(2004/C 33 E/264)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2344/03

by Toine Manders (ELDR) to the Commission

(16 July 2003)

Subject: Interreg bureaucracy

The rules governing Interreg subsidies in the Netherlands include passages which make administration unnecessarily difficult. For example, in order to be eligible for a subsidy it is necessary actually to show proof of payment of all invoices and wage/salary payments. This discourages organisations from applying for subsidies, so that inadequate use is made of the funds potentially available.

In the Netherlands, the procedure for applying for an Interreg BMG (Benelux-Middengebied/Central Benelux Region) subsidy is often seen as enormously cumbersome: merely producing a thorough project plan with defined end products already costs a huge amount. In addition, the administration is of considerable complexity: it is necessary to produce evidence of deployment of manpower, invoices, copies of pay slips and now, as mentioned above, also proof of payment.

This means in practical terms that each month a partner has to check which employees on the pay roll have contributed to the project and must print out a list of them, after which he must submit proof of payment/a copy of the bank statement providing the requisite overview. All this information is computerised and stored on payment diskettes, so that it is relatively easy to retrieve from the system, but it is difficult to print out because the relevant lists are enormously long. In a word, while partners' administrative work and book-keeping are computerised, Europe is still insisting on manually produced evidence/copies.

Moreover, I have found that, as a result of the various national approaches and interpretations, project concepts which would be very suitable are often refused Interreg funding and an unnecessary amount of time is wasted because of inadequate coordination.

1. Is the Commission aware of the bureaucratic complexities involved in applying for Interreg subsidies, an example of which appears above?

2. Do the Interreg subsidy rules in other Member States likewise include such provisions, which promote bureaucracy? If so, what?

3. Will the Commission take measures to put an end to unnecessary bureaucratic procedures involved in the granting of Interreg subsidies? If not, why not? If so, what will it do?

4. Will the Commission investigate the scope for setting up one competent authority per Euregion for the central coordination of Interreg project applications, processing and finalisation?

Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(22 August 2003)

The Commission is collecting the information it needs to answer the question. It will communicate its findings as soon as possible.

(2004/C 33 E/265)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2375/03

by Alexander de Roo (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(16 July 2003)

Subject: Eider ducks threatened by the cockle-fishing industry

According to a report published in the 5 July 2003 edition of the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad, it has been proved that commercial industrial fishing for shellfish in the Wadden Sea has an adverse effect on shellfish-eating birds. A team of biologists noted a significant fall — of at least 50 % — in the number of eider ducks (Somateria Mollissima).