acquacalda on Lipari.

The seriousness of the problem is highlighted by the discovery of many species of fish, such as white seabream, grey mullet and amberjack, with obvious anatomical malformations, such as atrophied tail fins and eyes and extensive desquamation.

Can the Commission carry out an investigation to ascertain the presence of chemical pollutants in the ecosystem of the Eolian islands?

Can it also issue a directive as a matter of urgency for the protection of the sea and Community coastlines in the Mediterranean basin, with particular reference to the environmental protection of the Eolian islands?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(17 July 1996)

The Commission is concerned to hear of the pollution of the waters around the Eolian islands,but notes that any investigation or remedial action is the responsibility of the Italian authorities. Without further information,

the Commission is unable to ascertain whether there is a problem, what the cause of the problem might be and whether there has been any breach of Community law.

The Commission is currently preparing a proposal for a water resources framework directive which would require the regular monitoring of coastal waters for signs of pollution and of its impact on the ecosystem. It would require action to be taken to ensure a good quality environment and would insist on regular reporting to the public.

(96/C 345/123)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1520/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) and Cristiana Muscardini (NI) to the Commission

(17 June 1996)

Subject: Mad cows

The events surrounding the epidemic of BSE in the United Kingdom show that the EU must provide guarantees regarding the effective and efficient application of veterinary policy measures and, more generally, regarding proper checks on origin.

Hence, in view of the need for EU inspections in the interests of more effective control measures, can the Commission say whether such controls have actually been carried out and, if so, by whom and whether it is true that in the United Kingdom arrangements are being made only to slaughter and destroy the animals suffering from the disease rather than all the animals on affected farms?

(96/C 345/124)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1521/96

by Cristiana Muscardini (NI) and Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(17 June 1996)

Subject: Bovine spongiform encephalopathy

The compensation being considered for farmers and the authorities in the United Kingdom in connection with the emergence of BSE seems unjust, in that it rewards those who should have been penalized for bad farming. Can the Commission — if the economic measures planned by the EU are actually carried out — arrange immediately for on-the-spot inspections designed to ensure effective checks (for example the registration of cattle, individual identification and certified proof of destruction) on the actual destruction of the relevant animals, in order to prevent evasion of the rules and other significant forms of fraud?

Joint answer to Written Questions E-1520/96 and E-1521/96
given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(11 July 1996)

The inspections in the United Kingdom concerning bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) were performed by the Office of veterinary and phytosanitary inspection and control with the participation of experts from the Commission and Member States. The missions also examined the controls performed in the United Kingdom on the destruction of meat and other by-products in order to avoid their incorporation into the human and animal food chains.

In the United Kingdom, before 29 March 1996 only animals which were suspected of BSE because of clinical signs were killed and destroyed. After 28 March 1996 the sale of meat of bovine animals over the age of 30 months was prohibited. On 3 May 1996 a programme to slaughter and destroy bovine animals over the age of 30 months was started in order to exclude them from the human food and animal feed chains and from use for cosmetic and pharmaceutical products.

At the request of the Community bodies, the United Kingdom presented a plan to the Commission on 3 June 1996 laying down supplementary measures to control and eradicate BSE in the United Kingdom. After the United Kingdom had agreed to modify the plan, it was adopted by Commission Decision 96/385/EC of 25 June 1996 [1].

[1] OJ L 151, 26.6.1996.

(96/C 345/125)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1557/96

by Josu Imaz San Miguel (PPE) to the Commission

(17 June 1996)

Subject: Plant-health checks on imports

In view of the need to establish proper checks on imports of certain agricultural products as a consequence of the liberalization of the world market (GATT, preferential agreements, etc.,) and given the widespread impact of pests and diseases which, introduced from other countries, affect certain typical Community products, such as the cancrosis which affects citrus fruits in Mediterranean countries, has the Commission considered increasing plant-health checks on imported products? Does the Commission think that it would be practical (and, if so, worthwhile) for EU technicians and/or experts to be posted to countries from which certain agricultural products with a high risk of contamination are imported? Is the Commission planning to take any action in respect of the various pests and diseases which affect citrus fruit in Mediterranean countries?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(5 July 1996)

The Commission is aware of the risks of pests and diseases being brought in with imports of citrus fruits from non-EC countries.

Measures to protect the Community against the introduction and spread of organisms harmful to plants or plant products are provided for in Council Directive 77/93/EEC, [1] as amended, Annex III of which lists items — including citrus fruit plants — which may not be brought into any Member State.

Annex IV of the Directive sets out the requirements to be imposed by Member States on the introduction and movement of plants and plant products, particularly those from outside the Community. A number of special requirements apply to citrus fruits, including rules designed to prevent cancrosis (xanthomonas campestris, all citrus pathogens), and Member States have to check consignments of citrus fruits to ensure compliance with these rules.

The Commission recognizes the need to tighten up the rules on citrus fruit entering the Community, particularly with regard to cancrosis, in the light of new scientific knowledge, and is currently reviewing the requirements.

In the Veterinary and Phytosanitary Office it is able to consult experts either employed directly by it or seconded from Member States for a fixed term or on an ad hoc basis, who are mandated by the Council, acting on a proposal from the Commission, to carry out various tasks which may include visits to non-member countries to assess the health of plants and plant products which are or may be exported to the Community.

[1] OJ L 26, 31 January 1977.

(96/C 345/126)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1560/96

by Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler (V) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: French Guyana's National Tropical Forests Park

In reply to an earlier question of 20 November 1995 (E-3129/95) (1) concerning the possible Commission involvement in French Guyana's National Tropical Forests Park, the Commission replied that it has provided ECU 1.5 million for this project.

Is the Commission aware of the serious objections of the indigenous peoples living in the area, against the proposal?

Is the Commission aware that the actual proposal by the 'Comité de Pilotage' is completely opposite to the proposals made by ORSTOM and WWF/IUCN?

Has the Commission consulted with the indigenous peoples affected by the National Park proposal before deciding to participate in the funding, and what has been the outcome of these consultations?

Is the Commission willing to ask the French Government to review the whole concept of the National Park following the recommendations of environmental organizations and indigenous peoples, and how is the Commission going to improve the participation of indigenous peoples in the project?

(1) OJ C 109, 15.4.1996, p. 26.

Answer given by Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(5 July 1996)

In its answer to Written Question No E-3129/95 the Commission stated that co-financing by the European Regional Development Fund of the project to create a tropical forest park in French Guiana was provided for under submeasure 6.3 of the Objective 1 single programming document (SDP) for French Guiana.

The Commission would point out that, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the appraisal and final selection of projects proposed for Community co-financing under the programmes adopted are, in the case of France, the responsibility of the prefect of the region in question. The authorities concerned are of course required to take account of national and Community legislation in their appraisal of proposals.

Under the Structural Funds Regulation (1) a committee chaired in this case by the Guianese prefect, of which the Commission is a member, is responsible for ensuring the SDP is properly implemented and, inter alia, monitoring compliance with Community policies. The Commission will inform the committee's chair of the concerns expressed and ask for clarification of the points raised.

(1) OJ L 193, 31.7.1993.

(96/C 345/127)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1565/96

by José Pomés Ruiz (PPE) to the Commission

(17 June 1996)

Subject: Information on the call for pilot project proposals under Article 10 of the ERDF Regulation

What progress has been made in the selection process for projects eligible for ERDF funding, under Article 10 thereof, following the call for proposals published in OJ C 319 of 30 November 1995?

Answer given by Ms Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(5 July 1996)

In all, 484 dossiers have been presented to the Commission in response to the call for proposals published in the Official Journal referred to by the Honourable Member.

A panel of independent experts will be appointed to examine the proposals received. In view of the time needed to set up this panel and for detailed analysis and rigorous selection of the dossiers, it may be possible to complete the process towards the end of October.

The budget at present available will enable the Commission to cofinance only some 25 projects for all the Member States.

(96/C 345/128)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1570/96

by Roberto Mezzaroma (UPE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Disowning of parents

The Italian media recently reported that children could appeal to the courts to change parents, on the grounds of mistreatment.

1. What steps can the Commission take to prevent this practice from spreading within the Member States of the European Union?

2. Would it not agree that European legislation should be enacted with a view to establishing the rights of both minors and parents?

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(29 July 1996)

The Community does not have any competence to regulate the rights of minors and parents in the Member States. Actions in this field are limited to the exchange of information and good practices.

All Member States signed the United Nations convention on the rights of the child and it lies within their responsibility to ensure implementation where necessary.

(96/C 345/129)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1571/96

by Johanna Maij-Weggen (PPE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: French payment to the Netherlands under the Rhine Salt Treaty

1. Is the Commission aware that France has still not made the payment of Fl. 9 711 million to the Netherlands to complete the French contribution to the Rhine Salt Treaty of 25 September 1991?

2. Is it aware that France should have completed this payment by 1 February 1995?

3. Is the Commission, which was present when the treaty was signed, prepared to request clarification from France concerning France's failure to meet its financial obligations and to request it to fulfil them?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(19 July 1996)

The Commission has been informed that payment was made to the Netherlands in June 1996.

(96/C 345/130)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1575/96

by Raymonde Dury (PSE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Price of 'maatjes' herrings

At the beginning of the 'maatjes' herring season the producers stated that the price of this product had doubled since 1995 because of the restrictive fishing quota policy imposed by the European Union.

Could the Commission confirm this? Has the rise in fish prices occurred in all the countries of the Union, and for all species?

Answer given by Ms Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(1 July 1996)

Quotas form part of the policy for conserving and managing fish stocks. The maximum herring catch authorized by the Council for 1996 is well below that for 1995.

However, prices are dictated by factors other than availability and the quota level cannot be held solely to blame for the rise in maatje prices. Although the average price of fresh landed herring rose significantly in Denmark during the first few months of the year, the same cannot be said of other Member States.

Prices for most demersal fish seem to be on a long-term downward trend.

(96/C 345/131)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1586/96

by Jean-Pierre Bazin (UPE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Bankruptcy of Bremer-Vulkan

In a recent interview in the German magazine Der Spiegel Mr Karel Van Miert, the Commissioner responsible for competition policy, said that the Commission had now appointed a new consultant to conduct a full investigation into Bremer-Vulkan.

The same weekly reveals that Bremer-Vulkan has received DM 975 million from the coffers of the East German conglomerate Schiffskommerz, in addition to aid from the Treuhand fund.

Can the Commission, with the aid of its new consultant, confirm or repudiate these revelations, and tell us whether it was aware of this additional subsidy?

Answer given by Mr Van Miert on behalf of the Commission

(19 July 1996)

The article in 'Der Spiegel' of 29 April 1996 to which the Honourable Member refers, is neither based on investigations initiated by the Commission, nor on sources from the Commission.

Contrary to the impression created by the article, the payments from 'Schiffscommerz' to the various shipyards in East Germany are perhaps little known, but the information was not kept confidential, or even secret. All bidders at the privatization were aware of the accounts receivable which are the base of these payments, from the balance sheets of the yards. The Commission was informed by the German government of the existence of these claims at the time of notification of the privatization programme, and they were considered in the evaluation of the restructuring programmes. Subsequently, the Commission gave information about the developments in these claims and the relevant contracts in the multilateral meetings with the Member States.

The Commission would recall that before German unification the yards did not accept export orders themselves, but all these contracts were directed through the central export agency 'Außenhandelsbetrieb Schiffscommerz'. The yards had no influence on the commercial terms which were in general very unfavourable for them.

At the time of privatization all yards had therefore substantial accounts receivable against 'Schiffscommerz' from completed and pending contracts. These claims against 'Schiffscommerz' were adapted to the deutsche Mark price level following the general rules of § 32 DM-Bilanzgesetz. This conversion is to be regarded as a general measure in the context of the unification of Germany. It therefore does not constitute aid in the sense of Article 92 of the EC Treaty.

(96/C 345/132)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1597/96

by José Apolinário (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Implementation of Directives 85/73, 88/409 and 93/118 by Spain

What is the state of compliance by Spain with Directives 85/73/EEC [1], 88/409/EEC [2] and 93/118/EEC [3], particularly as regards collection of the health inspection fee?

(1) OJ L 32, 5.2.1985, p. 14.
(2) OJ L 194, 22.7.1988, p. 28.
(3) OJ L 340, 31.12.1993, p. 15.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(15 July 1996)

Spain has duly transposed into national law those aspects of Directives 85/73/EEC, 88/409/EEC and 93/118/EC which relate to health inspection fees. The transposed legislation sent to the Commission by Spain, in accordance with its requirement under the Directives in question, has been examined by the Commission and is considered to be in compliance with those Directives.

As regards the collection of health inspection fees by the Spanish authorities, following a complaint to the Commission asserting that such fees were not being duly collected from Spanish slaughterhouses, Spain has been sending regularly to the Commission proof of the recovery of health inspection fees by the Spanish Autonomous Communities.

(96/C 345/133)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1600/96

by Honório Novo (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Community legislation in respect of landfill sites for the disposal of household waste

In Portugal, various procedures are currently under way with a view to deciding on the location of, preparing public competitions for, and subsequently constructing landfill sites for the disposal of household and industrial waste.

These procedures have been hotly disputed by the people in the areas concerned, who are accusing the local authorities of taking decisions on the basis of technically ill-founded and/or incomplete studies without having carried out environmental impact studies and, in certain cases, without responding appropriately to the many calls for public information and transparency.

The people affected and the organizations which represent them have not even succeeded in obtaining comprehensive information or securing access to the national and Community laws which regulate the procedure for determining the location of such sites and then constructing them.

In these circumstances, would the Commission provide details of all current Community legislation (relating to all aspects, including the environment) which regulates decisions on the location of landfill sites for household waste?

Which of these Community laws have already been incorporated into Portuguese law, which have not and, of the latter, which should have already been incorporated?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(17 July 1996)

Community legislation does not contain any special provisions on the location of landfill sites for household waste. Directive 75/442/EEC ([1]) (waste in general), as amended by Directive 91/156/EEC, ([2]) therefore applies, in particular Article 4 which stipulates that 'Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that waste is recovered or disposed of without endangering human health and without using processes or methods which could harm the environment'.

It should also be pointed out that installations for the disposal of domestic waste are covered by Annex II to Directive 85/337/EEC ([3]) (environmental impact assessment). Projects involving such installations must therefore, in accordance with Article 4(2) of the Directive, be the subject of an environmental impact assessment 'where Member States consider that their characteristics so require', i.e. if, by virtue of their nature, size or location, projects are likely to have significant effects on the environment (Article 2).

Finally, the Commission would inform the Honourable Member that the national transposing measures are, for Directive 85/337/EEC, Decree-Law No 186/90 and Regulatory Decree No 38/90 and, for Directive 75/442/EEC, Decree-Law No 310/95 and Order No 15/96.

([1]) OJ L 194, 25.7.1975.
([2]) OJ L 78, 26.3.1991.
([3]) OJ L 175, 5.7.1985.

(96/C 345/134)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1620/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Involvement of less developed countries in the IGC

In drawing up its submissions to the IGC on the Common Foreign and Security Policy, what consultations and research has the Commission undertaken with governments and organizations in less developed countries?

Does the Commission agree that a CFSP will inevitably focus Europe's attentions on its own borders, and diminish the priority accorded to less developed countries world-wide?

Does the Commission plan any initiative in this respect?

Answer given by Mr Santer on behalf of the Commission

(29 July 1996)

The report of the reflection group, the Commission's opinion and the interim report of the Italian Presidency clearly identify the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) as a way to enhance the identity and increase the influence of the Union in world affairs. How to give the Union a clear external identity is certainly one of the major issues currently being discussed by the inter-governmental conference (IGC).

In the Commission's view, this requires certain traditional responsibilities of the Community in foreign and security matters to be up-dated to reflect today's conditions in world affairs, more substance and continuity to be granted to the CFSP and the various policy instruments to be used in a more coherent and coordinated way.

The main aim is therefore to make the Union an effective international partner. An enhanced CFSP would provide a framework in which priorities can be set and policies pursued. There is no reason to suppose that this will make the Union inward-looking, or have a negative impact on the Union's relations with less-developed countries.

The Union's partners around the world follow the IGC with interest and for its part the Commission keeps them informed and hears their views through the various forms of structured or bilateral dialogue which exist.

(96/C 345/135)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1622/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Directoria

How many letters has the Commission received from individual local authorities and associations of regional and local authorities concerning the last Directoria, and can the Commission summarize the main representations received?

How does the Commission plan to respond to the representations made in organising future Directoria?

Precisely when are these now planned?

Answer given on behalf of Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(29 July 1996)

Directoria, the interregional cooperation event which was held from 4 to 6 December last year, was attended by 516 delegations, i.e. a total of 1 147 people.

The replies to the survey of participant satisfaction conducted in the form of a questionnaire issued at the close of the event numbered 142. The question on whether the services offered by Directoria could help in preparing projects for responding to calls for proposals was answered as follows: 8%: very much; 58%: to a certain extent; 31%: a little; 3%: not at all. It emerged from the comments made by the participants on the questionnaires that some wanted the convention to be held in more spacious premises, the price of the meal to be included in the booking fee, and interpretation into a language other than those already available (five). The Commission has taken all these suggestions into consideration in the arrangements being made for the next Directoria, which will probably be held at the beginning of 1997.

Some of the letters received before the event stated that the booking fee was too high.

A letter signed by 57 offices representing regional authorities in Brussels proposed a closer partnership between the Commission and these offices in preparing the Directoria. The offices suggested improvements involving the cost of participation and the number of catalogues per delegation and more opportunities for meeting the officials who manage projects under Article 10 of the Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)[1]. The Commission intends to reply positively to these suggestions and has proposed meetings with a delegation from the offices.

[1] Regulation (EEC) No 4254/88, as amended: OJ L 193, 31.7.1993.

(96/C 345/136)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1630/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: EU aid to the International Planned Parenthood Federation

How much money does the EU give to the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and what exactly is the money used for?

Is the money used directly for population control projects in China or is it used indirectly, for example, to send officials to the Cairo and Beijing Conferences, to block moves by pro-lifers condemning China's one child per couple policy?

Answer given by Mr Marin on behalf of the Commission

(18 July 1996)

In 1993, the Commission agreed with the International planned parenthood federation (IPPF) to support a three-year 10.5 MECU project entitled 'Support to IPPF to provide family planning to reduce fertility in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries'. This was a grant under budget heading B7-4080 'Operations promoting multilateral and regional or sub regional cooperation in the Mediterranean'.

In this project family planning associations from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Gaza and the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey implement integrated activities targeting the reduction of fertility, improvement of family planning, reproductive, sexual and mother and child health services, and the empowerment of women. No further IPPF activities have been supported by the Commission nor has any of the money been channelled directly to projects in China.

The Commission is not aware of any indirect use to block moves condemning China's one-child-per-couple policy.

(96/C 345/137)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1633/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Handynet information system — EU Helios programme

In the course of the last twelve months, what precise and quantifiable improvements have been made in the development and operation of the Handynet information system?

Has the Commission any statistics on the number of individual people with disabilities in some or all Member States who have directly used the system in this period?

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(31 July 1996)

In the course of the last twelve months the Handynet system has developed as follows:

a) Information content:

1. general qualitative improvement of the data on technical aids;
2. input of data concerning technical aids manufactured outside the Community and data input on non-governmental organisations prepared by these organisations.

b) Retrieval programme:

1. general improvement of the retrieval programme, retrieval criteria and speed;
2. installation of a tutorial allowing each user to learn how to use the CD-ROM (11 languages).

c) Use of the CD-ROM by disabled people:

1. seventy-seven Handynet CD-ROM have been presented to the members of the European disability forum and to the national disability councils free of charge;
2. since December 1995 a programme for statistical data collection has been included in the retrieval programme. Fifty organisations including thirty-five NGOs are expected to enter their data by September 1996.

(96/C 345/138)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1634/96

by Johanna Boogerd-Quaak (ELDR) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Security at the Petten reactor

1. Is the Commission aware of the Greenpeace demonstration on 26 April 1996 on the site of the Petten research reactor in the Netherlands ([1])? Can the Commission explain how this site, where there are supposed to be additional security measures because of the presence of highly enriched uranium, could be entered relatively easily and non-violently? Can the Commission say how this is compatible with its assertion, in answer to written question P-0576/96 ([2]), that 'spent reactor fuel may stay temporarily in safe storage at Petten'?

2. How does the Commission view its responsibility with regard to security of research reactors of the Joint Research Centre and protection of the population? Does the Commission have any knowledge of the security of the reactor? Does it feel that it is adequate? Can it indicate why the additional security measures which the fuel supplier (the United States) insisted on have never fully been implemented?

3. Is it true that because of the inadequate security the United States is no longer prepared to supply highly enriched uranium to Petten? Is it true that the owner (the Joint Research Centre, Brussels) and the operator (Energy Research Centre, the Netherlands) of the Petten research reactor are not prepared to switch from highly enriched to low enrichment uranium? If so, what are the reasons?

([1]) Noord Hollands Dagblad, 27 April 1996: 'Beveiliging is een lachertje' by Bert de Jong.
([2]) OJ C 173, 17.6.1996, p. 68.

Answer given by Mrs Cresson on behalf of the Commission

(8 July 1996)

1. & 2. The Honourable Member is invited to note the answers to written question P-1169/96 by Mrs Plooij-van Gorsel ([1]) and E-1259/96 by Mr Van Velzen ([2]) concerning the Greenpeace demonstration at Petten on 26 April 1996.

The Commission as owner and licence holder of the high flux reactor (HFR) is responsible for the security of the reactor as well as the internal security of the Joint research centre (JRC) Petten site, the external security being the responsibility of the Dutch authorities.

The security measures which are being applied are directed against all possible incidents concerning unauthorized interference with plant processes, materials and equipment, the internal JRC Petten security measures being fully in agreement with the measures to be taken by the police in case of alarm, and the response by the guards or police being dependent on the nature and gravity of the incident. From the beginning of the Greenpeace incident the security measures worked in accordance with established procedures. There was no question of unauthorized interference with plant processes, materials or equipment, and the response by the police was in accordance with the nature and gravity of the incident.

3. As indicated in the Commission's answer to written question 522/91 by Mrs Goedmakers ([3]), the Commission carefully investigated the possibility of conversion of the HFR to the use of low enriched uranium. The Commission came to the conclusion that the HFR could not be converted in the foreseeable future, for reasons of performance loss and prohibitive costs. The two high flux reactors which belong to the United States (US) Department of energy are probably, for similar reasons, also still using high-enriched uranium. This position was communicated to the US authorities in 1987. On the basis of the US Energy Policy Act of 1992 the United States are no longer supplying high enriched uranium (HEU) to non-US research reactors, including the HFR at Petten.

Furthermore, the Commission would remind the Honourable Member that within its new programme, the HFR will produce around 60% of medical radio-isotopes in Europe. Each year, 7 million patients benefit from this radio-isotopes production.

([1]) OJ C 322, 28.10.1996, p.37.
([2]) see page 47.
([3]) OJ C 311, 2.12.1991.

(96/C 345/139)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1637/96

by Glenys Kinnock (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Urban community initiative programme

When does the Commissioner expect the UK Urban programmes to start and what impact will a late start have on the performance of the programme and on the take-up of funding?

Answer given by Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(5 July 1996)

The approval of the Urban programmes for Great Britain is dependent upon agreement being reached with the United Kingdom authorities about administrative arrangements for their implementation. The Commission hopes that such an agreement will be reached soon.

The late start to these programmes — which has been due to a number of factors — should not have a major impact on their performance or on the take-up of funding. The reasons for this are twofold.

Firstly, the Urban programming period runs until the end of 1999, and allows spending of European structural funds until the end of 2001. The Commission foresees that funding will be fully taken up by this date, provided that, as usual, matching funding is available from the programme partners.

Secondly,the Commission believes that people living in the target areas should have a real stake in the development of local Urban plans. This process and the resulting capacity building within the target communities will have a beneficial influence on programme performance.

(96/C 345/140)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1651/96

by Hiltrud Breyer (V) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Simplified procedure for the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)

1. What GMOs have so far been released under the simplified procedure?

2. How many applications for the simplified procedure have there been, from which Member States?

3. Which GMOs are involved?

4. What arrangements are there under the simplified procedure to ensure the public is informed?

5. Is it true that GMOs can be released under the simplified procedure in total secrecy?

6. Does the simplified procedure preclude application of the environmental information directive?

7. If so, what corrections does the Commission propose to safeguard the principle of openness?

8. If not, what are the specific prospects for its application?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(17 July 1996)

1. According to the information received from the Member States, up to now six modified crop plants have been released according to the simplified procedure (cauliflower, chicory, maize, oil seed rape, potato and sugar beet).

2. & 3. Only France and the United Kingdom have requested the application of simplified procedures in 1994 under Article 6.5 of Directive 90/220/EEC [1] on the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms to the environment. These simplified procedures were adopted by the Commission in accordance with the opinion of the committee established pursuant to Article 21 of Directive 90/220/EEC (Commission Decision 94/730/EC of 4 November 1994 [2]). The authorities of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom have notified the Commission of their intention to apply the simplified procedures foreseen in that Decision. These simplified procedures cover the release of genetically modified crop plants which fulfil specific conditions outlined in detail in Annex II of Commission Decision 94/730/EC.

4. According to Article 7 of Directive 90/220/EEC the Member States may provide 'that groups or the public shall be consulted on any aspect of the proposed deliberate release' if it is considered appropriate. The simplified procedures which have been adopted do not restrict the right and the duty of the Member States to set up the appropriate public information.

5. Directive 90/220/EEC clearly outlines in Article 19 (4) that in no case the description of the genetically modified organism, the notifier and the location of the release may be kept confidential. Therefore, even releases according to the simplified procedures can not be done confidentially.

6. to 8. Directive 90/313/EEC of 7 June 1990 [3] on the freedom of access to information on the environment and Directive 90/220/EEC apply independently of each other. The application of Directive 90/313/EEC, therefore, is not excluded by the application of simplified procedures.

[1] OJ L 117, 8.5.1990.
[2] OJ L 292, 12.11.1994.
[3] OJ L 158, 23.6.1990.

(96/C 345/141)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1659/96

by Thomas Megahy (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Formulation and use of Commission sectorial guidelines in the transport sector

It would appear that the framers of the Treaty of Rome intended these sectoral guidelines to be drawn up under Article 94, which, since Maastricht, would enable Parliament to be involved in their formulation and give some democratic input into the process. It could be argued that, by basing its powers on Article 93, the Commission has excluded democratic accountability.

The guidelines for the civil aviation sector lay down no stated legal basis for the guidelines, no period of validity and no stated date for review.

Can the Commission indicate how far these guidelines are 'political' statements of policy and how far they create legal effects? To what degree do the guidelines themselves impose new obligations on the Member States or other affected parties?

With respect to the civil aviation sector, could the Commission state which new legal obligation the guideline imposes? It would seem to be a statement of position by the Commission that air transport is covered by the same rules as other sectors. If this is so, it contracts sharply with the motor vehicle industry framework which has been the subject of a legal challenge.

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(1 August 1996)

The document published in the Official journal [1] is a general statement of the approach that the Commission intends to adopt when examining a state aid case in the air transport sector. It aims at making the Commission's policy more transparent, at making its decisions more foreseeable and at ensuring an equal treatment between Member States. It does not, in itself, give rise to legal consequences since the Commission decides each individual case on the basis of the relevant provisions of the EC Treaty and applicable Community legislation. Neither does it in itself impose new legal obligations on Member States or other parties.

Articles 92 and 93 of the EC Treaty apply to all economic sectors, including transport and air transport. It is up to the Commission to apply these provisions taking into account the characteristics of particular sectors. In the air transport sector, one of the main factors used by the Commission to define its policy is the liberalisation process which will be fully implemented by April 1997.

The 1994 document in question does not define new rules. It only confirms and clarifies the position of the Commission vis-à-vis aids in the air transport sector in conformity with the provisions of the EC Treaty.

In the automobile sector, the guidelines impose on Member States an obligation to notify significant cases in respect of schemes which have already been approved by the Commission. That is the reason why, unlike the guidelines in the air transport sector, those guidelines were proposed to the Member States as appropriate measures in the context of Article 93.1 EC Treaty. The explicit agreement of all Member States was consequently requested and obtained.

(1) OJ C 350, 10.12.1994.

(96/C 345/142)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1663/96

by Jesús Cabezón Alonso (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Differences n tax rates between regions

The powers assigned to the Basque Autonomous Community (Spain) have enabled its institutions to establish a lower rate of company tax than that of other regions bordering the Basque country.

This difference in tax rates affects businesses located in the surrounding regions (Cantabria and La Rioja) and may lead to production investment being diverted for reasons of self-interest, namely the attraction of the lower rate.

Is the Commission aware of this situation? If so, has it considered whether this difference in tax rates constitutes a distortion of competition?

Answer given by Mr Van Miert on behalf of the Commission

(17 July 1996)

The Commission has not been notified by the Spanish authorities of the tax aid referred to in the question. It is endeavouring to monitor developments, particularly through reports in the press. At all events, it is pursuing the matter with the Spanish authorities.

The Honourable Member should refer also to the Commission's answer to Written Question No E-1951/94 by Mr Siso Cruellas [1] concerning tax advantages offered by certain Spanish regions.

(1) OJ C 30, 6.2.1995.

(96/C 345/143)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1666/96

by Juan Colino Salamanca (PSE) and Jesús Cabezón Alonso (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Beef intervention spending

What has been the increase in intervention spending on beef in the wake of the obvious negative repercussions of the 'mad cow' crisis?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(19 July 1996)

In the initial budget for 1996, intervention purchases of beef were expected to amount to 150 000 tonnes (ECU 221 million).

Given the fall in consumption as a result of the bovine spongiform encephelopathy (BSE) crisis, this quantity was increased to 300 000 tonnes (ECU 662 million) in preliminary draft supplementary and amending budget No 1/196.

By the end of June, some 180 000 tonnes had been bought in by tendering procedure.

In the preliminary draft budget for 1997, intervention purchases are put at 220 000 tonnes (ECU 469 million). Any further quantities must be covered from the ECU 505 million set aside for BSE.

(96/C 345/144)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1670/96

by Elly Plooij-van Gorsel (ELDR) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Import and export duties on diesel

European import and export duties on petroleum products are generally 6% for petrol and 3.5% for diesel and other fuels. Under European legislation, it is possible for these duties not be applied in certain circumstances. For example, developing countries benefit under the generalized system of preferences from exemption from duties within the limit of a Community ceiling.

1. Is it true that all oil-producing countries in the Middle East, and, since January 1993, Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union, benefit from this system?

2. In this way, is the limit of the Community ceiling still being respected?

Since 1991, the levy of customs duties on diesel with a sulphur content of less than 0.2% from any country has been abolished. In addition, as from 1 October 1994, all diesel sold within the European Union must have a sulphur content of less than 0.2%. In practice, that means that the customs duties on all imported diesel have been abolished.

3. Is the Commission aware that this situation has resulted in serious competition for European refineries? They are experiencing great difficulty in making the investment required in plant for reducing the sulphur content of the diesel they manufacture.

4. Is it true that American refineries export their products to Europe without paying any duties, while European products exported to the US are taxed?

If so, why does the principle of reciprocity not come into play?

5. Does the Commission intend to change the 1990 rules governing import duties on diesel with a sulphur content of less than 0.2%? If not, why not?

Answer given by Mr Papoutsis on behalf of the Commission

(31 July 1996)

1. & 2. The Community relies to a large extent — almost 75% — on oil imports (crude and petroleum products) from non-Community countries to satisfy its internal needs. Crude oil enters the Community with zero duty; the same applies to petroleum products intended for processing in a refinery or chemical transformation. As regards petroleum products intended for consumption (finished products), customs duties may or may not be applied according to the country of origin of the products. At present, the agreements in force between the Community and a large number of non-Community countries (Lomé Convention countries, Mediterranean countries, etc.), and the Community Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) provide for duty-free access without quantitative restrictions for finished petroleum products to the Community customs territory. The beneficiaries of the GSP include the countries of the Middle East and the former USSR. However, in application of the graduation mechanism provided for by Council Regulation (EC) No 3281/94 [1] for the products in question, Saudi Arabia and Libya ceased to enjoy the preferential entitlement on 1 January 1996 and Russia's preferential margin will be reduced by 50% from 1 January 1997 and it will cease to benefit under the GSP from 1 January 1998.

3. & 4. It is true that in early 1991 the 3.5% customs duty on Community imports, from any country of origin, of gas oil with a sulphur content not exceeding 0.2% by weight was suspended for an indefinite period. Very small quantities of gas oil imported from the United States have been recorded, but most imports originated in Russia. This suspension was decided in response to:

- political factors: aid to Russia, as a major supplier of gas oil to the Community, and the obligation not to discriminate on the basis of origin under the GATT rules (hence imports of gas oil from the United States are also exempt); on the other hand, imports of other petroleum products from the United States are subject to normal Common Customs Tariff (CCT) duties;
- environmental factors: incentive to import cleaner gas oil (with a sulphur content not exceeding 0.2% by weight); and
- technical factors: the Community is a net importer of gas oil, since its refineries are not in a position to produce the quantities necessary to satisfy internal demand.

5. Council Directive 93/12/EEC of 23 March 1993 [2] requires Member States to prohibit, from 1 October 1996, the marketing of diesel fuels in the Community with a sulphur content exceeding 0.05% by weight. For heating oil, on the other hand, the limit of 0.2%, in force since 1 October 1994, will continue to apply.

This development and considerations linked to the situation of the refining industry led the Commission to consider the possibility of withdrawing the current tariff suspension. However, recent discussions with Member States indicate that the great majority would not favour such a withdrawal.

[1] OJ L 348, 31.12.1994.
[2] OJ L 74, 27.3.1993.

(96/C 345/145)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1673/96

by Carmen Fraga Estévez (PPE) to the Commission

(12 June 1996)

Subject: Investigation of fraud in connection with imports of preserved tuna and tuna steaks under the GSP

In 1994 the Commission carried out a number of on-the-spot inspections in various firms in Ecuador and Colombia which export preserved tuna and tuna steaks to the EU under the customs exemptions granted by the GSP. The Commission's own reports show that irregularities were found which can only be termed scandalous.

In view of the outcome of these inspections, what measures will the Commission take to ensure that there is no fraud involved in the import of tuna steaks and preserved tuna under the GSP-Andean Pact, and when will it carry out fresh on-the-spot checks in order to force firms to put an immediate stop to the large number of irregularities noted?

Answer given by Mrs Gradin on behalf of the Commission

(16 July 1996)

The inquiries conducted in Ecuador and Colombia by the Commission, with the full cooperation of the authorities, concerned processed tuna imported into the Community with generalized system of preferences (GSP) certificates of preferential origin in 1994. As indicated in the 1994 annual report on the fight against fraud, the Commission has requested Member States to proceed with the recovery of duties on non-originating imports established during these enquiries in Ecuador and Colombia.

The Commission does not initiate inspections in situ, but it does investigate suspected irregularities. It follows that the Commission itself is not able to take direct action against third country exporters in order to prevent them from committing further fraud. This task falls to the authorities in the third countries concerned. They are in particular responsible for issuing Form A certificates which confer preferential status.

The authorities in the two countries have now introduced supplementary inspection procedures to ensure that the goods exported have the correct origin. Legislative measures were also adopted to prevent irregularities of this kind. New rules of origin have been established and have been applicable since 7 January 1995, which imply that the donor country content provision would allow for a cumulation of origin with the Community vessels. The companies and government departments involved therefore now understand better the criteria governing benefits from the Community GSP.

The 'Fight against fraud' work programme 1996 announces a Commission communication in the area of preferential agreements. It will address a number of issues aiming at strengthening the system and making it more fraud-proof. This communication will be presented in autumn 1996.

To this day, the Commission has no supplementary information concerning Ecuador and Colombia. However, if the Honourable Member has specific information, the Commission would be ready to re-open the investigations.

(96/C 345/146)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1676/96

by Anita Pollack (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Rabies

When does the Commission expect the UK to drop its quarantine restrictions in favour of verified anti-rabies vaccinations for domestic pets?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(16 July 1996)

The Commission is not in a position to state when the United Kingdom will drop its rabies quarantine restrictions.

Under existing Community rules, the United Kingdom is entitled to maintain its quarantine restrictions. The Commission understands that the government considered last year the report of the Agriculture select committee of the House of commons on rabies which recommended changes in the rules, in part due to the development of anti-rabies vaccinations. The governement concluded, however, that it would be premature to change the current arrangements.

(96/C 345/147)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1680/96

by Renzo Imbeni (PSE) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: The single currency and blind people

Has the Commission taken account of the special needs of blind people in the information campaign on the introduction of the new European currency (the EURO) and is it planning to produce it in a form that blind people can recognize?

Answer given by Mr de Silguy on behalf of the Commission

(22 July 1996)

The Commission has been in contact with the organizations representing the partially sighted and blind people since the preparation of the Green Paper on the practical arrangements for the introduction of the single currency ([1]) and has taken account, and will continue to do so, of their concerns in preparing for the changeover to the single currency, including the communication campaigns.

Preparations for euro notes and coins are a matter respectively for the European Monetary Institute and for the Working Party of the Member States' Mint Directors, acting under a mandate from the Ecofin Council.

The Commission has drawn the attention of these two bodies to the recommendations issued by the European Blind Union. Meetings have taken place between representatives of the two bodies, and the European Blind Union is consulted regularly on the work in hand.

(1) COM(95) 333.

(96/C 345/148)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1696/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: World Trade Organization — Rice

In signing the Uruguay round agreement, the European Union undertook gradually to reduce customs duties on rice. Under the GATT agreements the Union will have to move from a minimum price, based on the entry price, to a maximum price. This will mean that Europe will face keener international competition in terms of both agricultural production and industrial processing of paddy rice to produce milled rice. The Commission is therefore considering the possibility of new regulations based on:

1. a reduction in producer prices;
2. compensation for producers;

reducing the level of producer prices will inevitably have a negative impact on the profitability of Community rice production. To maintain current income levels, it is necessary to introduce a compensation scheme, while maintaining a level of production consistent with market demand.

Aid has therefore been fixed per hectare of land sown with rice, subject to a maximum guaranteed area for the Community.

Since the reduction in intervention prices proposed must be compensated in full financially to maintain the level of producers incomes and to ensure their survival and the compensation must therefore be calculated on the basis of the average for the past three production years (1993, 1994 and 1995) recorded in each of the producer Member States, and bearing in mind the trend in consumption and the accession of new Member States, does the Commission not consider that it should review the penalties imposed in the event of the maximum guaranteed area being exceeded?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(9 July 1996)

Article 6(5) of Regulation (EC) No 3072/95 of 22 December 1995 on the common organization of the market in rice [1] stipulates that 'where the areas given over to rice in a given year exceed one of the base areas indicated in paragraph 4, a reduction of the amount of the compensatory payment shall be applied to all producers in the base area in question for the same production year equal to:

- three times the rate of overrun if it is less than 1%,
- four times the rate of overrun if it is equal to or greater than 1% but less than 3%,
- five times the rate of overrun if it is equal to or greater than 3% but less than 5%,
- six times the rate of overrun if it is equal to or greater than 5%.'

The Commission has no intention of proposing changes to the criteria used in applying the penalties since in its original proposal it considered that the reduction in the compensatory amount should have been equal to six times the rate of overrun in order to maintain a degree of proportionality between the rate of overrun and the penalty expressed as a percentage of the intervention price.

(1) OJ L 329, 30.12.1995.

(96/C 345/149)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1697/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(24 June 1996)

Subject: Single market and consumer protection

In making any assessment of the single market and consumer protection and bearing in mind the forthcoming IGC, which will be crucial in achieving a people's Europe, one of the basic problems will be to review a number of important aspects, on which the Commission is asked to comment:

1. What new guarantees of consumer protection have been introduced as a result of Article 119a created by the Maastricht Treaty?

2. What improvements in terms of consumer protection can be proposed for the 1996 Treaty review?

3. Following the recent accession of three new Member States, what is the scope for maintaining more stringent protective measures, as provided for in paragraph 3 of Article 129a?

4. Are the arrangements for consulting and informing consumers working satisfactorily?

(96/C 345/150)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1705/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(25 June 1996)

Subject: Single market and consumer protection

With regard to the single market and consumer protection and the opportunities and obstacles created by the single market, the forthcoming review of the Maastricht Treaty should provide an opportunity to insert in the Treaty itself a number of fundamental provisions to improve consumer protection and the defence of consumers rights and to promote their participation and representation at all levels of decision-making.

Does the Commission not consider it necessary to:

1. reword Article 129a in order to establish an integrated and coordinated consumer policy to promote consumer interests,
2. draw up a detailed list of basic consumer rights,
3. confirm the recognition of consumers' organizations as parties in collective consumer actions,
4. introduce a new special appeal system with regard to the final decision on changes to application of the principle of subsidiarity?

Joint answer to Written Questions E-1697/96 and E-1705/96
given by Mrs Bonino on behalf of the Commission

(29 July 1996)

1. By including Article 129a in the Union Treaty, the authors clearly sought to emphasise the importance attaching to consumer protection in connection with completion of the internal market. Under the terms of this Article, the Community is to contribute to the attainment of a high level of consumer protection not only through measures adopted in the context of the completion of the internal market but also by means of specific action to support and supplement the policy pursued by the Member States to protect the health, safety and economic interests of consumers and to provide them with adequate information.

As things stand, Article 129a appears to be an adequate, appropriate legal basis for the development of consumer policy at Community level, particularly in conjunction with the third three-year action plan 1996-98 [1]. Article 129a (1) (b) has, moreover, already been used on two occasions as the specific legal basis for Community measures, namely the most recent Parliament and Council Decision introducing a Community system of information on home and leisure accidents (Ehlass) [2] and the proposal for a Directive on consumer protection in the indication of the prices of products offered to consumers [3].

2. While bearing in mind that the Intergovernmental Conference is not designed primarily to increase the powers of the Union, the Commission considers that the conference could provide a forum for looking into ways of achieving more effectively a high level of consumer protection under the different Community policies.

3. Article 129a (3) provides that the Member States are to give notification of consumer protection measures which are more stringent than those adopted pursuant to paragraph 2 of the same Article. Given that no legislative measure has yet been adopted at Community level under the said paragraph 2, there has been no call for implementation of the notification procedure referred to in paragraph 3. However, most of the directives already adopted in the field of consumer policy contain a safeguard clause whereby the Member States may maintain or introduce more stringent provisions with a view to providing a higher level of consumer protection. Such clauses have frequently been employed by the Member States. National legislative measures which are more stringent than the Community provisions have generally been notified to the Commission under the usual procedure for communicating the measures taken to transpose the directives in question.

4. Making a major effort to improve the provision of information to consumers and strengthening consumer representation are two of the ten priorities for consumer policy announced by the Commission in its communication of 31 October 1995. In particular, with a view to enhancing consumer consultation, the Commission decided to replace the Consultative Council with a Consumer Committee (4). The Commission has, for some years now, been successfully developing measures to inform consumers and is at present seeking to devise new strategies for information policy with a view to tailoring it more closely to the needs of consumers.

(1) Commission communication on priorities for consumer policy, 1996-98. Doc. COM(95) 519.
(2) Decision No 3092/94/EC of 7 December 1994, OJ L 331, 21.12.1994.
(3) OJ C 260, 5.10.1995.
(4) Decision 95/260/EC of 13 June 1995.

(96/C 345/151)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1707/96

by Amedeo Amadeo (NI) to the Commission

(25 June 1996)

Subject: Protection of workers exposed to carcinogens at work

The proposal for a Council Directive (COM(95) 0425 (1)) amending for the first time Directive 90/394/EEC (2) on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens at work is a significant step forward for the protection of workers and the strengthening of regulatory checks. However, does the Commission not consider that it is essential to:

1. provide an explanatory notice, which would be particularly useful for SMEs, to help employers and workers understand how the directive applies to their working environment,
2. review the classification of carcinogens,
3. explain the scope and duration of the exemptions proposed,
4. specify the limit value of 1 ppm proposed for benzene,
5. standardize the measuring procedures,
6. promote cooperation with and between specialized institutes and other bodies working in the area of health and safety at work,
7. encourage the production of comparable statistical data?

(1) OJ C 317, 28.11.1995, p. 16.
(2) OJ C 196, 26.7.1990, p. 1.

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(16 July 1996)

The Commission thanks the Honourable Member for his favourable assessment of its proposal for amendments to the Directive mentioned in his question.

The Commission is fully in agreement with some of the suggestions made and, following adoption of the proposal by the Council, it could provide an explanatory notice on the application of the amended Directive and propose a uniform method for measuring benzene in air.

With regard to the proposed limit value for benzene and the temporary exemptions provided for, the Commission made its decision on the basis of existing scientific data and socioeconomic considerations. These points have been discussed with the social partners and accepted as regards their intended aim. It goes without saying that all other provisions of a preventive nature laid down in the original Directive will also have to be applied.

The Commission does not consider it appropriate to undertake a review of the classification of carcinogens, which falls within the scope of Directive 67/548/EEC [1], which also relates to the labelling and packaging of dangerous substances. However, as the Honourable Member will see, the Commission's proposal to use the classification criteria laid down in Annex VI to Directive 67/548/EEC when implementing the proposed amendments to the Directive could enable the carcinogenic effect of as yet unclassified substances to be taken into consideration if need be.

The call to promote cooperation between specialised institutes could be met in the context of the Safety Action for Europe (SAFE) programme and the activities of the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work, which was recently set up in Bilbao.

With regard to the final question, which concerned statistics, the Commission has been working in this area since 1991 for the purpose of devising a common methodology allowing comparable statistical data to be obtained concerning both occupational accidents and diseases. Results should be available fairly soon.

(1) OJ 196, 16.8.1967.

(96/C 345/152)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1733/96

by Helena Torres Marques (PSE) to the Commission

(17 June 1996)

Subject: ESF funding of job-creation projects in Portugal

According to Agence Europe, on 28 May 1996 the Commission approved ESF funding for 58 innovative job-creation projects in the fifteen Member States.

Can the Commission state how many of these projects concern Portugal and specify their nature?

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(5 August 1996)

Pursuant to Article 6 of the Regulation on the European Social Fund (ESF) [1], the Commission has approved three Portuguese projects:

Promoter	Project title	Duration (in years)	Total cost (in ecus)	ESF Contribution (in ecus)
Associação in Loco	Alice — Acções Locais Integradas para a Criação de Emprego do Lado de Dentro da Realidade	3	514 127	385 595
CGT — IN	Projecto-Piloto de Formação Interactiva à Distância de Trabalhadores das PME e Microempresas	2	337 800	253 350
Direcção Geral Dos Assuntos Consulares e Comunidades Portuguesas	Saber viver numa Europa Multicultural	3	504 147	378 110

(1) Regulation No 4255/88, as amended — OJ L 193, 31.7.1993.

(96/C 345/153)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1744/96

by Cristiana Muscardini (NI) to the Commission

(3 July 1996)

Subject: Liberalization of the telecommunications sector

Telecommunications are a sector of vital importance to the social and economic development of the EU countries, provided that they can be regulated in such a way as to protect new economic operators vis-à-vis existing public concession-holders and their dominant position.

Could the Commission draw up a directive to regulate the complexity of the sector, with particular reference to:

1. access to, and use of, the public telecommunications network;
2. the setting up of an independent, autonomous authority to establish the use of radio frequencies and the technical standards and constraints imposed on service suppliers, and to settle any disputes between operators;
3. the arrangements for the provision of telecommunications services;
4. the resale of transmission capacity;
5. the confidentiality of personal data and of telephone communications;
6. tariff liberalization through the imposition of a maximum charge based on the average level of charges within the EU?

Answer given by Mr Bangemann on behalf of the Commission

(25 July 1996)

The Commission shares the view expressed by the Honourable Member about the importance of the telecommunications sector. Indeed, this assessment motivated the development of the Community's telecommunications policy which was initiated by the Commission's 1987 green paper on the development of the common market in telecommunications services and equipment [1]. That policy led to an ambitious legislative programme opening up telecommunications services to competition and culminating in the liberalisation, on 1 January 1998, of public voice telephony and of networks by means of Commission Directive 96/19/EC [2].

In parallel, harmonisation legislation was proposed which led to the development of open network provision on the basis of Council Directive 90/387/EEC [3]. This legislation provides inter alia for access to networks by service providers and to the mandatory supply of leased lines in accordance with certain minimum standards.

A specific directive providing for the protection of personal data and of privacy in telecommunications network [4] has also been submitted to the Council and Parliament.

One of the requirements underlying the development of a competitive telecommunications services markets is the establishment of an independent authority in each Member State. This requirement has been introduced by Commission Directive 90/388/EEC//9S3 and is being refined in the Commission's proposal to adapt ONP legislation to the competitive environment [5] which is currently being discussed by Council and Parliament.

(1) COM(87) 290 final.
(2) OJ L 74, 22.3.1996.
(3) OJ L 192, 24.7.1990.
(4) OJ C 200, 22.7.1994.
(5) OJ C 62, 1.3.1996.

(96/C 345/154)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1747/96

by Roberta Angelilli (NI) to the Commission

(20 June 1996)

Subject: ACEA and Milk Marketing Board

Since 1994 the Rome Municipality has introduced a number of measures aimed at privatizing certain major municipal agencies.

On 30 June 1995, by its Decision No 1844, the Rome Municipal Council decided to publish a call for tenders from the private sector, on the basis of an urgent procedure, for a specialist advisor to determine and, possibly, implement the plan for the improvement and/or conversion and/or privatization of the ACCL (Municipal Milk Marketing Board). The Rome Municipality undertook to forward the call for tenders, for official publication, to the European Community, as well as the Italian Republic's Official Gazette and at least three newspapers (two national and one regional).

Similarly, on 4 July 1995, by its Decision No 1937, the Rome Municipal Council decided to publish a call for tenders from the private sector, on the basis of an urgent procedure, for a specialist advisor to determine and, possibly, implement the plan for the improvement and/or conversion and/or privatization of the ACEA (Municipal Energy and Environmental Board). Again, the Rome Municipality undertook to forward the call for tenders, for official publication, to the European Community, as well as the Italian Republic's Official Gazette and at least three newspapers (two national and one regional).

Although both tenders have already been awarded following the necessary decisions by the Municipal Council, it appears that neither of the calls for tenders was ever forwarded (or at least not before the deadline) to the European Community's Official Publications Office, for publication in the S supplement to the EU Official Journal.

Will the Commission explain why the two calls for tenders were not forwarded, or at least not forwarded in time?

If, as seems to be the case, the two calls for tenders were not forwarded, what action does the Commission intend to take with regard to the Rome Municipality's serious omission, which in effect distorted competition in the award procedure?

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(16 July 1996)

The Commission has been informed that, on 10 July 1995, the Rome Municipality sent the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities the call for tenders for a specialist adviser to determine and, possibly, implement the plan for the improvement and/or conversion and/or privatization of the ACCL (Municipal Milk Marketing Board). This call for tenders was published in Official Journal No S 134 of 18 July 1995 (p. 230). Notice that the contract, the amount of which was LIT 200 000 000 (exclusive of VAT), had been awarded was subsequently published in Official Journal No S 240 of 15 December 1995 (p. 60).

As regards the tender for assistance and advice in organizing the restructuring, conversion and possible privatization of the ACEA (Municipal Energy and Environmental Board), the Commission has been informed that the Rome Municipality simply sent the Office for Official Publications notice that the contract, which amounted to LIT 404 600 000 (inclusive of VAT), had been awarded. This notice was published in Official Journal No S 103 of 31 May 1996 (p. 38).

The Commission will be contacting the Italian authorities with a view to obtaining the requisite information to assess the applicability of Council Directive 92/50/EEC of 18 June 1992 relating to the coordination of procedures for the award of public service contracts [1] and of Community law in general. In particular, the Italian authorities will be asked why the call for tender for advisory services concerning the Municipal Energy and Environmental Board was not sent to the Official for Official Publications (and hence not published in the Official Journal). This might have created an obstacle to open tendering when the contract was awarded.

On the basis of the above information and of the information already received from the Honourable Member, the Commission should be able to determine whether, in the case in point, the conditions necessary to institute infringement proceedings against Italy pursuant to Article 169 of the EC Treaty have been met.

[1] OJ L 209, 24.7.1992.

(96/C 345/155)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1759/96

by Leen van der Waal (EDN) to the Commission

(3 July 1996)

Subject: Violation of the human rights of religious minorities in Morocco

The European Evangelical Alliance has sent me a report of December 1995 by Middle East Concern stating that converts from Islam to Christianity are increasingly suffering persecution at the hands of the police and the courts in Morocco. This is odd in that religious freedom in Morocco is guaranteed under the constitution and Morocco is a signatory to as number of international human rights agreements. There appears, then, to be a discrepancy between the policy of the national authorities aimed at tolerance and the application of this policy by the local authorities.

1. Can the Commission confirm Middle East Concern's information about the position of religious minorities and the discrepancy between the policy of the national authorities and the behaviour of the local authorities in Morocco?

2. What action does the Commission intend to take under the association agreement, to which the european Parliament recently gave its assent, in response to this situation?

Answer given by Mr Marín on behalf of the Commission

(26 July 1996)

1. Under Article 6 of the Moroccan constitution, Islam is the state religion but the state guarantees freedom of worship.

However, under Islamic law, it is strictly forbidden to change religion and Article 220(2) of the 1962 Moroccan penal code also prohibits conversion in certain circumstances. As a result, a number of Moroccan citizens have been prosecuted for practising Christianity.

2. Respect for human rights and democratic principles is not only a source of ongoing concern for the EU but also something which all signatories to the declaration of the Barcelona Conference, including Morocco, expressly agreed to uphold.

The Commission, acting with the Member States, will certainly pass on its misgivings to the Moroccan authorities in the forthcoming political talks on the new association agreement. The agreement will not come into force until it has been ratified by all Member States.

(96/C 345/156)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1760/96

by Daniel Féret (NI) to the Commission

(20 June 1996)

Subject: EU recognition of qualifications in cosmetic medicine

Does Council Directive No 93/16/EEC [1]to facilitate the free movement of doctors and the mutual recognition of their diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications provide for recognition of specialist medical training in cosmetic medicine, as distinct from plastic surgery?

Whereas plastic surgery is in practice recognized as a speciality, training in cosmetic medicine still remains to be defined.

While there is a growing demand for this type of treatment (mesotherapy, electrotherapy, cellulite treatment, etc.), there is considerable disparity within the European Union between laws governing this profession and this often leads to abuse or such services being offered by unqualified practitioners, to the detriment of patients.

The European Union should therefore recognize qualifications in cosmetic medicine wherever the speciality exists in order to allow doctors with this qualification freedom of establishment throughout the European Union and legal protection for this medical qualification.

Does the Commission not consider that existing legislation needs to be supplemented and will it put forward a proposal to recognize qualifications in cosmetic medicine in the European Union?

(1) OJ L 165, 7.7.1993, p. 1.

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(11 July 1996)

The Commission has not received any request that the medical speciality of cosmetic medicine be covered by Council Directive 93/16/EEC. In any event, such a step must be in response to a sustained request from several Member States where that speciality is carried on. It must also satisfy an effective need as regards the right of establishment and the freedom to provide services. Such a need has not yet been shown to exist.

(96/C 345/157)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1780/96

by Luigi Florio (UPE) to the Commission

(3 July 1996)

Subject: Suggested reduction in Community salaries

A few months ago the media reported that the head of the Finnish Government suggested to the President of the Commission, Mr Santer, that the pay of the staff of the Community institutions should be reduced in order to prevent a middle-ranking Finnish official from earning more than the Prime Minister.

What response did this proposal receive?

Does the Commission agree that the salaries paid — at all levels — in the Community institutions are excessively high?

Answer given by Mr Liikanen on behalf of the Commission

(29 July 1996)

The Commission refers the Honourable Member to Council Regulation (EC, Euratom, ECSC) No 2963/95 of 18 December 1995 (1) regarding the remuneration of officials of the European Communities.

The Commission feels that an objective comparison with the remuneration in national civil services can only be made on the basis of comparable living and working conditions, i.e. a comparison with national civil servants working abroad. It is not possible, therefore, for the Commission to comment on Community levels of remuneration, any more than on national levels.

The Commission wishes to point out that the level of remuneration of Community officials was examined and finally determined during the 1991 negotiations on the method of adjustment of remuneration.

The method was adopted by the Council in December 1991 and will be in operation for ten years. It is based on the principle that the remuneration of Community officials should keep pace with the average remuneration of national civil servants in the Member States, while also applying a measure of salary restraint.

(1) OJ L 310, 22.12.1995.

(96/C 345/158)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1799/96

by Joan Vallvé (ELDR) to the Commission

(3 July 1996)

Subject: Lower award of 'blue flags' for Balearic Islands beaches

The EU awards 'blue flags' to beaches and coastal leisure centres which have particularly high standards of water quality, environmental protection or user safety. This year, it has given awards to a total of 45 beaches and 18 coastal leisure centres in the Balearic Islands.

However, these figures mean that eight less 'blue flags' than last year have been awarded to Balearic Islands beaches, although the number of awards for coastal leisure centres has increased by one.

Can the Commission explain the reasons for the withdrawal of these awards, with specific details for each of the eight cases?

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(1 August 1996)

The Commission would like to remind the Honourable Member that the Blue Flag scheme is run by a non-governmental organization entitled the 'Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe' (FEEE) with headquarters in Denmark. This organization coordinates a network of national operators responsible for the scheme in their particular Member State. Blue Flags are awarded by the European jury — in which the Commission is represented — to beaches which satisfy the requirements standards laid down by the scheme. Only those beaches proposed by the national jury of each Member State are considered to be candidates.

With regard to the beaches of the Balearic Islands, and compared with last year, 14 beaches forfeited their Blue Flag while 6 new ones were awarded it, resulting in an overall loss of eight flags. The reasons why some beaches were not proposed by the Spanish jury this year may be requested from the Spanish organization 'Asociación de Educacion Ambiental' (ADEAC) responsible for the scheme.

(96/C 345/159)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1803/96

by Sérgio Ribeiro (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(5 July 1996)

Subject: Entitlement to unemployment benefit for second-generation emigrants

According to information supplied by the Portuguese community in France, the French-born children of citizens of EU Member States established in France are obliged to register for entitlement to unemployment benefit with the departments for 'foreign citizens', that is, citizens of third countries.

Given that this state of affairs is surely contrary to the principles of European citizenship and, therefore, to the principle of the equality of rights of citizens of any Member State, on the same basis as the citizens of the Member State where they are resident, can the Commission state whether it is aware of this situation and whether it intends to make representations to the French Government with a view to changing it?

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(1 August 1996)

Under the terms of Article 5 of Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 [1], a national of a Member State who seeks employment in the territory of another Member State shall receive the same assistance there as that afforded by the employment offices in that State to their own nationals seeking employment.

This provision applies to any children of a Community worker who are entitled to unemployment benefit prior to finding their first job.

In the case of children of a Community worker who are entitled to unemployment benefit because they have lost their job, they are themselves workers and are covered by Article 7 of the same Regulation, under which a worker who is a national of a Member State may not, in the territory of another Member State, be treated differently from national workers by reason of his or her nationality in respect of any conditions of employment and work, in particular as regards re-employment should the person concerned become unemployed.

If the Honourable Member would be so kind as to provide the Commission with detailed background information, the Commission will bring the matter to the French Government's attention.

(1) OJ L 257, 19.10.1968.

(96/C 345/160)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1817/96

by Roberto Mezzaroma (UPE) to the Commission

(5 July 1996)

Subject: Coordination of and incentives for European cultural institutes

Many Community Member States have established specific structures for the dissemination and promotion of their cultures and languages. Among such structures are the 'Alliance française' in France, the 'Goethe Institut' in Germany and the 'Dante Alighieri' in Italy.

1. Would not the Commission agree that, with due regard being shown for the autonomy of such institutes, funding should be provided with the specific purpose of providing 'first-aid' language courses for immigrants from non-Community countries who hold a valid residence permit, so as to facilitate their integration into society in the individual Member States?

2. Would not it also agree that it should draw up a single certification system for language studies so as to ensure that diplomas obtained from individual institutes in other Member States are valid throughout the Community?

Answer given by Mrs Cresson on behalf of the Commission

(1 August 1996)

1. Apart from the European programmes now under way in the field of education, the Commission does not have a legal basis whereby it can provide direct support to national institutions, such as those referred to by the Honourable Member, for the purpose of teaching the language of the host Member State to migrants from third countries.

Under the Socrates programme — Chapter II (Comenius), Action 2 — the Commission supports transnational cooperation projects aimed at helping the children of migrant workers to learn the language of the host Member State.

2. In Chapter III — Action 1 (Lingua) — of the Annex to Parliament and Council Decision No 819/95/EC of 14 March 1995 (1) establishing the Socrates programme, provision is made for Community financial assistance to be allocated to transnational projects aiming to improve methods and tools for the recognition of linguistic experience. The Honourable Member may obtain further details on this aspect in the Socrates and Lingua Guidelines for Applicants, Action D.

Furthermore, the Commission published at the end of 1995 a White Paper on 'Teaching and learning: towards the knowledge-based society' (2), the first general objective of which is to encourage the acquisition of new knowledge. It is proposed to open up new methods of recognising skills, the idea being to pinpoint a number of well-defined areas of knowledge (including languages) and to launch a 'personal skills card' project; such a document should allow individuals to have their knowledge and know-how recognised as and when acquired.

(1) OJ L 87, 20.4.1995.
(2) COM (95) 590 final.

(96/C 345/161)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1833/96

by Antonio Graziani (PPE) to the Commission

(28 June 1996)

Subject: Storm in the Italian province of Lucca

What action within its powers does the Commission intend to take in the light of the severe storm which hit the Versilia and Garfagnana areas, in the Italian province of Lucca, on 19 June 1996?

A whole geographical area has become unrecognizable.

The damage, which it is difficult to assess as yet, is estimated at approximately several hundred billion Lire.

The death-toll so far is nine, although this figure is unfortunately provisional.

(96/C 345/162)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1898/96

by Marco Cellai (NI) to the Commission

(5 July 1996)

Subject: Environmental disaster in the Upper Versilia and Garfagnana area

The very violent storm which struck the Upper Versilia and Garfagnana area caused rivers to burst their banks, with the result that roads, railway lines, and bridges have been destroyed and entire villages have even been submerged by a torrent of water and mud.

Thirteen people died in the disaster, three others are missing, and thousands more have had to abandon their homes and manage as best they can in makeshift centres fitted out by the emergency services.

The catastrophe was bound to happen, given the extraordinarily heavy rain which preceded it.

The flood has devastated the environment and swept away buildings of historical and architectural interest.

The Italian authorities have so far failed to grant sufficient aid, even though the stricken populations are in urgent need of practical help.

In the light of the foregoing, does the Commission not believe that it should allocate Community funds immediately with a view to restoring and rebuilding the areas and villages affected?

Joint answer to Written Questions P-1833/96 and P-1898/96
given by Mr Santer on behalf of the Commission

(30 July 1996)

The Commission wishes to express its full sympathy to the families of the victims and to the Italian people severely hit by the storm which devastated the province of Lucca on 19 June 1996.

With regard to the sources of Community financing which might be utilized in this case, the specific aim of the Community action 'emergency aid to disaster victims in the Community' is the provision of such aid for European citizens most seriously affected by such exceptionally large scale and serious events. However, the Commission regrets that there are no appropriations at the relevant budget heading (B4-3400) this year as only a token entry was made when Parliament adopted the 1996 budget. Recently the Commission proposed to the budgetary authority that ECU 1 million be transferred by way of exception. Parliament's Committee on Budgets preferred to reduce the amount to ECU 300 000.

With regard to possible Structural Fund assistance for Objective 5b regions, it should be noted that Community resources have been allocated definitively for the period 1994-99. The single programming document (SDP) for the objective 5b areas in the Tuscany region, which have been allocated ECU 133 million for the period 1994-99, can only receive additional resources resulting from the index-linking of Community resources, which at present amount to ECU 2.8 million. In order to repair the damage caused to 5b areas in the province of Lucca,

the Commission is prepared in the partnership context, and notably in the SPD monitoring committee, to consider the proposals put forward by the Italian authorities to finance the renewal of the damaged agricultural and forestry resources, the protection of the environment and the improvement of the rural infrastructure by allocating all or part of the resources resulting from index-linking or by amending the SDP so as to transfer resources from the amount allocated to existing measures.

Where the damage occurred in objective 2 areas eligible for the Structural Funds (municipalities of Carrara, Massa and Montignoso), the Commission would be willing, in partnership with the Italian authorities, to consider providing assistance as part of the programmes in question, depending on the funds available.

(96/C 345/163)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1839/96

by Nikitas Kaklamanis (UPE) to the Commission

(5 July 1996)

Subject: Extension of Regulation No 2019/93 to all the Greek islands

Agriculture on the Greek islands is in decline, while the demographic situation is characterized by a marked ageing of the population, particularly the farming population, which is also caused by strong competition from the tertiary sector (tourism).

Council Regulation (EEC) No 2019/93 ([1]) made an enormous contribution to the attempt to balance development of the primary and tertiary sectors. That attempt should be continued with the Regulation being revised and extended to all Greek islands. This is essential because the grounds for the Regulation's adoption are valid for all Greek islands.

The revision which is envisaged by the Regulation itself should cover all those points by, for example, abolishing quotas and co-responsibility as well as improving incentives for young people to remain in farming. It is estimated that the abolition of quotas would have a negligible impact on the Community budget because of the islands' limited agricultural potential. It would, however, make life much easier for young farmers who remain in the farming profession, and depopulation of the countryside would thus be prevented. Particular importance should be attached to liberalizing production of cows' milk, processed tomatoes, durum wheat, eligible sheep and goats, suckler cows and meat production. At the same time, the specific supply arrangement should be improved and the measures to support local products (wines, pulses, mastic, honey, potatoes, sea sponges, etc.) should be extended. Particular attention should be paid to maintaining the island landscape by granting special conditions, while the derogations applicable to structural measures should be improved.

What are the Commission's views on the revision and extension of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2019/93 to all Greek islands?

([1]) OJ L 184, 27.7.1993, p. 1.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(22 July 1996)

The Commission welcomes the Honourable Member's observations on the contribution made by Regulation (EEC) No 2019/93 to achieving balanced development on the small Aegean islands inasmuch as it demonstrates that the Commission proposal, which the Council has approved, was well-prepared and even-weighted.

On the basis of experience acquired during the implementation of Regulation (EEC) No 2019/93, the Greek authorities requested the amendment of certain measures which the Commission is currently examining with a view to proposing subsequently, if necessary, a readjustment of such measures whilst observing the principles of the common agricultural policy. This examination requires more extensive discussion with the Greek authorities.

The Commission does not consider it necessary to extend Regulation (EEC) No 2019/93 to cover all the Greek islands, since its aim is to promote the economic and social development of the small Aegean islands which, because of their size, their limited scope for agricultural production and their distance from the mainland, experience problems of supply, have very little self-sufficiency and an extremely inadequate agricultural infrastructure.

(96/C 345/164)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1840/96

by Sir Jack Stewart-Clark (PPE) to the Commission

(5 July 1996)

Subject: Observatory on Older People

What steps does the Commission plan to take to act on the conclusions of its report 'the Demographic Situation in the European Union 1995'? Does the Commission have any plans to re-establish the Observatory on Older People? and if so, when?

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(31 July 1996)

The report on the demographic situation in the European Union 1995' has developed the theme of ageing, with a comparative analysis of national structures as its main approach.

The Commission will continue the work in this field in particular through supplementary analysis at regional level.

The conclusion of the Social Affairs Council of 3 June 1996, requests the Commission to work more closely with national bodies and to define jointly a new set of priorities.

In this context the opinion of the Parliament on the 1995 demographic report will be very useful.

The re-establishment of an observatory with the aim of drawing up regular comparative reports on the socio-economic situation of older people throughout the Community is envisaged in the proposal for a Council decision on Community support for actions in favour of older people adopted by the Commission on 1 March 1995 ([1]).

The proposal has still not been adopted by the Council. In this context, the Commission has not seen fit to re-establish the observatory. This situation is being kept under review.

([1]) OJ C 115, 9.5.1995.

(96/C 345/165)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1859/96

by Ursula Schleicher (PPE) to the Commission

(5 July 1996)

Subject: Consequences of legislative procedures

Can the Commission say how it has reacted to the legislative initiatives taken by Parliament so far in accordance with Article 138b of the EC Treaty?

Answer given by Mr Oreja on behalf of the Commission

(1 August 1996)

The Parliament has adopted four legislative initiatives under Article 138B of the EC Treaty. The Commission has already informed Parliament in its half-yearly report ([1]) on actions taken by the Commission in response to

Parliaments's own-initiative resolutions of its follow up to the Jackson report (A3-0310/94) 'Fire safety in Hotels' and the Alber report (A3-0232/94) 'Preventing and remedying environmental damage'. With regard to the latter, an internal communication will be presented to the Commission in the near future, on the basis of which the Commission will decide how to proceed, taking account of Parliament's requests.

In respect of the Rothley resolution (A4-201/95) the Commission is aware of the difficulties to which traffic accident victims are exposed when an insurance company is located in a different Member State. Insurance companies, also conscious of these difficulties, have taken a number of initiatives. The Commission embarked on a wide ranging consultation with interested parties, including Mr Rothley, in order to decide on the most appropriate course of action. This has yielded little.

The Commission would have preferred a negotiated agreement between concerned parties in order to meet the requirements set out in Parliament's resolution. As a voluntary solution does not seem possible, the Commission will propose legislation:

- requiring all European insurance companies to authorise a representative in all Member States to settle claims;
- requiring Member States to impose sanctions against insurance companies which fail to designate authorised representatives;
- requiring the establishment of information centres in Member States which victims could contact in order to find out the identity and address of this representative in their country of origin.

In regard to the Leopardi report the Commission does not intend to put forward a proposal for a decision based on Article 129 of the EC Treaty calling for a general introduction of a European health card. Current budgetary, technical, legal and political difficulties prevent the introduction of such a card. Research on health cards is still taking place in the context of the telematics applications and the G-7 information society programmes. In addition a number of initiatives have already been taken by the Commission within the framework of the implementation of Council Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 ([2]) on coordination of social security schemes. A Tess working party ([3]) has drafted a discussion paper to encourage discussion, taking account of pilot projects and studies already available from the Eurocard project, which should serve as a basis for a recommendation to the Administrative commission on social security for migrant workers. If this body accepts the recommendation of the working party, this may serve a basis for a proposal from the Commission in the context of social security.

([1]) SP(95)3210.
([2]) OJ L 149, 5.7.1971 — consolidated version by OJ No C 325, 10.12.1992.
([3]) Working party under the administrative commission on social security for migrant workers creating measures for the development and implementation of the Tess Programme — Telematics for social security.

(96/C 345/166)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1877/96

by Joan Colom i Naval (PSE) to the Commission

(28 June 1996)

Subject: Execution of the Structural Funds

There has recently been renewed reference, albeit without exact data, to an increase in the number of budget commitments still awaiting execution and to the incapacity of Member States to absorb Community funding, especially in the area of the Structural Funds. With a view to clarifying the situation, can the Commission provide information as to:

- what results are available for the execution of the Structural Funds in 1994 and 1995, with details for commitment appropriations, broken down by Member State for each of the Funds, of the divergences from the initial forecasts;
- what commitments under the Structural Funds are still awaiting execution, with details of the share corresponding to each Member State and of the programming period in which the commitments concerned originated?

Answer given by Mr Liikanen on behalf of the Commission

(16 September 1996)

The Commission is sending direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat a table containing the information requested.

(96/C 345/167)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1878/96

by Luigi Caligaris (UPE) to the Commission

(5 July 1996)

Subject: Aid to the areas affected by flooding in Friuli

On the night of 21 June 1995 the Italian region of Friuli was hit by exceptionally severe flooding, resulting in three deaths and serious damage to houses and infrastructures.

As these floods have particularly affected a number of mountain communities in areas eligible under Objective 5b, does the Commission consider it desirable to allocate extra funding to that objective, so as to ensure the swift rehabilitation of the environment and infrastructures in the areas affected?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(31 July 1996)

The Commission has always treated natural disasters in the Member States with great sensitivity. It regrets that heading B4-3400 covering emergency aid för victims of disasters in the Community was relegated to a token budget entry in 1996 and so left unfunded when Parliament adopted this year's budget. However, although the Commission pays close attention to these matters, the allocation of Objective 5b funding is fixed for the period 1994-99 and no extra money for particular programmes has been earmarked.

The single programming document (SPD) allocated ECU 44 million between 1994 and 1999 to those parts of the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region covered by Objective 5b. The only additional funding available for these areas comes from indexation of SPD allocations, currently amounting to ECU 0.92 million.

In order to tackle the flood damage caused in the 5b areas of Friuli on 21 June, the Commission is willing to work together with the SPD monitoring group and others in examining proposals from national and regional authorities to rebuild disaster-hit farming and forestry businesses, protect the environment and rural areas, and improve rural infrastructure by allocating all or part of the extra money resulting from indexation or changes to the SPD which would result in the transfer of funds from the total allocated to existing measures.

It should also be noted that, for the period 1994-99, the SPD has earmarked ECU 11.38 million of public funds (ECU 2.84 million of it from the guidance section of the EAGGF) for measures to protect the soil and prevent hydrogeological damage and flooding. The Commission would, in conjunction with its partners, support any proposal from national or regional authorities to bring forward the annual forecasts on the use of these funds.

(96/C 345/168)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1881/96

by Robin Teverson (ELDR) to the Commission

(11 July 1996)

Subject: Directive 88/166/EEC on battery cages

In response to my question E-1159/96 [1], the Commission stated that they 'have no information about the number of inspections carried out ... as such activities clearly fall within the competence of the Member States'.

However, Article 7.1 & 2 of Directive 88/166/EEC (2) clearly states that the 'Commission shall check on its application on the spot regularly' and that 'Commission experts shall carry out inspection operations jointly ...'. In addition, 'the Commission will prepare periodical general reports on the results of the inspections ...'.

Why is the Commission not fulfilling these requirements? If this is not being done, then how are we to know if the individual Member States are implementing the Directive? Has the Commission produced a periodical general report on the results of the inspections as required by the Directive?

(1) see page 34.
(2) OJ L 74, 19.3.1988, p. 83.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(31 July 1996)

As already pointed out in its reply to the Honourable Member's Written Question E-1159/96, the Commission, being short of staff in the sector of veterinary inspections, was until now unable to carry out on-the-spot inspections in the field of the protection of laying hens in battery cages (Council Directive 88/166/EEC).

As a consequence, the Commission does not have the necessary information to evaluate whether this Directive is uniformly applied on the spot, throughout the Member States. Since no Commission inspection results are thus available, the Commission was unable to prepare periodical reports.

It is once more repeated that the Commission is ready to fulfil its obligations, once the necessary budgetary funds for the employment of further veterinary inspectors are made available.

(96/C 345/169)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1909/96

by Anita Pollack (PSE) to the Commission

(11 July 1996)

Subject: Directive 85/337/EEC (environmental impact assessments)

Which Member States have not yet fully transposed Directive 85/337/EEC (1) into national law?

(1) OJ L 175, 5.7.1985, p. 40.

Answer given by Mrs Bjerregaard on behalf of the Commission

(1 August 1996)

As guardian of the Treaties the Commission sees that Community Directives are properly transposed into national law.

In the case of Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, the Commission has instituted infringement proceedings against Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain for failure to comply with the Directive. These proceedings are currently under way.

In addition, the Court of Justice, in its judgment of 2 May 1996, ruled against Belgium for improper transposition of the Directive.

Examination of the conformity of the three new Member States' national laws transposing the Directive has yet to be completed.

(96/C 345/170)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1913/96

by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(5 July 1996)

Subject: State involvement in the management of Olympic Airways

In its answer to question 1048/96 [1], the Commission expresses its concern that 'certain other conditions have not, as yet, been entirely fulfilled', emphasizing that 'This relates, in particular, to the degree of apparent involvement by the state in the management of the airline beyond its obligations as a shareholder'.

Will the Commission give specific details of the involvement by the state going beyond its obligations as a shareholder towards Olympic Airways?

[1] OJ C 305, 15.10.1996.

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(31 July 1996)

The Commission would refer the Honourable Member to the Decision of the Commission on this matter which was published in the Official Journal No C 176 of 19 June 1996.

(96/C 345/171)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1931/96

by Luigi Florio (UPE) to the Commission

(16 July 1996)

Subject: Number of directives currently in force

How many European directives are currently in force in the EU?

(96/C 345/172)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1932/96

by Luigi Florio (UPE) to the Commission

(16 July 1996)

Subject: Number of regulations currently in force

How many Commission regulations are currently in force in the EU?

Joint answer to Written Questions E-1931/96 and E-1932/96 given by Mr Santer on behalf of the Commission

(29 July 1996)

The Honourable Member will find details of Community legislation in force in the directory published twice yearly by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Legislative acts included in this directory are selected from the Celex database, which has been open to the public since 1981. Currently, Celex contains 1587 directives and 3188 Commission regulations in force.

(96/C 345/173)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2028/96

by Mary Banotti (PPE) to the Commission

(12 July 1996)

Subject: PHARE programme — financial accountability

Can the Commission indicate how the financial accountability of consultants appointed under the PHARE programme is monitored?

Can the Commission also state how payments to secondary consultants are monitored and audited?

Answer given by Mr Van den Broek on behalf of the Commission

(1 August 1996)

The general conditions for all service contracts financed from Phare stipulate that the 'contractor shall be liable to the contracting party for full performance of all obligations resulting from the contract, repair any damage caused to the contracting party or the persons to whom the services were provided as a result of any action or omission relating to the performance of the contract, which is attributed to him as a result in particular of his warranty or negligence, errors or omissions'. A similar clause is stipulated for the supply contracts.

The Commission monitors the implementation of all projects closely and payment is undertaken only after verification that the terms of the contract have been met. Contractors' reports are verified by the Commission and, when required, by independent monitors. Payment is effected as specified in the contract to ensure that at every step of the project the objectives and targets are met before payment is undertaken. All bills and expenses submitted for reimbursement are verified by the Commission on the basis of justifying documentation as stipulated in the contract. At the end of the project, the accounts are cleared on the basis of an independent financial audit. In addition to the Commission's controls, the Court of auditors audits the Phare programme and present annual report on all aspects of the implementation.

In very few cases, the contractor is entrusted with the management of special funds for the purpose of the implementation of a project. In that event, the funds are guaranteed by the bank where the funds are deposited and are only released for payment upon the Commission's authorization.

The Commission does not make payments in favour of secondary consultants. The contractor always remains fully responsible towards the Commission in regard to any sub-contracted parts of the contract. The payments to the contractor are made only after the services have been rendered or the goods supplied.

(96/C 345/174)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2139/96

by Luciano Vecchi (PSE) to the Commission

(3 August 1996)

Subject: Specialized training courses for doctors and surgeons in Italy (implementation of Directive 82/76/EEC)

Italy's implementation of the Community directives on medical specialists has given rise to reservations and disagreement, particularly as to whether Italian law complies with Community Directives 75/362/EEC (1), 75/363/EEC (2) and 82/76/EEC (3).

In particular, many people have pointed out that, whereas in those directives doctors training as specialists are regarded as workers following special training courses, in Italian law they are regarded as 'students', and although they are subject to the usual obligations contained in employment contracts, they do not enjoy the accompanying rights.

Does the Commission consider that the relevant Italian legislation complies with Community law and, if not, does it intend to take any specific action on the matter?

(1) OJ L 167 of 30 June 1975, p. 1.
(2) OJ L 167 of 30 June 1975, p. 14.
(3) OJ L 43 of 15 February 1982, p. 21.

Answer given by Mr Monti on behalf of the Commission

(11 September 1996)

The Commission would refer the Honourable Member to its answer to Written Questions E-2821/94 and E-3105/95 by Mr Burtone (1) and Mrs Gyldenkilde (2).

(1) OJ C 139, 5.6.1995.
(2) OJ C 79, 18.3.1996.

(96/C 345/175)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2150/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(3 August 1996)

Subject: Code of Practice on the employment of disabled persons

What progress is being made in agreeing the Code of Practice, to ensure equal opportunities in the employment within the European institutions for people with disabilities? What separate action is being taken in this respect by both DGIX and DGV? How is the European Parliament involved in the drawing up of the draft Code? What is the timetable for its expected agreement?

Answer given by Mr Liikanen on behalf of the Commission

(16 September 1996)

A draft of a code of good practice on the employment of disabled people within the Commission and other institutions has been circulated to directorates general and staff representatives for their comments. It will subsequently be discussed with the other institutions before being adopted by the Commission. As announced in the Communication of the Commission on equality of opportunity for people with disabilities (1), it is intended to adopt the code by the end of 1996.

(1) COM(96) 406.

(96/C 345/176)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2299/96

by Richard Howitt (PSE) to the Commission

(27 August 1996)

Subject: Draft code of practice on the employment of disabled people

When does the Commission intend to publish its draft Code of Practice on the Employment of Disabled People, referred to in the Green Paper on Social Policy in 1994 and still not published in 1996?

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(17 September 1996)

The Commission would refer the Honourable Member to its answer to his Written Question E-2150/96 (1).

(1) see page 116.