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QUESTIONS AU CONSEIL

(La Présidence en exercice du Conseil de l'Union européenne est seule responsable de ces réponses)

QUESTIONS TO THE COUNCIL

(The Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union bears sole responsibility for these answers)

Anfrage Nr. 1 von Bernd Posselt (H-0178/10)

Betrifft: EU-Beitritt Kroatiens

Wie beurteilt der Rat die Chancen, die Beitrittsverhandlungen mit Kroatien bis zum Herbst abzuschließen, und welche Schritte plant er, um noch unter dem spanischen Vorsitz substanzielle Fortschritte auf diesem Gebiet zu erzielen?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

This period is key for Croatia's negotiating process. Negotiations have progressed significantly and are entering their final phase. The EU has commended Croatia for the good progress made but substantial work still has to be done in order to conclude them successfully.

The Presidency continues to work towards further advancement of the negotiations, in line with relevant European Council and Council conclusions. Our aim is to reach decisive progress in Croatia's negotiating process by opening all the remaining chapters and provisionally closing as many chapters as possible. We are also determined to make substantial progress in drafting the Accession Treaty.

On 19 February we were able to open Chapter 13 - Fisheries and Chapter 27 - Environment, which are very demanding chapters in the accession process, and require a lot of preparation. On 19 April we provisionally closed Chapter 1 - Free Movement of Goods, which represented an important milestone, as half of the chapters in the negotiations have been now provisionally closed., since the start of the negotiations on 3 October 2005, thirty chapters have been opened, of which eighteen have been provisionally closed. Further Accession Conferences will be planned, as appropriate, in order to take the process forward.

Some sensitive chapters still remain on the table, such as Chapter 8 - Competition and chapter 23 - Judiciary and Fundamental Rights. We will also have to conclude discussions on some chapters which have important budgetary implications, such as agriculture and regional policy. Let me underline, however that Croatia's progress towards the conclusion of the negotiations will also depend on the completion of the necessary political, economic, legislative and administrative reforms. Therefore, addressing outstanding reforms, as well as meeting all remaining benchmarks in time,

and further transposing and implementing effectively the *acquis*, continue to be essential for Croatia if it is to meet its objective to conclude accession negotiations by 2010.

Question no 2 by Mairead McGuinness (H-0180/10)

Subject: EU 2020 delivery timetable

Can the Council outline the timetable for Member States to convert into national goals the five headline targets that have been agreed as the key elements of the new strategy for jobs and growth, known as the EU 2020 strategy?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The March European Council agreed on the main elements of the new Strategy for Growth and Jobs, which will be formally adopted at the June European Council. This includes the five headline targets which will guide the action of the Member States and of the European Union:

a 75% employment rate for women and men aged 20-64;

an investment of 3% of GDP in research and development, together with an indicator on innovation intensity;

the confirmation of the so-called 20/20/20 goals on climate and energy;

a reduction of school drop-out rates and an increase in the share of population with tertiary education, and

promoting social inclusion, in particular reducing poverty.

The March European Council also agreed that, in the light of these headline targets, Member States will set their national targets, taking account of their relative starting positions and national circumstances.

The work to establish national targets has already started. Supporting the efforts at the national level in each Member State, the preparatory bodies of the Council are currently discussing the national targets. In parallel, bilateral consultations are taking place between every Member State, the Commission, and the Presidency, to review the overall situation for all five targets for each country.

Regarding the methodology for national targets, the European Council conclusions state that Member States will set them according to their national decision-making procedures, in a dialogue with the Commission in order to check consistency with the EU headline targets. The European Council will examine the results of this dialogue in June.

At national level, the targets will be confirmed in the National Reform Programmes to be presented in the autumn of 2010.

Ερώτηση αρ. 3 του κ. Γεωργίου Παπανικολάου (H-0183/10)

Θέμα: Ευρωπαϊκή αρωγή για τη φιλοξενία των παράνομων μεταναστών που εισρέουν στο Ευρωπαϊκό Νότο

Παρά τη σημαντική συμβολή της υπηρεσίας Frontex στον τομέα της πρόληψης, ο αριθμός των παράνομων μεταναστών που εισρέουν στην Ευρώπη μέσω του Ευρωπαϊκού Νότου παραμένει ιδιαίτερα αυξημένος. Οι χώρες πρώτης εισόδου αντιμετωπίζουν ήδη σημαντικά προβλήματα στα κέντρα υποδοχής και φιλοξενίας των μεταναστών ενώ το πρόβλημα αναμένεται να διογκωθεί δεδομένου της υπάρχουσας οικονομικής κρίσης.

Αναμένεται η Ισπανική Προεδρεία να αναλάβει άμεσα πιο δραστικές πρωτοβουλίες για την παροχή συγκεκριμένων μέσωσ στήριξης των κρατών που επιφορτίζονται με την φιλοξενία των παράνομων μεταναστών;

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The Presidency and the Council continue to attach considerable importance to combating illegal immigration and promoting solidarity for that purpose.

The European Council adopted at its meeting on 10/11 December 2009 the Stockholm Programme, a new multi-annual planning in the area of freedom security and justice for the years 2010-2014. In this Programme, it is clearly stated that a comprehensive European immigration policy, based on solidarity and responsibility, remains a key policy objective for the European Union. The Programme emphasizes that, in order for the EU to maintain a credible and sustainable immigration system, it is necessary to prevent, control and combat illegal immigration as the Union faces an increasing pressure from illegal migration flows and particularly the Member States at its external borders, including at its Southern borders.

The Presidency is also working to complete, in the June Council, the first annual assessment of the 2008 European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, which also emphasizes the need to promote solidarity to those Member States whose geographical location exposes them to influxes of immigrants, or whose resources are limited. The Commission has adopted the first annual report on immigration and asylum on 6 May 2010 on the basis of which the Presidency will seek to draw the relevant Conclusions at the June Council.

It should also be recalled that the JHA Council at its meeting of 25 and 26 February 2010 adopted Council Conclusions concerning 29 measures for the reinforcing of the protection of the external borders and combating illegal immigration. These Conclusions underline the importance of the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility in the integrated management of external borders and recall the need for active co-operation between Member States and the need to further enhance the efficiency of the FRONTEX Agency so as to cope better with the challenges the Unions is facing in this field. They therefore provide for a series of measures directed to the further development of FRONTEX and the European Surveillance System (EUROSUR), the fight against the illegal immigration networks and trafficking in human beings, solidarity and the integrated management of the external borders and co-operation with third countries.

The Council has in particular agreed to promote solidarity with the Member States facing particular pressures through capacity building and practical co-operation.

Question no 4 by Marian Harkin (H-0186/10)

Subject: Knowledge migration

Given that the Spanish Presidency is this week (17-18 May 2010) hosting the annual conference – on the theme ‘Brains on the move’ – of the pan-European Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), has the Presidency considered exploring the possibility of European schemes to facilitate knowledge migration and prevent a European ‘brain drain’, to promote excellence and to develop a network of leading universities at international level?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The Council has a limited competence in the field of education as established in Article 165 TFEU. According this position, the Union contributes to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of educations systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity. Nevertheless, the Council is sensitive to the issues raised by the Honourable Member. In this sense, higher education - through its close links to research and innovation - is occupying an increasingly prominent role in the Union's overall economic strategy. The Council would therefore point to a number of initiatives in which it has been either actively or closely involved and that are aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of Europe's higher education institutions and fostering academic excellence and cooperation, whilst encouraging the free flow and exchange of knowledge and ideas so essential to social and economic progress.

First of all, and as showed by its Resolution of 23 November 2007 on modernising universities for Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge Economy¹, the Council continues to encourage Member States to undertake extensive modernisation and restructuring of their higher education institutions in order to promote and maintain quality and excellence in Europe's higher education sector. Modernisation of this kind is recognised not only as a core condition for the success of the broader Europe 2020 Strategy for growth and jobs, but also as part of the wider move towards an increasingly global and knowledge-based economy. The Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the internationalisation of higher education² also emphasise the point that] Promoting quality and excellence is essential to ensuring that Europe does not lose out in the global competition to attract and retain the best talents.

Secondly, the Council also attaches great importance to promoting learning mobility in higher education for students, teaching staff and researchers.

The highly successful Erasmus strand of the Lifelong Learning Programme³ - together with the Erasmus Mundus programme in the field of cooperation with third countries⁴ - continue to demonstrate the benefits of mobility and the free flow of knowledge in terms of enriching human capital, strengthening employability, enhancing the capacity for creativity and innovation, and improving the quality and innovation of teaching, learning and research. In addition to mobility actions, the programmes encourage and support the development of joint academic projects, networks and partnerships between higher education institutions.

Finally, the Council would add that progress achieved through the broader, pan-European Bologna process, as well as the EU's success in adopting common approaches and tools with regard to the recognition of qualifications and quality assurance, can all help to further enhance the attractiveness of higher education within the Union.

Question no 5 by Alan Kelly (H-0189/10)

Subject: Investigating deaths of EU citizens in third countries

Could the Council indicate its position on the death of EU citizens abroad at the hands of state officials from third countries?

What assistance would it consider giving to a family affected by the above?

One example of such circumstances involves the death of Mr. Michael Dwyer, an Irish citizen in Bolivia. He was killed by an elite squad within the Bolivian police, and many questions on the matter remain unanswered.

As a general principle, does the Council feel that the families of those who have died are entitled to a proper investigation into such deaths? Would it consider using its influence with a third country to ensure that such an investigation came about?

In this specific case, can the Council take any action that may assist the Dwyer family?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The Council has not been made aware of the specific case raised by the Honourable Member. Since Consular matters fall within the competence of the Member States, the Council is not in a position to provide a response to the specific incident related to the death of Mr. Dwyer.

¹ Doc. 16096/1/07 REV 1

² Doc. 8261/10

³ Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning - OJ L 327, 24.11.2006.

⁴ Decision No 1298/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 establishing the Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries - OJ L 340, 19.12.2008.

More generally, the Council underlines the importance of respect for Human Rights as the cornerstone of the external relations of the European Union, and refers the Honourable Member to the (Human Rights) Guidelines on HR dialogues which it adopted in November 2008.

The missions of the Member States and the delegations of the European Union do therefore follow closely cases such as that referred to by the Honourable Member.

The fight against impunity and in support of an independent judiciary - and therefore the correct and full carrying out of criminal investigations - are among the priorities raised by the EU in its dialogue with third states. The European Union regularly raises cases such as that of Mr Dwyer in its contacts with third countries, and calls systematically for these cases to be the subject of full and proper investigation.

Question no 6 by Jim Higgins (H-0197/10)

Subject: Birth deformities in Fallujah

The World Health Organisation has pledged to carry out an independent study of the rise in birth deformities in the Iraqi city of Fallujah in an endeavour to ascertain the cause of the dramatic increase in severe birth defects.

Concern has been raised about the weapons used by American forces in 2004, when Fallujah suffered one of the heaviest bombardments of the entire war in Iraq, including the controversial use of white phosphorus. What action will the Council take should the World Health Organisation find exposure to white phosphorus to be linked to the city's alarming level of severe birth deformities?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

As the Honourable Member knows, the Council follows developments in Iraq very closely, including on this specific issue. The Council is aware of certain allegations made in the past, relating to the issue raised by the Honourable Member. However, for the time being we have no specific information available to allow us to provide a substantive response. We note that the WHO is likely to carry out a study on women's health in Iraq. The EU will of course take a careful look at this study once it is finalised. It would therefore be premature and inappropriate for the Council to take a view on this issue at this stage, when basic information is still not available.

Nonetheless, the Presidency would like to add that the Council is very much aware of the Iraqi health sector needs and is committed to supporting it. So far a total of €117 million from the Iraq reconstruction assistance has been devoted to the health sector. The 2008 assistance programme included a key project focusing on support to specialised medical services.

The 2009-2010 integrated assistance package also contains support to institutional and human capacity of the health sector to deliver quality health services (strengthening the primary health service system, improvement of health conditions in schools).

Ερώτηση αρ. 7 του κ. Νικόλαου Χουντή (H-0203/10)

Θέμα: Απόφαση των αρχηγών κρατών της ευρωζώνης για το μηχανισμό υποστήριξης

Η δήλωση των αρχηγών κρατών της «ζώνης του ευρώ» που αναφέρεται στην κατάσταση της ελληνικής οικονομίας, αφήνει ορισμένα ερωτηματικά σχετικά τόσο με την προτεινόμενη διαδικασία, όσο και με την ουσία του μηχανισμού υποστήριξης. Στην απόφαση αναφέρεται ότι:

«τα κράτη μέλη της ευρωζώνης είναι έτοιμα να συνεισφέρουν σε συντονισμένο διμερή δανεισμό» και παρακάτω αναφέρεται ότι «αναμένουμε από τα κράτη μέλη του ευρώ να συμμετάσχουν με βάση την κλειδα κατανομής της ΕΚΤ που τους αντιστοιχεί». Το Συμβούλιο εκφράζει ευχή ή δέσμευση;

Στόχος του μηχανισμού είναι να «θέτει κίνητρα για επιστροφή στη χρηματοδότηση από τις αγορές ... μέσω της κατάλληλης τιμολόγησης κινδύνων». Ποιος είναι ο φορέας που θα αξιολογήσει τον κίνδυνο; Αναφέρει επίσης ότι «τα επιτόκια θα διαμορφώνονται με μη χαριστικούς όρους, δηλ. δεν θα περιλαμβάνουν στοιχεία επιδότησης». Σήμερα που γράφεται αυτή η ερώτηση τα spreads των ελληνικών ομολόγων αγγίζουν τις 400 μονάδες βάσης. Ποιο θα ήταν το θεωρητικό παραδεκτό επιτόκιο που θεωρείται ότι «δεν θα υπήρχαν στοιχεία επιδότησης»;

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The support programme to Greece has been agreed on and will be carried out by the euro area Member States outside the framework of the EU treaties, through intergovernmental agreements. It will take the form of pooled bilateral loans from individual euro area Member States, as well as a significant contribution from the IMF. The EU Member States agreed to entrust the European Commission with the tasks in relation to the coordination and management of the stability support provided by the euro area countries.

The Council has therefore not discussed the details of the financial support programme to Greece, such as the distribution key of individual Member States' participation. Member States have, however, indicated their intention to participate in line with the commitments made in previous euro area statements and according to the distribution key of the ECB, subject to the completion of the appropriate national procedures.

The Council adopted, on 10 May, a Decision under Treaty Articles 126 and 136, setting out the main elements of the economic programme that Greece must now implement, reflecting the key conditions attached to financial assistance. The specific loan agreement between the Member States providing financial support and Greece makes the financial support conditional upon Greece complying with the measures laid down in that Decision and in a Memorandum of Understanding that has to be consistent with the referred Decision. The Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between the lenders and Greece on 9 May. The Council will regularly examine Greece's compliance with this Decision, on the basis of monitoring by the Commission and regular reporting by Greece.

It is expected that the first disbursement will take place before 19 May.

The Council Presidency recalls that the details of bilateral loans and the conditionality attached to them, were agreed between the Member States participating in the support programme and Greece. The Council is not in a position to comment on Member States' bilateral actions, nor on statements made by the Heads of State or Government of the Member States.

Întrebarea nr. 8 a doamnei Silvia-Adriana Țicău (H-0204/10)

Subiect: Sprijin pentru disponibilizările din instituțiile publice

În februarie 2010, rata șomajului în UE a ajuns la 10%, iar previziunile OIM arată că aceasta nu va descrește decât în prima parte a anului 2011. Criza economică a afectat dramatic sectorul privat, mii de întreprinderi fie efectuând disponibilizări masive, fie intrând în incapacitate de funcționare. În cazul întreprinderilor afectate de criza economică și financiară, acestea pot utiliza atât FSE, cât și FEAG pentru a sprijini persoanele disponibilizate. Pentru sectorul public, UE nu are însă suficiente instrumente pentru a sprijini persoanele disponibilizate de instituțiile publice sau de interes public ca urmare a reducerii bugetelor naționale din cauza crizei economice și financiare. În plus, anumite angajamente asumate de unele dintre statele membre cu FMI sau CE pentru a putea depăși criza economică implică reduceri masive de personal în sectorul public.

Aș dori să întreb Consiliul dacă analizează posibilitatea creării unui instrument european dedicat sprijinirii persoanelor disponibilizate din sectorul public din cauza crizei economice și financiare.

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The Council shares the concerns about the situation in terms of job losses and increasing unemployment in the European Union, which affects both the private and public sector.

While there is no specific proposal by the Commission on a European instrument to support public sector workers, existing measures at the EU level can already provide aid to all categories of workers made redundant.

Such is the case with the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) Regulation, which applies to workers, both from the private and public sector, made redundant as a result of major structural changes in world trade patterns due to globalisation, and where these redundancies have a significant adverse impact on the regional or local economy.

In order to alleviate the impact of the financial and economic crisis, this Regulation was revised in 2009 to temporarily expand its scope and to ease the access to the fund by adjusting the intervention criteria. A Member State can apply for a financial contribution from the EGF for public sector workers made redundant provided that its application meets the intervention criteria set out in the revised Regulation.

The target group in question may also benefit from the European Social Fund through selected projects to be implemented by beneficiaries such as State shared enterprises or local administrative authorities. There are no restrictions as to the sector of origin, be it private or public, provided that a project falls under the Member States' Operational Programme co-financed by the European Social Fund, and that the former public sector employees are covered by the scope of such a project.

A further European instrument, the European Progress Microfinance Facility, may also apply. The European Progress Microfinance Facility aims at increasing the availability and accessibility of microfinance for vulnerable groups, such as, inter alia, unemployed wanting to set up or further develop a micro enterprise. Workers from both private and public sector, who have recently become jobless and want to start an on-line business, could therefore potentially benefit from loans under such Facility.

Klausimas Nr. 9, pateikė Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (H-0209/10)

Tema: Dėl nacionalinių parlamentų bendradarbiavimo

Lisabonos sutartis pirmą kartą nacionaliniams parlamentams suteikia svarbų vaidmenį sprendžiant Europos Sąjungos klausimus. Taip nacionaliniai parlamentai skatinami anksti pradėti aktyviai dalyvauti ES lygmens politikos formavimo procese. Labai svarbu, kad visų formų tarpparlamentinis bendradarbiavimas atitiktų du pagrindinius principus – didesnio efektyvumo ir parlamentinio demokratizavimo. Norėčiau pabrėžti, kad svarbu remti nacionalinių parlamentų funkciją apsvarstyti teisės aktų projektus, kol jų dar nepradėjo svarstyti Europos Sąjungos teisės aktų leidėjai, taip pat jų atliekamą veiksmingą savo vyriausybės atstovų priežiūrą šiems posėdžiaujant Taryboje.

Norėčiau paklausti Tarybos, kokių konstruktyvių veiksmų ji ėmėsi, siekdama pagerinti bendradarbiavimą su valstybėmis narėmis po Lisabonos sutarties?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The Lisbon Treaty encourages the greater involvement of National Parliaments in the activities of the European Union and strengthens the parliamentary dimension of the Union.

One of the more significant developments in the Lisbon Treaty is the new subsidiarity control mechanism, which gives National Parliaments a specific role in examining legislative proposals to ensure that they comply with the principle of subsidiarity and the reinforcement of the information of National Parliaments on the actions of the European Union.

The Council is committed to ensuring the effective implementation of the provisions concerning those aspects of relations with National Parliaments which fall within its area of responsibility.

To this end a number of procedures have been established by the Council, and we informed the national parliaments of these procedures:

- a) the establishment of a system for the transmission to national Parliaments of draft legislative proposals put forward by Member States or Institutions to allow national Parliaments to carry out the subsidiarity check within the time limit of 8 weeks referred to in Article 6 of Protocol No 2.
- b) the transmission to national Parliaments for information, proposals for the amendment of the Treaties (including drafts arising from implementation of the second subparagraph of Article 81(3) TFEU) and applications by third States for accession to the European Union.
- c) the transmission to national Parliaments, for information other documents provided for in the Treaties, in particular:
 - agendas for Council meetings;
 - outcome of Council meetings;
 - minutes of the "legislative deliberations" parts of Council meetings;
 - positions adopted by the Council under the various legislative procedures;
 - information on the outcome of the evaluation referred to in Article 70 TFEU;
 - information on the proceedings of the standing committee on operational cooperation on internal security (COSI) referred to in Article 71 TFEU.

I would like to assure you of the Council's commitment to the effective functioning of these new procedures in order that National Parliaments are able to fulfil properly the important new role which the Lisbon Treaty attributes to them.

Regarding the subsidiarity control, the Council has also sent at the beginning of this year to national parliaments two initiatives of Member States in the field of Justice and Home Affairs. National parliaments were invited to express their views on the respect of the subsidiarity principle within 8 weeks. Only one negative opinion was received.

Moreover, according to Article 48 TEU, the Council had already transmitted national parliaments, at the end of 2009, the Spanish initiative related to the revision of Protocol 36 to the treaties (supplementary MEPs). National Parliaments have also been informed of the request for accession to the EU from Serbia.

Question no 10 by Gay Mitchell (H-0212/10)

Subject: Financial support for travellers

In the wake of the unprecedented travel disruption that occurred across Europe as a result of the volcanic ash cloud, what consideration has the Council given to financial support for those who have suffered losses?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The main current legislative framework in the field of compensation and assistance to passengers is defined by Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 February 2004 establishing common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights. This Regulation introduced new rules on compensation and assistance for air passengers in the event of denied boarding, cancellations, long delays and involuntary downgrading. It sets out minimum rights for passengers to be respected by any airline if the journey is disrupted. The same Regulation requires Member States to set up enforcement bodies with the ability to impose dissuasive sanctions.

The Council is aware of the unprecedented travel disruption caused by the eruption of a volcano in Iceland and of its extraordinary consequences, including almost ten millions passengers unable to fly.

I already had the opportunity to discuss this issue with Members of Parliament during the debate at the plenary session of 20 April.

During an extraordinary meeting on 4 May, the Council agreed in particular that Regulations on air passengers' rights were fully applicable and enforced in a uniform manner, in the context of such crisis, taking into account the exceptional circumstances. It invited the European Commission to take into account the experience and the different reactions of all stakeholders during the ash cloud crisis in the context of the current review of the Regulation 261/2004.

Question n° 11 de Malika Benarab-Attou (H-0218/10)

Objet: Accord de coopération entre EUROPOL et Israël - Respect des droits de l'homme

L'Union européenne est en passe de conclure un accord de coopération entre EUROPOL et Israël.

EUROPOL va inclure dans l'accord une disposition faisant référence à l'interdiction pour EUROPOL de traiter des données personnelles obtenues en violation des droits de l'homme, conformément à l'article 20, paragraphe 4, de la décision 2009/934/JAI⁵ du Conseil du 30 novembre 2009.

Le projet d'accord prévoit-il des dispositions garantissant à EUROPOL qu'Israël ne lui transmettra pas de données obtenues en violation des droits de l'homme, notamment sous la torture ou de la part de personnes emprisonnées illégalement?

Si oui, quelles sont les modalités rendant cette garantie effective?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The negotiations for the conclusion of an operational cooperation agreement between Europol and Israel are taking place between the Europol Director and the Israeli authorities. The Council is not involved in these negotiations. It is only when the draft agreement will be submitted by the Europol Management Board to the Council that the Council will be able to give its opinion on the content of the agreement.

As the Honourable Member is aware, the Council attaches great importance to data protection and, in this respect, is looking forward to receiving the opinion of the Europol Joint Supervisory Body (JSB) together with the draft operational cooperation agreement. When the Council decided last year to authorise the Europol Director to start the negotiations on a draft operational cooperation agreement, the Council based its decision on a report of the Europol Management Board and on the opinion of the JSB which both indicated that no obstacles existed to start the negotiations with Israel provided that a number of issues raised by the JSB were addressed during these negotiations. Once the draft operational agreement will be submitted to the Council, the Council will be able to assess whether or not the JSB comments were duly taken into account.

Question no 12 by Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (H-0219/10)

Subject: Decision of the Ukrainian Parliament to extend the lease of the Sevastopol base

On 27 April 2010, the parliament of Ukraine – the Verkhovna Rada – took the unexpected decision to ratify a new treaty extending the Russian navy's lease of the Sevastopol base for 25 years after 2017, with an option to further prolong the lease for five additional years. The decision was adopted by a majority of 236 out of 450 in the midst of an embarrassing brawl in the chamber of the Verkhovna Rada. The Russian Duma quickly followed suit and ratified the treaty by an astonishing 98% majority.

⁵ JO L 325 du 11.12.2009, p. 6.

In the opinion of the Council, what impact will this agreement have on Ukraine's sovereignty? How will it affect Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration prospects?

Considering that after the 2007 enlargement the EU will directly border the Black Sea, what impact will the presence of this strong Russian naval base close to the EU border have on the EU's long-term security?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The improvement of Ukrainian relations with Russia is one of President Yanukovich's key foreign policy goals. This has been welcomed by the EU, which has consistently supported constructive relations between Ukraine and Russia.

At a meeting in the presence of President Medvedev in Kharkiv on 21 April, Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement on extending the lease of the Sevastopol base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) until 2042, with a five-year automatic extension if not otherwise agreed. The agreement also included a 30 % lowering of the price of Russian gas as part of the lease payment.

The Council has taken note of this agreement which it considers to be Ukraine's sovereign decision. The Council has consistently taken the view that Ukraine had the sovereign right either to terminate the lease agreement when it expires in 2017, or to extend it. The Council has also taken note of the fact that the gas price rebate granted to Ukraine was part of this agreement. The Council expresses the hope that the lower gas price would not deflect Ukraine from working towards increased energy efficiency and from pursuing its reform agenda, notably in the energy sector. The Council also hopes that lower gas prices will enhance budgetary discipline, helping to restore cooperation with the IMF.

Before the 2007 enlargement the EU already directly bordered the Baltic sea, where Russia has several strong naval bases. The Council considers that the presence of Russian naval base in Sevastopol should not have any impact on EU's security.

Uimh. na ceiste 13 le Liam Aylward (H-0224/10)

Ábhar: Lá um Mhurtall

Beidh an Lá Eorpach um Mhurtall ar siúl an Satharn seo, 22 Bealtaine. Is é an murtall ceann de fadhbanna is mó atá ag saoránaigh an Aontais Eorpaigh agus ag seirbhísí slándála sna Ballstáit faoi láthair.

Meastar go mbeidh 20% de dhaonra na hEorpa, 150 milliún duine fásta agus 15 milliún páiste agus déagóir, aicmithe mar dhaoine murtallacha faoi dheireadh na bliana seo. Cad is féidir leis an gComhairle a dhéanamh chun dul i ngleic leis an méadú ar fhadhb an mhurtaill sna Ballstáit agus san Aontas Eorpach ina iomláine?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

In its conclusions adopted on 6 December 2007, the Council called upon Member States to work together to develop activities aimed at the reformulation of foods to reduce levels of salt, saturated fat, "trans" fatty acids, added sugar and energy density given the role these elements play in the development of chronic diseases, overweight and obesity.

Furthermore, on 8 June 2010 the Spanish Presidency will invite the Council to adopt conclusions recommending measures to be taken by the Member States and by the Commission to promote and supervise the reduction of salt intake by the European population. The consumption of salt in excess causes damages to health, in particular problems of obesity. The excess of salt, through induction of thirst and intake of caloric beverages, contributes to obesity.

The Council is currently examining a proposal for a Regulation submitted by the Commission "on the provisions of food information to consumers", aiming at making the food labelling more informative, more legible, more readable and allowing comparison between similar products.

More informative as the inscription of nutrition particulars (sugars, fat, salt, etc.) should become mandatory.

More legible because a minimum character size is under consideration.

More readable as all the information should appear together in a single table and allowing comparison because the quantities should always be expressed in 100 g for solids or 100 ml for liquids.

The objective is to motivate the consumers to choose the product best adapted to their needs and to learn how to avoid foods that can harm their health.

Question no 14 by Pat the Cope Gallagher (H-0229/10)

Subject: Single European Sky

In the light of the major disruption caused by the volcanic ash cloud, does the Council intend to bring in measures for speedier implementation of the Single European Sky initiative?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

On 25-26 February 2010, the Spanish Presidency organised in Madrid the High-Level Conference on the roadmap towards implementing Single European Sky. The participants in the Conference agreed that delivering the Single European Sky is of utmost importance for the future of European aviation. The initiative aims towards ambitious goals: cutting of the cost of flying by half, decreasing by 10% the environmental impact of flight through better use of airspace completed by a sky decarbonisation programme and enabling a three fold increase of capacity while improving further the already high safety record of the European airspace. The participants also endorsed an ambitious roadmap for the achievement of the Single European Sky.

The eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland since 14 April, created a cloud of volcanic ash that threatened to cover most of Europe. In accordance with the relevant procedures developed at international level, the national authorities closed off all affected airspace, with huge impact on air traffic in Europe.

The EU transport ministers first addressed the air traffic disruptions at a video/audio-conference on 19 April, where they agreed on a progressive and coordinated opening of European air space, while underlining that safety must be considered an absolute priority. Ministers decided on a common scheme with three zones depending on the ash concentration, which came into force on 20 April and continues to be applicable. They also agreed on an extraordinary Council meeting on 4 May 2010.

During that meeting of 4 May, the Council held an exchange of views on the consequences of the air traffic disruption, based on information provided by the Commission. The Council agreed on the importance of giving the highest priority to the acceleration and anticipation of the full implementation of the Single European Sky. It called the European Institutions and the Member States to take urgently the appropriate decisions on a series of measures identified, in particular on the:

- immediate creation of a crisis coordination cell,
- nomination without delay of the Functional Airspace Blocks coordinator,
- accelerated implementation of the Functional Airspace Blocks,
- appointment of the European network manager before the end of 2010,
- adoption before summer 2010 of the performance scheme,
- acceleration of the implementation of the European Aviation Safety Agency's new competences, particularly on air transport management, to be assumed before 2012,
- adoption of the Single European Sky Air Transport Management Research Programme (SESAR) deployment strategy before the end of 2010.

Question no 15 by Brian Crowley (H-0233/10)

Subject: Political situation in Burma

Could the Council provide an updated assessment of the political situation in Burma?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The political situation in Burma/Myanmar cannot be separated from the deep social and economic challenges facing the country. Focusing simply on the pending elections and the renewal of the institutions will not be enough to redress fundamental weaknesses and bring about sustainable progress.

For the first time in 20 years, the country is preparing for multi-party parliamentary elections, at a date to be announced. The military control the process and will keep their grip on the future parliament too. The electoral laws exclude the approx. 2.000 political detainees as persons in prison from being party members and from being elected, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party, the NLD has therefore decided not to participate. That leaves the main position to the Government-sponsored USD Party. 25 other parties have registered, several not linked to the military. We do not consider that the elections will transform the military dictatorship into a democracy at once, but they might be the first step in a longer process of transition.

The inclusion of the ethnic groups is even more important for progress than the role of the opposition. They make up 40% of the people and live on 50% of the land. Some ceasefire groups may also join the electoral process. A key sticking point is the transformation of ceasefire militias into Border Guards. In addition to the risk of renewed armed conflict, especially in border areas, there is pressure on remaining non-ceasefire groups and the danger of increased refugee outflows.

The human rights situation remains of grave concern to the EU. There is no rule of law, no judicial independence; widespread impunity for human rights offences; severe restrictions on freedom of expression and a strictly controlled media.

The economic situation provides a mixed but mostly bleak picture. Burma/Myanmar remains a Least Developed Country, with widespread poverty among ordinary citizens. Recovery and reconstruction after Cyclone Nargis will take years. The State's revenues are mainly derived from sales of natural gas to the region. These continue to support modest rates of growth, but much of this is used for the army and major construction projects, such as the new capital Naypyidaw. Record-low investments in health and education hamper the longer term prospects of the country. Finally, the global economic crisis, with weaker performance of Myanmar's major trading partners and fewer remittances from overseas workers, as well as external economic boycotts have impacted badly on the situation.

The EU, together with the whole international community, agrees that bringing about change in Burma/Myanmar is a long-term process. We will continue to play our part in this by actively engaging with all the actors on the ground, and through a carefully balanced mixture of pressure and engagement. The elections, even if they may be flawed, could be a first step to a more inclusive society and democracy. Our view is that we cannot afford to miss this chance to engage, and we are prepared to continue our work, together with our partners such as the US, the UN and Asian countries, beyond that date.

Fråga nr 16 från Anna Hedh (H-0235/10)

Angående: Människohandel

Kommissionen presenterade nyligen sitt förslag till direktiv (2010/0065 (COD) – KOM(2010)0095) om förebyggande och bekämpande av människohandel samt skydd av offer. Ett viktigt direktiv som ger EU en möjlighet att bekämpa ett av de allvarligaste brotten i världen. Det är därför viktigt att alla medlemsländer strävar åt samma håll genom att harmonisera sina lagstiftningar, genom att öka skyddet för brottsoffer och genom att arbeta förebyggande. Vi måste ta ansvar för efterfrågan som finns i våra länder på tjänster från offer för människohandel. Därför är jag förvånad och besviken över att

kommissionen i sitt förslag till direktiv i artikel 15.4 inte föreslår en kriminalisering av dem som utnyttjar tjänster med vetskap om att personen som tillhandahåller tjänsten är offer för människohandel.

Med anledning av ovanstående vill jag därför fråga rådet vilka utsikterna är att medlemsstaterna skulle kunna tänka sig att kriminalisera köpandet av tjänster från offer för människohandel?

Answer

The present answer, which has been drawn up by the Presidency and is not binding on either the Council or its members as such, was not presented orally at Question Time to the Council during the May 2010 part-session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

I am grateful to the Parliament for the opportunity to respond to this specific point related to trafficking in human beings (THB). This is an important issue. Combating trafficking in human beings is a priority for the Spanish Presidency, it has been highlighted as a priority issue in the Stockholm programme, and efforts to prevent and fight trafficking have been considerably stepped up within the last year. Trafficking in human beings is a major violation of fundamental human rights to which the EU should promote a proactive, coordinated and coherent approach. A comprehensive policy, of which prevention is an important element, is gradually taking shape.

According to the Article 15 on "prevention" referred to in the question, Member States shall "take appropriate measures" to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation related to trafficking in human beings. According to Paragraph 2 and 3, this includes actions such as information and awareness raising campaigns, research and education programmes, aimed at raising awareness and reducing the risk of people, especially children, of becoming victims of trafficking in human beings, and training for officials likely to come into contact with victims and potential victims. According to paragraph 4 of Article 15, "Member States shall consider taking measures to establish as a criminal offence the use of services which are the objects of exploitation as referred to in Article 2 with the knowledge that the person is a victim of an offence referred to in Article 2."; in other words Member States shall consider criminalising the use of cheap labour and the purchase of sexual services, when aware of the fact that the person is a victim of trafficking. It is a non-binding provision that leaves it up to Member States how to deal in detail with the question of criminalisation.

This wording is identical to the wording of the preceding proposal for the Framework Decision endorsed at the JHA-Council of 1 December 2009, but which had become void with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. From discussions in the Council, it was clear that a binding provision would not be acceptable for a large majority of the Member States. This is also reflected in the Commission's explanatory memorandum accompanying the proposal, point 2.1.2 of which states that "the issue of introducing a specific obligation to criminalise clients who knowingly use sexual services from a trafficked person was controversial among stakeholders. Several MS pointed out that in any case such a provision should not be binding."

QUESTIONS A LA COMMISSION

QUESTIONS TO THE COMMISSION

Întrebarea nr. 30 a doamnei Silvia-Adriana Țicău (H-0193/10)

Subiect: Măsuri pentru dezvoltarea politicii industriale a UE

Competitivitatea UE este recunoscută în domeniul industriale precum producția de automobile, industria chimică și cea constructoare de mașini, Uniunea asigurând în 2008 27%, 30%, respectiv 38% din producția mondială. De asemenea, în 2008, UE era al treilea, respectiv al doilea mare producător în domeniul farmaceutic și în domeniul construcției de aeronave civile. Criza economică a afectat grav industria europeană. Astfel, în luna februarie 2010, producția industrială a scăzut cu 2% față de februarie 2009, iar numărul șomerilor (UE-27) a ajuns la 23,019 milioane, în creștere cu 3,1 milioane față de februarie 2009. Îngrijorător este faptul că, în cazul tinerilor (sub 25 de ani), rata șomajului a ajuns la 20% în februarie 2010.

Având în vedere legătura strânsă dintre rata de ocupare a forței de muncă și creșterea producției industriale, aș dori să întreb Comisia care sunt măsurile pentru dezvoltarea unei politici industriale ambițioase, ecologice și sustenabile, care să permită reducerea ratei șomajului și păstrarea producției industriale în UE?

Réponse

L'industrie européenne représente encore 18% de l'emploi total, malgré la diminution de l'emploi dans l'industrie de quelque 0,5% par an au cours de la période 1995-2007, tandis que l'emploi dans les services aux entreprises a enregistré une croissance annuelle de 4,5%. Néanmoins, la crise financière a démontré l'importance de maintenir une base industrielle solide en Europe.

La stratégie « Europe 2020 » annonce le développement d'une politique industrielle à l'ère de la mondialisation, qui met l'accent sur le maintien et le développement d'une base industrielle solide, compétitive et diversifiée, ainsi que sur une transition vers une plus grande efficacité énergétique et une utilisation plus raisonnée des ressources. De plus, il est désormais clair que les politiques de l'UE devront faciliter l'amélioration de la compétitivité des entreprises européennes, tous secteurs confondus.

En septembre 2010, la Commission développera sa nouvelle vision pour une politique industrielle à l'ère de la mondialisation. Sa priorité sera de faciliter la transition vers une base productive plus compétitive, plus innovante et plus durable. La Commission fera des propositions concrètes sur la base d'une analyse des forces et des faiblesses des différents secteurs industriels et prendra en compte les points suivants:

la nécessité d'intégrer le souci de la compétitivité dans toutes les politiques de l'Union;

la mise en place d'infrastructures modernisées devra être accélérée, en particulier en ce qui concerne l'énergie, les transports et les réseaux de télécommunications. En outre, il est aussi nécessaire d'intensifier les efforts d'innovation et de valoriser les technologies génériques clefs qui soutiennent le développement de nouvelles industries, pôles de compétitivité et services;

par ailleurs, la transition vers une économie verte et efficace dans l'utilisation des ressources, à travers les filières industrielles, y compris les petites et moyennes entreprises (PME), constitue un défi majeur. Toutefois, cet objectif est aussi une opportunité pour l'industrie européenne, tant en termes de maîtrise technologique que de création d'emplois;

finalement, sur le plan international, il sera nécessaire d'assurer aux entreprises européennes les conditions d'une concurrence loyale sur le marché mondial et de diffuser les règles et normes de l'UE à l'extérieur de l'Europe. D'autre part, il faut également être très vigilant en ce qui concerne l'approvisionnement en matières premières.

Vraag nr. 31 van Kathleen Van Brempt (H-0231/10)

Betreft: Beleid van de Commissie aangaande schaarse grondstoffen

Voor het einde van dit jaar wil de Commissie een voorstel uitwerken over het beleid aangaande steeds schaarser wordende grondstoffen. Commissaris Tajani heeft tijdens zijn bezoek aan de ITRE commissie op 28 april 2010 meermaals beklemtoond dat het grondstoffenbeheer één van zijn hoofdprioriteiten is. Naast toegang tot grondstoffen binnen en buiten de EU werd ook recyclage en hergebruik als belangrijk aandachtspunt naar voor geschoven.

De vraag is echter hoe de Commissie de termen "recyclage en hergebruik" precies definieert en interpreteert en hoe afdoend en ambitieus haar beleid op dit gebied zal zijn. Zal het hier bij de klassieke opvattingen van recyclage en downcycling blijven? Of zal de Commissie ook verder gaan en nieuwere praktijken zoals "cradle to cradle" in acht nemen en promoten? Indien ja, hoe zal zij dit concreet vertalen naar het beleid toe? Zal, bijvoorbeeld, 'cradle to cradle' in de toekomst als één van de vereiste criteria worden opgenomen bij openbare aanbestedingen?

Answer

The Commission thanks the Honourable Member for allowing it this opportunity to discuss the issues of resource efficiency, the EU's Waste and Recycling policies and the Raw Materials Initiative (RMI).

Before the Commission addresses the Honourable Member's points, it would like to emphasise the fact the RMI is an integrated strategy which brings together various policy strands aimed at ensuring sustainable supply of, raw materials within the context of Europe's continued shift towards a more resource efficient economy. As per the 2008 RMI Communication, this integrated strategy follows three pillars:

ensure access to raw materials from international markets on a fair and equal footing with other industrial competitors;

set the right framework conditions within the EU in order to foster sustainable supply of raw materials from European sources;

boost overall resource efficiency and promote recycling to reduce the EU's consumption of primary raw materials and decrease the relative import dependence.

Indeed, the third pillar of the RMI focuses on reducing consumption of primary raw materials by increasing resource efficiency and promoting recycling. This builds on the extensive policies and legislations of the EU on waste management, including recycling, that are already in place, such as the Waste Framework Directive, the Waste Shipment Regulation and the range of directives dedicated to the management of specific waste streams such as waste electrical and electronic equipment. Indeed, one of the objectives of the RMI is to encourage and facilitate the full implementation and enforcement of waste and recycling legislation.

With regard to definitions of terms such as "recycling" and "re-use", the Waste Framework Directive, adopted in November 2008, defines recycling and outlines a waste hierarchy whereby the priority is given, firstly, to prevention, then to preparation for re-use and then to recycling. Overall, this means that the EU's policies are already based on a coherent approach to encouraging reuse and recycling over other forms of disposal. In addition, the concept of "Life Cycle Thinking" is already referred to in this Directive, and thus derivative terms such as "cradle to cradle" are addressed, and actively promoted by EU policies in the area. Moreover, a platform on Life Cycle Assessment hosted by the Joint Research Centre provides a range of examples and methods on Life Cycle thinking and Assessment.

Furthermore, a number of actions are being taken by the Commission to allow for a more effective achievement of our goals in this area:

One important piece of work concerns the establishment of 'end of waste' criteria for a number of bulk waste streams, such as iron and steel, aluminium and copper.

In order to deal with rarer metals which are currently difficult to recycle, the Commission is taking a twin-track approach. The first approach relates to research on substitutability, and the second relates to trade. Within Europe, the Commission is looking at encouraging research on substitutability, namely into novel materials for replacement of strategic or scarce raw materials such as for example platinum metals and rare earths. Regarding trade strategy, the Commission pays a particular attention to unfair and distortive trade practices by third countries whilst ensuring that environmental considerations are adequately taken into account.

Another field of action concerns illegal shipments of secondary raw materials. We are engaging with industry to analyse this situation and to propose concrete recommendations so that existing illegal shipments of waste (an important source of secondary raw materials) outside the EU can be remedied through a full implementation of the Waste Shipment Regulation.

As part of our Lead Market Initiative, we are currently examining ways in which Europe's recycling industry can be more competitive. Issues currently being investigated include measures to stimulate the recyclability of the products and measures to stimulate demand for eco-innovations in recycling.

Finally, green public procurement is a voluntary instrument, which enables public authorities to procure products, services and works with reduced environmental impacts throughout their life cycle. The most up-to-date developed common GPP criteria take into account recycling or recovering of materials, amongst other environmental requirements.

As the Honourable Member knows, the Commission has committed to report to European Parliament and to Council on the implementation of the RMI by the end of 2010. This will take the form of a Communication, in which we will outline our proposed actions. As such, this is work-in-progress.

In addition, later this year the Commission aims to publish its review of the Thematic Strategy on the Prevention of Waste and Recycling.

The Commission continues to welcome the Parliament's focus on this important subject and look forward to further discussions we will have throughout 2010.

Vraag nr. 32 van Ivo Belet (H-0237/10)

Betreft: Europese ecoscore

Een aantal lidstaten, waaronder België en Duitsland, hebben reeds een eigen ecoscore ontwikkeld om de milieuprestatie van wagens uit te drukken.

De ecoscore houdt niet enkel rekening met gebruikelijke indicatoren zoals CO₂-uitstoot, maar ook met de uitstoot van andere broeikasgassen (methaan en stikstofoxide), luchtkwaliteitsemissies en de geluidsemissies van het voertuig.

De berekening van de ecoscore verschilt echter van land tot land. Een Europese ecoscore zou kunnen zorgen voor meer uniformiteit.

Overweegt de Commissie een Europese ecoscore te introduceren? Zo ja, binnen welke termijn zal de Commissie dit doen?

Réponse

L'engagement de l'UE pour la qualité de l'air est fort et continu. Il a été précisé au cours des dernières années par l'adoption d'une quantité considérable de textes législatifs régulant les différents aspects dont il faut tenir compte dans ce très vaste domaine.

Pour atteindre l'objectif fixé dans le cadre de l'Accord de Copenhague, à savoir limiter l'augmentation globale de la température par rapport aux niveaux pré-industriels, à un maximum de 2°C, il est essentiel que les émissions de gaz à effet de serre soient réduites d'au moins 50% en 2050 par rapport au niveau de 1990.

Pour atteindre l'objectif de 2°C, il est nécessaire d'adopter avec rapidité des mesures concrètes dans le secteur du transport, puisqu'il produit la plus grande part des émissions de CO₂ du monde. Par exemple, les voitures libèrent dans l'atmosphère 12% des émissions de carbone de toute l'UE.

L'Ecoscore est une des mesures qui peuvent être développées en vue de diminuer les effets adverses du trafic roulant sur l'environnement, principalement à travers l'amélioration de la qualité de l'air et la réduction du niveau de bruit. Jusqu'à présent, la Commission n'a pas pris de mesures pour créer un Ecoscore européen, ou pour homogénéiser les actions des différents Etats membres quant aux systèmes créés.

Néanmoins, l'activité environnementale de la Commission est très vaste. Elle comprend les aspects relatifs à l'information du public de la performance environnementale des véhicules commercialisés dans l'UE. A cet égard, la directive 1999/94/CE⁶ concernant la disponibilité d'informations sur la consommation de carburant et les émissions de CO₂ à l'intention des consommateurs lors de la commercialisation des voitures particulières neuves, cherche à garantir que les informations relatives à la consommation de carburant et aux émissions de CO₂ des voitures particulières neuves soient mises à la disposition des consommateurs afin de permettre à ceux-ci d'opérer un choix éclairé. Prochainement, la Commission entamera un travail de révision de cette directive, avec pour objectif de créer des conditions plus favorables et efficaces de transmission de l'information environnementale au public. La Commission voudrait aussi rappeler que les activités de la Commission relatives à l'assurance de la bonne qualité de l'air touchent à tous les domaines des émissions du trafic roulant, en établissant des limites et normes par rapport aux polluants (CO, HC, NO_x, particules polluantes) ainsi qu'aux gaz à effet de serre (notamment le CO₂) et aussi en tenant compte des différents types de véhicules sur nos routes (particuliers, commerciaux légers, camions). Ces activités ont permis de compléter l'acquis législatif européen capable de garantir pour les années à venir, un développement durable de l'économie européenne.

Finalement, dans le domaine de la réduction du niveau de bruit, il faut mentionner la directive 70/157/CE du Conseil⁷, concernant le rapprochement des législations des États membres relatives au niveau sonore admissible et au dispositif d'échappement des véhicules à moteur. Cette directive a été modifiée plusieurs fois pour des raisons d'adaptation au progrès technique, la dernière étant celle par la Directive 2007/34/CE de la Commission⁸. La Commission aussi proposera une nouvelle modification pour la prochaine année, avec l'objectif de réduire les limites d'émissions de bruit.

⁶ JO L 12 du 18.1.2000

⁷ JO L 42 du 23.2.1970

⁸ JO L 155 du 15.6.2007

Question no 33 by Mairead McGuinness (H-0181/10)

Subject: EU Budget Review

During the British Presidency in 2005, the European Council invited the Commission 'to undertake a full, wide ranging review covering all aspects of EU spending, including the CAP, and of resources, including the UK rebate, to report in 2008/9'.

Can the Commission provide us with information on the current status of this review? Does the Commission intend to issue a Communication on this matter and can the Commission outline in detail the proposed timeline for this?

Answer

After consultation with the Parliament Committee of Budgets and in order to better link the Budget Review with the Europe 2020 strategy and the Work Programme of the new Commission, and to allow the new College to take ownership of this major initiative, the President of the Commission has decided to postpone the presentation of the Budget Review to the third quarter of 2010. This timing should allow the Parliament to make its views known on the future orientations of the EU Budget by the end of 2010. The President of the Commission announced this timing to the EP Plenary early in 2010.

The Commission is currently working on the Budget Review and is also about to launch the internal preparation for the closely linked next Multiannual Financial Framework. The Commission intends to present a Communication on this matter during the first semester of 2011.

Ερώτηση αρ. 34 του κ. Γεωργίου Παπαστάμκου (H-0182/10)

Θέμα: Αναθεώρηση του προϋπολογισμού και ΚΑΠ

Τον Οκτώβριο του 2009 είχε διαρρεύσει στη δημοσιότητα σχέδιο ανακοίνωσης της Επιτροπής σχετικά με την αναθεώρηση του προϋπολογισμού της ΕΕ. Στο σχέδιο ανακοίνωσης προβλεπόταν σημαντική μείωση των δαπανών για την ΚΑΠ, καθώς και άλλες προτάσεις για τη μελλοντική της κατεύθυνση. Η απελθούσα Επίτροπος Γεωργίας, κ. Boel, σε δημόσια συνεδρίαση της Επιτροπής Γεωργίας του ΕΚ, είχε χαρακτηρίσει το εν λόγω κείμενο ανύπαρκτο.

Μπορεί να με διαβεβαιώσει η Επιτροπή ότι δεν επεξεργάζεται αντίστοιχες προτάσεις ως προς την ΚΑΠ στο πλαίσιο της αναθεώρησης του προϋπολογισμού της ΕΕ;

Δεσμεύεται, σε κάθε περίπτωση ότι η συζήτηση για την αναθεώρηση του προϋπολογισμού δεν θα προδικάσει τη συζήτηση που βρίσκεται ήδη σε εξέλιξη σχετικά με την αναθεώρηση της ΚΑΠ για τη μετά το 2013 περίοδο;

Answer

The December 2005 European Council as well as the Inter-Institutional Agreement on budgetary discipline and sound financial management of May 2006 mandated the Commission "to undertake a full, wide ranging review covering all aspects of EU spending, including the Common Agricultural Policy, and of resources, including the United Kingdom rebate".

The paper brought to public attention in October 2009 was a working paper which had not been discussed or validated at the appropriate political level by the Commission. The document was strictly an internal text presenting different reflections and alternative scenarios meant for the Commission's internal use.

The Commission is currently preparing its position on the various dimensions of the EU Budget Review. The Commission Work Programme for 2010 foresees the Budget Review document to be available in the third quarter of 2010.

Moreover, the Commission has launched on 12 April 2010 a public consultation on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post-2013. This consultation will provide an important input into the Commission Communication on the CAP post 2013 to be put forward towards the end of 2010. The communication will explore avenues on the future of the CAP as regards substance, it will follow the Budget Review Communication but will not anticipate any financial aspects. These will be dealt with in the proposals that the Commission will make in 2011 on the multi-annual financial framework.

The Budget Review and in particular the public consultation on the CAP post 2013 provide a welcome opportunity to take a thorough look at the current CAP and its objectives. The CAP has undergone significant reforms over past years. Clearly the policy has proven its capacity to adapt to changing demands and new challenges. That reform capacity will be called on again in the coming period.

The Budget Review will also be a welcome occasion to take a thorough look at what should be the EU political priorities and how the EU should be financed. The Commission is convinced that the CAP will be an important part of the EU priorities, also after 2013. Further adaptation of the CAP will however be required to reflect better the Europe 2020 vision and to respond better to future challenges, such as climate change and food security.

Undoubtedly the decision on the future CAP budget will be tough. It is crucial to get first the policies for the future right, and then to see what they need in terms of budget.

Klausimas Nr. 35, pateikė Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (H-0192/10)

Tema: Atviro koordinavimo metodo naudingumas ir veiksmingumas ES valstybėse narėse

Atviras koordinavimo metodas, taikomas ES viešosios politikos srityse, sukurtas strateginiams Europos Sąjungos tikslams siekti. Šis metodas turėjo apimti gairių, rodiklių nustatymą ES lygmeniu, konkrečių kiekybinių uždavinių ir priemonių nustatymą nacionaliniu lygmeniu, vertinimus, ataskaitas, veiksmų planus, palyginimus pagal gaires, reitingus, kolegų apžvalgas bei geros politikos sklaidą. Vertinant atviro koordinavimo metodo perspektyvas ES lygmeniu reikia atkreipti dėmesį į tai, kad nevisapusiškai įgyvendinti Lisabonos strategijoje numatyti tikslai. Be to, atsižvelgiant į netolygų Lisabonos strategijos įgyvendinimo rezultatų pasiskirstymą tarp ES šalių, didėja abejonės šio metodo naudingumu. Jei visos ES ar ES valstybių narių vidaus rodikliai ir toliau labai skirsis nuo tikslų, kurių siekiama pagal ES strategijas, tai tik dar kartą įrodys atviro koordinavimo metodo neefektyvumą ir neveiksmingumą.

Ar Komisija nemano, kad atviro koordinavimo metodas silpnas iš prigimties ir dėl netvirtų jo poveikio mechanizmų jo įtaka valstybėse narėse menka? Ar šis metodas naudingas ir kaip jį taikant konkrečiai prisidedama prie valstybės narės skurdo lygio mažinimo, kovos su socialine atskirtimi, socialinės apsaugos priemonių efektyvumo, ekonomikos ir užimtumo augimo? Kokia būtų Komisijos nuomonė privalomų minimalių socialinių standartų įtvirtinimo visoje ES klausimu?

Answer

A number of evaluations and studies conducted by the Commission suggest that the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in the social policy area and in the field of employment and education policy under the Lisbon Strategy has been instrumental in fostering progress in policy implementation thanks to the common identification of challenges and priorities, the definition of and agreement on common indicators as the basis for regular monitoring, exchange of best practice and mutual learning. Cooperation between Member States, such as that in the field of social protection and social inclusion (the 'social OMC'), is a case in point.

Mutual learning is generally regarded as one of the most successful aspects of the OMC and as a policy improvement tool by the Member States and the stakeholders. The multiplier effect of exchanges of best practice, notably at regional and local level, will be crucial for translating the objectives of the future Europe 2020 strategy, and in particular inclusive growth, into practical results. The Commission's proposed flagship initiative involving the development of a European Platform for Poverty should support, enhance and broaden cooperation at EU level in this area.

To obtain further insights into the way the OMC has worked and the progress achieved, the Commission has launched a major external study to assess the effectiveness and impact of the 'social OMC'. The study will look at the way the OMC has operated as a method for policy coordination and mutual learning and its impact at national level. The results of this study should be available by the end of the year.

Interrogazione n. 36 dell'on. Salvatore Iacolino (H-0199/10)

Oggetto: Ripartizione delle competenze in materia di strategia europea per le droghe

Il Centro Europeo di Monitoraggio delle Droghe e delle Tossicodipendenze (ECMDDA) è un'Agenzia dell'Unione Europea che fornisce una panoramica di informazioni e dati oggettivi che costituiscono una base per il dibattito europeo su droghe e tossicodipendenze. Il controllo della sua attività è operato dal portafoglio Affari Interni della Commissione.

Il fenomeno dell'abuso di droga e quello del traffico illecito di stupefacenti sono affrontati a livello europeo attraverso un approccio globale che trova espressione nelle politiche europee sulle droghe elaborate dalla Direzione generale Libertà, Sicurezza, Giustizia della Commissione.

Non appare, pertanto, facilmente comprensibile la scelta di codesta Commissione di attribuire al portafoglio Affari Interni il controllo dell'Osservatorio di Lisbona facendo rientrare, invece, l'elaborazione dell'intera strategia europea per le droghe tra le competenze del portafoglio Giustizia, Libertà Fondamentali e Cittadinanza.

La Commissione intende mantenere separate le competenze oppure ritiene di dover apportare degli aggiustamenti al quadro attuale, favorendo così una migliore circolarità delle informazioni e un maggior coordinamento tra l'Agenzia di Lisbona e la DG Libertà, Sicurezza, Giustizia con le attività affidate ai singoli Commissari?

Answer

The challenge of tackling the issue of drugs is one that requires a variety of measures using a variety of tools. A successful policy depends on effective coordination within an overall vision: in this as in other areas, different Commissioners and their services work together to deliver collegiate decisions and implement collective action.

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction has a number of key roles, in particular monitoring the drugs situation in the EU, which includes monitoring drugs supply (price, drugs seizures and drug law offences) and the drugs markets. This information is of direct significance to the work of the Commissioner responsible for Home Affairs and the task of the services under her authority to tackle organised crime. This focus is different from that of the Commissioner responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, including her responsibilities for the overall anti-drugs policy.

Anfrage Nr. 37 von Franz Obermayr (H-0200/10)

Betrifft: "Mitbeteiligung Europas" am bulgarischen Atomkraftwerk Belene

Nachdem Bulgarien die finanziellen Ressourcen für die Fertigstellung des Atomkraftwerks Belene fehlen, hofft der bulgarische Ministerpräsident Borissow nun auf finanzielle Unterstützung aus Europa. Sollte das Projekt scheitern, müsste Bulgarien zusätzlich zu den bereits investierten 1,2 Milliarden Euro noch 600 bis 900 Millionen Strafgebühren an die mit dem Bau beauftragte russische Firma Atomstroyeksport zahlen. Russland hatte Bulgarien für die Fortsetzung der Errichtung ein Darlehen in Höhe von 2 Milliarden Euro angeboten. Bulgarien hofft dennoch weiter auf europäische Investitionen, da es sich nicht in russische Abhängigkeit begeben möchte. Bei einem Besuch in Sofia kündigte das für Energie zuständige Kommissionsmitglied, Günther Oettinger, Ministerpräsident Borissow eine „Mitbeteiligung Europas“ an und sicherte außerdem die Unterstützung bei der Suche nach potenziellen Investoren zu.

Wie soll so eine „Mitbeteiligung Europas“ konkret aussehen?

In welcher Höhe gedenkt die Kommission, die Fertigstellung des AKW Belene finanziell zu unterstützen?

Hat die Kommission bei ihrer Zusage einer Unterstützung auch über die erheblichen grenzüberschreitenden Gefahren nachgedacht, die von einem neuen AKW in der EU ausgehen?

Werden allfällige Unterstützungen mit der Auflage eines ordnungsgemäßen Verfahrens zur Prüfung der Umweltverträglichkeit gewährt?

Answer

With respect to questions 1 and 2, the Commission would like to recall that in accordance with article 194(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Member States have the right to determine the conditions for exploiting their energy resources, the choice between different energy sources and the general structure of their energy supply. In line with the principles of the Treaties and the subsidiarity principle, investment decisions are the sole responsibility of investors and Member States.

At Euratom level, the concrete financial mechanisms that could be considered in this context are Euratom loans and loans from the European Investment Bank. For the time being, no formal request has been presented by the Bulgarian authorities for a Euratom loan which could cover only part of the overall project, i.e. up to 20 % of the project costs. Therefore, Bulgaria needs to secure other sources of financing already before a Euratom loan could be granted. Currently, only around EUR 600 million are still available in the Euratom loan facility, while the cost estimate for the Belene NPP is at least EUR 4 billion.

Concerning question 3, the role of the EU is to develop, in the interest of all Member States, the most advanced legal framework for the use of nuclear energy in order to ensure the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation. Currently, Bulgaria has to transpose the provisions of the Nuclear Safety Directive⁹ by 22 July 2011. In addition, Bulgaria is party to all relevant international conventions, including the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency.

Finally, according to information provided by the Bulgarian authorities, development consent had already been granted for the Belene nuclear power plant before the date of Bulgaria's accession to the EU on 1 January 2007. Therefore Directive 85/337/EEC as amended¹⁰ (the EIA Directive) is not applicable in this case. Nevertheless, according to the Bulgarian authorities an environmental impact assessment (EIA) was carried out in 2004, pursuant to the applicable national legislation at that time, which had already transposed the provisions of the EIA Directive. On this basis, the Commission has no power to require Bulgaria to initiate a new EIA procedure regarding this project.

For more detailed information about the EIA procedure and other related issues concerning the Belene nuclear power plant the Commission refers to its replies to the following Parliamentary questions: E-4186/08; E-1337/08; E-6141/07; E-5669/07; E-5506/07 and H-0996/07.

Question n° 39 de Jean-Luc Bennahmias (H-0202/10)

Objet: Organisme européen de contrôle des activités sportives

En cette période où le *mercato* sportif va débiter, les questions sont nombreuses sur l'opacité des conditions de transfert des sportifs, comme dans la rémunération des agents de joueurs.

La Commission estime-t-elle opportun que l'Union européenne propose la création d'un organisme européen indépendant de contrôle de ces activités, basé sur le modèle français de la direction nationale de contrôle de gestion ou de l'agence mondiale anti-dopage?

La Commission soutiendrait-elle la création d'un organisme élargi aux pays membres du Conseil de l'Europe, qui assurerait le contrôle de la transparence financière afin d'empêcher les dérives et les inégalités de traitement aboutissant à une concurrence faussée entre les clubs?

Réponse

La Commission informe l'honorable parlementaire qu'elle a commandité une étude indépendante sur les agents sportifs dans l'Union européenne dont les résultats ont été publiés sur son site web en décembre 2009¹¹. Cette étude fournit un état des lieux approfondi et détaillé des questions relatives aux activités des agents sportifs dans l'Union; l'étude constate que les pratiques liées à la rémunération des agents diffèrent selon les pays et les disciplines sportives considérées.

⁹ Council Directive 2009/71/EURATOM of 25 June 2009, establishing a Community framework for the nuclear safety of nuclear installations, OJ L 172, 2.7.2009.

¹⁰ Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, OJ L 175, 5. 7. 1985, as amended by Council Directive 97/11/EC of 3 March 1997, OJ L 73, 14. 3. 1997, and Directive 2003/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003, OJ L 156, 25. 6. 2003, and Directive 2009/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009, OJ L 140, 5.6.2009.

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/sport/news/news917_en.htm

L'étude note également que les épisodes de criminalité financière dans lesquels les agents sportifs sont impliqués se situent majoritairement dans le cadre des opérations de transfert de joueurs, lesquelles sont caractérisées par une certaine complexité et opacité, comme souligné par l'honorable membre.

La Commission considère que les résultats de l'étude représentent une base solide pour entamer une discussion avec les parties prenantes (mouvement sportif, Etats membres, Parlement) sur la question des agents sportifs.

Quant à la création d'un organisme de contrôle des transferts et des activités financières des clubs sportifs, la Commission estime que ceci relève de l'autonomie des organisations sportives. La Commission respecte et soutient l'autonomie du sport; cette dernière, pour être efficace, doit être accompagnée de règles de bonne gouvernance fondées sur les principes de la démocratie, de la représentativité et de la responsabilité de tous les acteurs sportifs. Dans ce contexte, la Commission prend note des travaux menés au sein de l'UEFA pour établir un système de contrôle des finances des clubs participants aux compétitions organisées par l'UEFA sur la base du principe du Fair Play Financier.

La Commission considère que l'objectif de ce projet d'assainissement des finances des clubs et de promotion des investissements à long terme dans le football en vue de garantir un meilleur équilibre des compétitions, semble rejoindre un des objectifs de l'Union en matière de sport, c'est-à-dire la promotion de l'équité dans les compétitions sportives (article 165 of du TFUE). La Commission rappelle également que toute mesure prise dans ce contexte doit respecter les règles du Traité en matière de marché intérieur et de concurrence.

La Commission estime que ces règles, en raison de la nature paneuropéenne de l'UEFA, pourraient s'appliquer aux clubs de football des pays membres de l'Union, ainsi qu'aux pays membres du Conseil de l'Europe.

Question no 40 by Mara Bizzotto (H-0206/10)

Subject: Burqa, niqab and security policies

The issue of the burqa, the niqab and any other kind of totally enveloping outer garment worn by Muslim women has usually been tackled from the point of view of gender discrimination; nevertheless, the issue of totally enveloping outer garments would maybe deserve to be tackled, besides the issue of women's fundamental rights, also from the perspective of security policy and public order.

Considering that some aspects of public security have gained supranational relevance, and that the total covering of the woman's body by the burqa or niqab clearly appears as a practice breaching women's fundamental rights which the EU is supposed to guarantee, to what extent, according to the Commission, could the issue of the burqa/niqab in Europe fall within the framework of security and gender equality policies? Does the Commission intend to promote any measure related to the issue, in order to meet the demands for security and respect of women's fundamental rights in the EU?

Answer

The wearing of the burqa and the veil, like that of other religious symbols, may raise a number of complex issues and relate to situations which differ widely depending on the circumstances. Member States have different traditions and approaches to this issue.

The wearing of religious symbols should be the free exercise of a religion and not a constraint imposed on anyone. Violations of women's rights are not acceptable. At the same time the issue of religious symbols should not be exploited to stigmatise religions and fuel xenophobia. It is also clear that the burqa cannot prevent necessary police or security controls.

If the issue of the veil or headscarf arises in the context of Union law, in particular the anti-discrimination directives, most importantly Directive 2000/78/EC prohibiting discrimination in employment based on religion, the Commission will not hesitate to take the necessary measures to ensure that the law is complied with.

Member States should guarantee that fundamental rights are effectively protected in accordance with international, European and national law.

Vraag nr. 41 van Frank Vanhecke (H-0207/10)

Betreft: Huisvesting in Vlaanderen

In de media circuleren berichten dat de Commissie momenteel vier klachten onderzoekt in verband met mogelijke overtredingen van Europees recht betreffende de toegankelijkheid tot huisvesting in Vlaanderen.

Twee klachten zouden betrekking hebben op het onderdeel 'Wonen in eigen streek' van het Vlaams Grond- en Pandendecreet. De twee andere klachten zouden gaan over het gemeentereglement van respectievelijk Zaventem en Vilvoorde.

Hoeveel klachten in verband met de toegankelijkheid tot huisvesting in Vlaanderen onderzoekt de Commissie momenteel? Kan de Commissie mij in het kort voor elk van die klachten de juridische redenering van de klagers schetsen? In welk stadium bevinden zich elk van de klachten? Wat zijn voor de afzonderlijke klachten de volgende stappen en stadia? Wanneer hoopt de Commissie voor elk van de klachten het onderzoek af te sluiten? Zijn inbreukprocedures tegen België volgens de Commissie mogelijk?

Answer

The Commission is currently examining several issues related to alleged breaches of EU law by rules on access to housing or social housing applicable in certain parts of Belgium. The Commission's attention has been drawn to these issues by individual complaints, questions by Honourable Members and media coverage.

The Commission's concerns are strictly linked to the situations where EU law is at stake by virtue of an EU citizen or an EU company having made use of one of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the EU Treaty. There is no EU competence with regard to measures which have no factor linking them with any of the situations governed by EU law and which are confined in all relevant respects within a single EU country, such as those linked to application of rules applying to Belgian nationals residing in Belgium.

Two of the four issues concern regulations adopted by municipal councils of Zaventem and Vilvoorde which provide for more favourable treatment of Dutch speakers who seek to purchase plots of municipal land.

The Commission is pursuing these cases in the light of possible violation of freedom of movement of EU citizens as the requirement of linguistic proficiency may put at disadvantage EU citizens from EU countries other than Belgium or the Netherlands.

The Commission is also looking into the compliance with EU law of the Decreet van 27 maart 2009 betreffende het Grond- en Pandenbeleid of the Flemish Region which was published on 15 May 2009. The Decree requires prospective buyers of plots of land and/or houses to have a sufficient link with the municipality. The Commission is examining whether the Decree does not violate EU law by introducing a requirement which may put at disadvantage EU citizens from EU countries other than Belgium.

The Commission takes the above cases of possible violation of fundamental rights of non-Belgian EU citizens residing in certain parts of Belgium very seriously and is committed to progress on the above cases.

Zapytanie nr 42 skierowane przez Czesław Adam Siekierski (H-0208/10)

Przedmiot: Sytuacja w strefie euro. Problem Grecji.

Problemy, których ostatnio doświadcza Grecja pokazują, do czego prowadzą zaniechania czy też zaniedbanie w obszarze ścisłej kontroli i nadzoru finansowego w strefie euro. Dla systemu wspólnej europejskiej waluty kryzys finansowy i gospodarczy okazał się największym wyzwaniem w jej historii. Bezwzględnie obnażył ukrywane już od pewnego czasu nieprawidłowości. Pakt Stabilności i Wzrostu mający gwarantować wypełnianie kryteriów konwergencji został w sposób karygodny zlekceważony przez narodowe, ale także unijne organy. Brak dyscypliny i odpowiedniego systemu kar doprowadził w rezultacie do kryzysu wspólnej waluty.

W związku z tym mam pytanie. Czy Komisja zamierza podjąć kroki w kierunku zapewnienia bezwzględnego przestrzegania Paktu Stabilności i Wzrostu w strefie euro, aby nie dopuścić w przyszłości do podobnej sytuacji, jaka ma miejsce obecnie? Jakie dokładnie działania zamierza podjąć Komisja?

Answer

The Stability and Growth Pact is the appropriate framework to face the fiscal challenges stemming from the financial and economic crisis. It is providing a much-needed anchor for fiscal policies in the current difficult phase of exit and risks to sovereign debt. Nevertheless, the Commission has concluded that the preventive arm needs to be reinforced, and incentives relating to the corrective arm need to be made timelier and strengthened. To this end, within the Communication on 'Reinforcing economic policy co-ordination' which it has presented on 12 May 2010, it has also set out proposals on 'Reinforcing compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact and deeper fiscal policy co-ordination'.

Specifically, the Commission intends to make budgetary surveillance and policy co-ordination more forward-looking. In the euro area in particular a more far-reaching approach to the assessment of budgetary policies seems justified, including a more pervasive review of the weaknesses of national budgetary plans ahead of their adoption. Moreover, domestic fiscal frameworks should be made more consistent with the priorities of EU budgetary surveillance, for instance by reflecting multi-annual budgeting procedures. As to public debt and sustainability, more prominence is proposed to be given to it and notably the debt criterion of the excessive deficit procedure should effectively be implemented. Furthermore, in order to provide the right incentives for Member States to tackle fiscal imbalances, the functioning of the Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) could be improved by speeding up the individual procedures, in particular with regard to Member States in repeated breach of the Pact. Finally, to ensure better compliance with the Pact more attention should also be paid to the use of the various funds from the EU budget.

Question no 43 by Nessa Childers (H-0210/10)

Subject: Ryanair's rejection of identity cards and driving licences

There are many policies employed by budget airline Ryanair which I or my constituents could take issue with. Though the company has proven itself to be one of the most successful Irish businesses of the last two decades or so, its frugal approach has also caused notably negative experiences for many travellers.

However, one of its company policies had a particularly negative effect this week when the passport office in Dublin was temporarily shut down. As a result of industrial action at the passport office, many people did not get new passports and were forced to rely on other documents to travel. However, because Ryanair only accepts passports as valid identification and rejects government- issued identity cards or driving licences, many travellers were therefore unable to travel.

Is it legal for Ryanair to reject government-issued identity cards and driving licences as valid proof of identity on its flights? Could Ryanair be forced to accept these documents?

Answer

Article 21(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union stipulates that every EU citizen shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in the Treaties and by the measures adopted to give them effect. The respective limitations and conditions are to be found in Directive 2004/38/EC¹².

All EU citizens with a valid national identity card or passport have the right to leave a Member State and enter to another one, as provided in Articles 4(1) and 5(1) of the Directive. Driver licences or identity documents other than valid national identity card, in principle, are not acceptable travel documents.

The above rules are addressed to Member States and are without prejudice to the right of airlines to lay down the rules concerning accepted travel documents. Airlines are entitled to carry out identity checks within a commercial framework for security or identification purposes. If submitted to this kind of check, EU citizens are entitled to prove their identity by presenting either a valid national identity card or passport.

According to the current Ryanair's Terms and Conditions of Travel¹³, a valid national identity card issued by the government of a European Economic Area country is an acceptable travel document that allows the holder to board a Ryanair flight. The Terms explicitly exclude driver licences as means of proving the identity of the passengers.

¹² Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, OJ L 158 of 30 April 2004

¹³ <http://www.ryanair.com/en/terms-and-conditions>

There is no provision of EU law that could be invoked to restrict the commercial freedom of airlines to accept for travel documents other than a valid national identity card or passport.

Zapytanie nr 45 skierowane przez Tadeusz Zwiefka (H-0214/10)

Przedmiot: Komunikat Komisji Europejskiej dotyczący pomocy publicznej przy sprzedaży gruntów i budynków przez władze publiczne

Zgodnie z Komunikatem Komisji Europejskiej w sprawie elementów pomocy publicznej przy sprzedaży gruntów i budynków przez władze publiczne (97/C 209/03)¹⁴, sprzedaż nieruchomości nie stanowi pomocy publicznej, jeśli dokonywana jest zgodnie z procedurą otwartego i bezwarunkowego przetargu, o którym informacje zostały w wystarczająco dobry sposób opublikowane. Zapewnienie otwartości przetargu następuję przez publikację ogłoszenia o przetargu w prasie o zasięgu co najmniej ogólnokrajowym, a czasami międzynarodowym. Koszty zamieszczania ogłoszeń jak również obowiązek wielokrotnego ich publikowania stanowią stosunkowo duże obciążenie dla budżetów jednostek samorządu terytorialnego. W związku z faktem, że komunikat został opublikowany 13 lat temu, w dobie ograniczonego dostępu do Internetu zwracam się z zapytaniem:

Czy Komisja mogłaby rozważyć całkowite lub częściowe zniesienie ciężącego na właściwym organie obowiązku publikacji ogłoszeń w prasie?

Czy Komisja mogłaby rozważyć skrócenie terminu na podanie ogłoszenia do publicznej wiadomości w przypadku przetargu na zbycie nieruchomości, której cena wywoławcza jest wyższa niż 100 000 euro?

Answer

The objective of the Commission Communication on State Aid in the sale of lands and building¹⁵ published in 1997 was to provide Member States with clear guidance on the procedures that in general preclude the existence of State aid in the sale of land and buildings.

This Communication has contributed to simplify the tasks of national administrations and to reduce the number of notifications.

Concretely, the Communication indicates two possibilities to exclude the presence of aid: sale through an unconditional bidding procedure or sale without an unconditional bidding procedure but based on an independent expert's evaluation.

Only as regards the first option, sale through an unconditional bidding procedure, does the Commission require a number of procedural precautions. These requirements are, however, formulated in a way that should normally allow Member States to comply with them without changing their domestic procedures.

One important requirement (among other elements) is that the offer must be sufficiently well-publicised.

According to the Communication an offer is 'sufficiently well-publicised when it is repeatedly advertised over a reasonably long period (two months or more) in the national press, estate gazettes or other appropriate publications, so that it can come to the notice of all potential buyers.

The Commission agrees with the Honourable Member that new technologies, like Internet, have contributed to facilitate communication. Nevertheless, press communication remains a well-established and essential element of public procurement procedures, which can easily be complied with. This being said, publications in Internet can be used as an additional mean of information.

Concerning the period of publication, a minimum of two months still seems to be an adequate time-period even for sales under EUR 100 000.

The Commission will certainly take into account the Honourable Member's remarks when revising the Communication in question. However, the Commission is not in a position to provide a specific time table in that respect.

¹⁴ Dz. U. C 209 z 10.7.1997, s. 3.

¹⁵ OJ C 209, 10.7.1997.

Ερώτηση αρ. 46 του κ. Τάκη Χατζηγεωργίου (H-0215/10)

Θέμα: Το μέλλον της Κοινής Αγροτικής Πολιτικής και της υπαίθρου

Ενόψει της γεωργικής ανάπτυξης σε μεγάλες γαίες και της υποστήριξης που παρέχεται σε τέτοιου είδους αναπτύξεις από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση. Ενόψει της παγκοσμιοποίησης αλλά και της οικονομικής κρίσης, που αποδεικνύει πως μια τοπική ανωμαλία μπορεί να οδηγήσει σε κρίση συνολικά τον πλανήτη, δεν πρέπει να υποστηρίξουμε τις μικρές οικογενειακές γεωργικές μονάδες για τη συντήρηση της βιοποικιλότητας και της ανάπτυξης των βιολογικών προϊόντων, την εξισορρόπηση και τη συντήρηση των φυτών της γης σε περίπτωση ασθενειών; και την αυτάρκεια των κρατών.

Περαιτέρω, μπορεί η Επιτροπή να αναφέρει τις συνέπειες της παρούσας οικονομικής κρίσης στη γεωργία των κρατών μελών, ειδικότερα στους μικρούς καλλιεργητές και τι προτίθεται να πράξει;

Answer

As regards agricultural development in mountain areas, the Commission Staff Working Paper "Peak Performance: New insights into mountain farming in the EU" concludes that the situation in mountains largely varies from one Member State to another, and different conditions may exist even within one Member State. When it comes to support, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development currently offers various measures to mountainous and foothill areas. The bulkiest support is represented by payments to farmers in areas with natural handicaps which aim at maintaining sustainable farming in place in order to avoid land abandonment. Apart from this scheme, higher aid intensities may apply in such areas to farm or forestry investments. Several other rural development measures aiming at increasing competitiveness and/or quality of life are also available.

As regards support to small farmers, the existing toolkit of rural development provides support for investments into farming, processing, forestry, and diversification, as well as it may support micro-business creation and rural tourism. For the new Member States, the rural development Regulation offers specific payment for semi-subsistence farms. This transitional measure aims at those farms which have the capacity and the intention to restructure.

As regards the economic crisis, the Commission does not possess data on its impact on small farmers. However, in order to respond to the economic crisis, dairy crisis and climate change, Member States have programmed additional funds of about EUR 5 billion stemming from the Health Check of the Common Agricultural Policy and the European Economic Recovery Package, which is now available for investments in agriculture, environment and broadband in rural areas.

Finally, the Commission would like to draw the Honourable Member's attention to the fact that the Commission and Member States implement the rural development in shared management. The targetting of the funds is a responsibility of the Member States.

Klausimas Nr. 47, pateikė Justas Vincas Paleckis (H-0216/10)

Tema: Dėl verslo efektyvumo naujosiose ES valstybėse

Nuo 2004 metų XXI amžiuje į ES įstojusios valstybės gavo dideles finansines injekcijas. Pavyzdžiui, Lietuva kasmet gaudavo ir tebeauga 4–5 mlrd. litų ES struktūrinių fondų paramą, kad galėtų vystyti socialinę ekonominę infrastruktūrą, žmoniškuosius išteklius, gamybą, kaimo plėtrą ir žuvininkystę, administracinius gebėjimus. Tačiau net esant tokio masto paramai, šiandien verslas daugelyje naujųjų ES šalių vegetuoja, uždaromos įmonės ir tai lemia labai aukštą nedarbo lygį.

Kaip EK vertina tokį finansinės paramos rezultatą? Kokia EK nuomonė dėl verslo naujosiose ES valstybėse kokybės, efektyvumo, produktyvumo?

Answer

The Commission recognises the difficult economic situation in Lithuania. Unemployment and companies closing are of great concern to us, and it is for this very reason that European cohesion policy exists and the European Regional Development Fund was created. The Commission also recalls that the economic and financial crisis has caused a decline in economic activities in all European counties, not only in the new Member States.

However, the Commission strongly believes that its support to enterprise is effective. In fact, its ex post evaluation of 2000-2006 reports 1 million jobs created across Europe as a result of such support. Moreover, the Commission will soon

publish the last results of the ex post evaluation of enterprise support, showing that our grants significantly boosted investment, production and productivity.

As to our opinion on quality and productivity in the new Member States, our 6th progress report on economic and social cohesion found that in most of these countries (including Lithuania), there is a high quality of human capital – low productivity is entirely due to lack of investment capital and of infrastructure.

Cohesion Policy is spending some EUR 1.5 billion on entrepreneurship, innovation and ICT in Lithuania in the 2007-13 period. The Commission is convinced that by long term investment in innovation, enterprise and economy we can make a difference.

Interrogazione n. 48 dell'on. Iva Zanicchi (H-0217/10)

Oggetto: Modifiche normative conseguenti all'istituzione del Servizio Europeo per l'Azione Esterna

A seguito dell'istituzione del Servizio Europeo per l'Azione Esterna diversi Uffici e Direzioni verranno coinvolte in un generale riassetto delle competenze che, sebbene non ancora chiaramente definito, dovrebbe portare a nuove riallocazioni delle responsabilità nella programmazione, sia a livello geografico che a livello tematico.

Anche la normativa che va a regolare la programmazione di fondi – in special modo quelli legati alla cooperazione allo sviluppo – dovrà essere adattata al già menzionato riassetto. In tale contesto sarebbe auspicabile avere ulteriori delucidazioni riguardo al modo in cui verranno implementati questi cambiamenti.

Ci sarà un processo di creazione di una nuova normativa? Oppure si procederà al semplice aggiornamento di quella esistente?

Answer

The High Representative/Vice President submitted a proposal for a Council Decision establishing the European External Action Service¹⁶ (EEAS) in late March 2010. On April 26, the Council found overall political agreement on the text, which is now being discussed with the European Parliament. In this context, on May 11 the High Representative/Vice President, the Vice President of the Commission for Interinstitutional Relations and Administration, Foreign Minister Moratinos and Mr Brok, Mr Verhofstadt and Mr Gualtieri MEPs held a quadrilateral meeting. Everyone is working hard to ensure an early deal between all three institutions, allowing the new service to be put in place as soon as possible.

Development is central to the EU's external action. It is part of what has given the EU profile on the international stage, where it is a world-leading actor. Its cooperation programmes are a key tool in its bilateral and regional relationships.

This remains the case in the new Lisbon context. The challenge is to make the policy and cooperation even more effective, and to make sure that they are fully part of a coordinated and integrated approach to different countries and regions of the world.

The draft Decision contains specific rules on the division of tasks with respect to the programming of EU external assistance: in line with its responsibility for the coordination of external relations, the EEAS shall contribute to the programming of all geographic instruments (except the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance). The EEAS will in particular have responsibility for preparing the decisions on strategic, multi-annual steps in the programming cycle: country allocations, country/regional strategy papers, national/regional indicative programs.

These draft Commission decisions shall be prepared under the supervision and guidance of the Members of the Commission for Development and for Neighbourhood Policy, and will be jointly proposed by the High Representative/Vice President and the responsible Members of the Commission.

The Commission will remain responsible for the other stages of the cycle and implementation, fully in line with its financial responsibilities under the Treaty. Thematic programmes will be prepared by the Commission under the responsibility of the Member of the Commission for Development.

¹⁶ Council Document 8029/10

Thematic programmes, except the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, as well as the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation, shall be prepared by the appropriate Commission service under the guidance of the Member of the Commission for Development and presented to the College in agreement with the High Representative/Vice President and other relevant Members of the Commission.

One important change as a result of the EEAS proposal is that, unlike in the past, the programming of the cooperation under the Development Cooperation Instrument (cooperation with Asia and Latin America) will be under the supervision of the Member of the Commission for Development. That way, the appropriate development profile will be ensured to all country programmes, whether with, for example, Benin, Bangladesh or Bolivia.

The legal texts of the cooperation instruments will be jointly submitted by the Member of the Commission for Development and the High Representative/Vice President for decision by the Commission.

This effective division of labour will allow for continued delivering to the EU's partners as the world's largest donor, and to attain maximum leverage with its development policy.

Zapytanie nr 49 skierowane przez Konrad Szymański (H-0222/10)

Przedmiot: Dyskryminacja polskich obywateli przez niemiecki urząd ds. dzieci i młodzieży (Jugendamt)

Komisja wielokrotnie zapewniała o świadomości problemów, jakie występują w związku z działalnością niemieckiego urzędu ds. dzieci i młodzieży (Jugendamt) w sprawach transgranicznych.

Jakie działania podjęła Komisja w tej kwestii zgodnie z jej zaangażowaniem w ochronę praw dzieci przed wszelkimi formami dyskryminacji i nierównego traktowania?

W jaki sposób pragnie Komisja wesprzeć wymianę doświadczeń między sędziami niemieckimi i polskimi, by poprawić politykę sądów, zgodnie z pierwotnym zapewnieniem Komisarza Jacques'a Barrota w odpowiedzi z dnia 15 grudnia 2008 r. (E-5951/08)?

Czy Komisja podziela zdanie, iż obowiązek używania języka niemieckiego w przypadku odwiedzin rodzica Polaka może doprowadzić do pogorszenia sytuacji psychicznej dziecka, gwałci jego prawa oraz wolności oraz nosi znamiona dyskryminacji językowej?

Answer

The Commission would like to assure the Honourable Member that the protection of the rights of the child is a priority of its work. The Commission is committed to protect children from any kind of discrimination and unequal treatment in accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Aware of the difficulties which can exist in cross-border situations, and to facilitate the life of European citizens, the objective of the European Union in family law matters is to establish common rules within the European judicial area. Regulation (EC) No 2201/2003¹⁷ lays down common rules concerning jurisdiction of the courts dealing with matrimonial matters and the matters of parental responsibility, and ensures that court judgments taken in family matters are recognised and enforced in the other Member States.

Regulation (EC) No 2201/2003 includes a special mechanism on access rights, by providing that a court order issued in a Member State is recognised automatically and is directly enforceable in the other Member States, so as to ensure that children can maintain their relationships with their two parents after the separation of the couple, in particular when those parents are living in different Member States. The enforcement procedure is however governed by the law of the Member State of enforcement. The courts of the Member State of enforcement may also make practical arrangements for organising the exercise of rights of access.

The problems quoted by the Honourable Member relate to the enforcement of rights of access and thus concern the application of national law by national authorities.

¹⁷ Council Regulation (EC) No 2201/2003 of 27 November 2003 concerning jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in matrimonial matters and the matters of parental responsibility, repealing Regulation (EC) No 1347/2000, OJ L 338, 23.12.2003

In its field of competence, the Commission pursues its efforts in the framework of Regulation (EC) No 2201/2003 to ensure the best application of this Regulation. According to Article 58 of the Regulation, the central authorities, who are in charge in each Member State of its implementation, meet regularly. The latest meeting of central authorities took place on 2 March 2010. In that context, bilateral meetings were organised between central authorities to deal with pending cases. This initiative was judged a success by participants, and is likely to be repeated in future meetings. The Commission also welcomes all initiatives taken by Member States that could permit exchanges and cooperation between Member States in this matter.

The Commission has previously inquired into the issue of alleged discrimination of non-German parents who are required by German authorities to communicate with their children only in German at certain meetings organised and supervised by the Jugendamt.

The German authorities communicated their written observations on these cases to the Committee on Petitions¹⁸, as well as to the Commission. According to these observations the German authorities take into primary consideration the best interests of the child in all actions concerning children. According to the German authorities, it is possible that the right to a visit is exercised under surveillance to protect a child from the risk of abduction, negative influences etc. In these cases, the exclusive usage of German can be exceptionally imposed when additional charges for the German administration would be excessive. The total prohibition of contacts with a parent can also be considered in order to protect the best interests of the child.

Zapytanie nr 50 skierowane przez Ryszard Czarnecki (H-0223/10)

Przedmiot: Przeszczeganie praw kobiet i mniejszości religijnych w Pakistanie

Chrześcijananie z Pakistanu demonstrowali w Europie przeciwko prześladowaniom kobiet i mniejszości w Pakistanie. Jakie działania podejmuje Komisja w celu zapewnienia przestrzegania praw kobiet i mniejszości religijnych w Pakistanie?

Answer

The EU is closely following the situation in regard to rights of women and religious minorities in Pakistan.

The EU has consistently used its political dialogue with Pakistan to raise human rights issues, and there have been a number of diplomatic demarches. This has been complemented from 2007 onwards with the human rights dialogue under the Cooperation Agreement with Pakistan, which allows for regular and two-way dialogue on governance and human rights. The EU has insisted that women's and minority rights be respected.

There have been some achievements towards institutional progress in the human rights field in Pakistan, in particular the establishment of a Ministry for Human Rights, a Ministry for Minorities and moves towards the establishment of an independent National Human Rights Commission. The provision of quotas for women in federal and provincial parliaments from 2002 has contributed to improving the participation of women in democratic institutions in Pakistan.

But Pakistan will need to build further on these efforts to better integrate women and religious minorities into social, economic and political structures. Several laws which discriminate against women continue to exist, which conflict with guarantees given in Pakistan's Constitution and which limit access to justice for women in Pakistan.

The continued application of the blasphemy laws has repeatedly been brought up by the EU with the Government of Pakistan as part of this human rights dialogue. Although in absolute terms, the majority of those accused under the laws belong to the Muslim faith, the blasphemy laws have often been applied against religious minorities, and that false accusations have been used as a tool to settle private disputes or for personal gain.

The last meeting of the Joint Commission between Pakistan and the EU took place on 25 March 2010, preceded by a sub group on governance, human rights and migration on 24 March. The situation of women and religious minorities in Pakistan was raised on that occasion. The EU also intends to raise these questions at the forthcoming Summit with Pakistan on 4 June 2010.

In terms of funding, the EU provides small grants to local NGOs in Pakistan in the field of human rights and democratisation, within the framework of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

¹⁸ Petition 38/2006

In this respect, funds have been committed for funding projects on issues including violence against women and children, access to justice, women's political empowerment, promotion of worker's rights, the role of the media in the democratisation process, trafficking in human beings, sexual harassment at the workplace, juvenile justice reform, minorities' rights, eradication of torture and provision of rehabilitation services for its victims, civil society sensitisation on human rights and capacity building of NGOs working in this field.

Question no 51 by Laima Liucija Andrikiene (H-0226/10)

Subject: Financing of the Aid-for-Trade programmes

The EU made a pledge in 2005 that it would commit €2 billion to various Aid-for-Trade related programmes. Being a rapporteur of the International Trade Committee's opinion on the Development Committee's report 'on progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: mid-term review in preparation of the UN high-level meeting in September 2010', I would like to receive information from the Commission about whether such a target has been met, and would like to know what the specific budget lines are that are used to finance the above-mentioned programmes.

In addition, can the Commission provide information about the overall funds being earmarked for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals? What is the actual procedure for the mobilisation of funds to reach those most in need? Can the Commission provide examples of projects that have been implemented to enhance the trading capacity of the developing countries?

Answer

Trade can be a powerful tool in improving the livelihoods of the poor. Through increased employment and wages and enhanced government tax revenues and social spending, it can help reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This is why the EU and its Member States have committed themselves to increase their Aid for Trade (Aft).

On 15 October 2007, the EU and its Member States adopted the EU Aid for Trade Strategy. A joint EU and EU Member States initiative, this Strategy aims at supporting all developing countries, particularly the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), to better integrate into the rules-based world trading system and to use trade more effectively in the fight against poverty.

The Commission has been monitoring the implementation of the Strategy since its adoption, and it has just released its third monitoring report, covering progress of EU and EU Member States in this area, and analysing Aid for Trade flows in 2008. As this will show, the common efforts of the EU and its Member States in the area of Aid for Trade are now starting to show, both in terms of increased policy activities in the EU and the Member States, and in increased flows of Aid for Trade to developing countries.

In 2005, the EU and its Member States made a commitment to increase their Trade Related Assistance (TRA) – a sub-set of total Aid for Trade - to EUR 2 billion annually by 2010. This year's report shows that they have already hit this target.

The most substantial increases have been reported in wider Aid for Trade - including transport and energy, productive sectors and trade-related adjustment. Last years report showed that total EU and Member States Aid for Trade amounted to EUR 7 billion in 2007. The new figures point to important further increases in 2008, both from the part of the EU and the Member States, up to EUR 10.4 billion in total. The European Union therefore remained the largest provider of Aid for Trade worldwide.

EU Aid for Trade is financed from the European Development Funds national, regional and intra-ACP envelopes, as well as from the EU budget. Except for a small budget line for multilateral Aid for Trade activities, and some specific resources set aside for sugar and banana related adjustment support, funds are generally not earmarked for Aid for Trade at the outset, but allocated to these sectors in collaboration with partner countries, following normal programming procedures. The full 2010 Aid for Trade monitoring report can be found at the following link:

http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/SEC_2010_0419_COM_2010_0159_EN.PDF

The Commission does not operate any direct benchmarking of funds for the achievement of the MDGs. The sector breakdown of our aid to development cooperation is the result of a joint programming exercise carried out with our partner countries. The result reflects the priorities of our partners, as well as the attempt by the Commission to maximise the added value of its intervention and to improve division of labour with EU Member States and other donors. Moreover, results on the MDGs can be attained through various means, notably through budget support, whereby disbursements are linked to

performance indicators in the MDGs sectors (education, health, but also, more in general, poverty reduction). The MDGs can be impacted also through investments in other sectors (water and sanitation, rural development, governance...) and the Commission gives strong attention to these as well.

In order to increase the awareness of our partners and other donors, and to accelerate the path towards the attainment of MDGs, the Commission adopted an Action plan for the MDGs on 21 April 2010 which contains examples of EU-funded projects and can be found at this link:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/10/145&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

Ερώτηση αρ. 52 του κ. Γεωργίου Τούσσα (H-0227/10)

Θέμα: Άρση του "καμποτάζ": οι επιπτώσεις στους εργαζόμενους, στα πλοία και στον τουρισμό

Η εφαρμογή του κανονισμού (ΕΟΚ) αριθ. 3577/92

¹⁹ για την πλήρη απελευθέρωση της παροχής υπηρεσιών στον τομέα των θαλάσσιων μεταφορών, που κατάργησε το «καμποτάζ» στα πλαίσια της πλήρους απελευθέρωσης των αγορών, έχει οδυνηρές συνέπειες για τους εργαζόμενους στα πλοία και τις μικρομεσαίες τουριστικές επιχειρήσεις στην Ελλάδα. Τα επιχειρήματα της ΕΕ και των κυβερνήσεων ΠΑΣΟΚ-ΝΔ, ότι ο ελεύθερος ανταγωνισμός θα ήταν προς όφελος των εργαζομένων, αποδείχτηκαν απάτη. Οι εφοπλιστές εκτίναξαν στα ύψη τις τιμές των εισιτηρίων και τους ναύλους, ενώ οι κρατικές επιδοτήσεις που πήραν στην επταετία 2003-2010 δεκαπλασιάστηκαν. Οι επιχειρηματικοί όμιλοι του κλάδου απέλυσαν χιλιάδες ναυτεργάτες και τους αντικατέστησαν με ξένους, χωρίς συγκροτημένα εργασιακά δικαιώματα και ΣΣΕ. Τώρα, κυβέρνηση ΠΑΣΟΚ και ΕΕ εξαγγέλλουν την πλήρη κατάργηση του «καμποτάζ» για όλα τα κρουαζιερόπλοια, κάτι που θα επιφέρει ακόμα πιο οδυνηρές συνέπειες για τους εργαζόμενους. Χαρακτηριστική περίπτωση είναι το κρουαζιερόπλοιο «ZENITH», με σημαία Μάλτας, που απασχολεί 613 ανασφάλιστους ναυτεργάτες χωρίς κανένα εργασιακό δικαίωμα από 27 διαφορετικές χώρες, κυρίως από τρίτες χώρες, χωρίς μισθολογικά και εργασιακά δικαιώματα και ΣΣΕ, όταν χιλιάδες εργαζόμενοι από την Ελλάδα και άλλα κράτη μέλη της ΕΕ είναι άνεργοι.

Αναγνωρίζει η Επιτροπή ότι η άρση του καμποτάζ για τις κρουαζιέρες ωφελεί τα κέρδη των επιχειρηματικών ομίλων του κλάδου και όχι τους εργαζόμενους;

Answer

A distinction should be made between regular ferry service to islands and cruises. Under the regulation on maritime cabotage, Member States may require that ships ensuring scheduled passenger services to islands are staffed with EU crews, which is the case in Greece. Non-EU seafarers, therefore, are not employed by ferry operators and the worries expressed by the Honourable Member appear not be founded in this respect.

A switch from Greek to non-EU seafarers may have occurred in the case of cruises, where, however, the global number of seafarers employed is much smaller than for ferries.

As for the reference to the Maltese-flagged ship 'Zenith', the information provided is not sufficient to assess whether there is an infringement of EU rules or not. The Honourable Member might be willing to provide more detailed information in a formal complaint to the Commission.

Question no 53 by Pat the Cope Gallagher (H-0228/10)

Subject: EU budgetary support for sport

Following the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, what new budgetary support measures will the Commission introduce for sporting initiatives in Member States?

¹⁹ EE L 364 της 12.12.1992, σ. 7.

Answer

Following the entry into force of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which gives the EU a new competence to support Member States' activities in the field of sport, the Commission intends, during the course of this year, to propose new initiatives that will most likely take the form of a political Communication setting out the framework for EU-level cooperation in the field of sport and a proposal for incentive measures in support of it.

For this purpose, consultations with stakeholders have already started, and will be further intensified during the coming months. After this consultation phase, and at the end of the current three-year period of preparatory actions (2009-2011), the Commission will be in a position to propose new incentive measures that would start in 2012. These new measures would respond to the objectives of the Treaty while respecting the competences of the Member States and the sports movement. They would aim at supporting transnational projects put forward by public bodies or civil-society organisations which foster networks and the exchange of good practice in the field of sport.

The nature of the challenges facing Europe means that coordinated action will give European added-value to national initiatives. The Commission's proposals will respond to the demand for specific measures that support those stakeholders, in particular sports organisations, that are not targeted by existing programmes at European level. The new incentive measures will also help the Union to achieve its objectives in other areas of policy, such as education, health and social inclusion.

The Commission's proposals will have to take account of the existing room for manoeuvre in the current EU financial framework, which is very limited. The abovementioned consultations will help the Commission to set priorities among the areas that might benefit from its first incentive measures.

Question no 54 by Lena Ek (H-0230/10)

Subject: Actions by the Commission for EU measures to control endocrine-disrupting chemicals - companies and safer alternatives to BPA

Retailers and manufacturers of baby products all over the world are moving to replace the chemical bisphenol A (BPA), which is used to make polycarbonate plastic and is known for its hormone-disrupting properties. Its suspected impact is greatest on disorders associated with metabolism, fertility and neural development. Polycarbonate plastic is widely available in tins of food and canned drinks, and in a wide array of plastic products such as mobile phones, computers and medical equipment.

How does the Commission intend to encourage EU companies to be among the first movers in using and developing safer alternatives, while also ensuring the EU's competitiveness?

Answer

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is currently reviewing a study on developmental effects of Bisphenol A and in addition is reviewing emerging literature in the context of Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on materials and articles intended to come into contact with food and Commission Directive 2002/72/EC relating to plastic materials and articles. By the end of May 2010 EFSA will give the European Commission an up-to-date overview on the safety of Bisphenol A complementing the existing opinions.

Once the EFSA opinion is available a decision will be made on the next steps in the framework of the above legislation.

It is a priority to develop safe alternatives for articles within the scope of Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004 and Directive 2002/72/EC which are the main source of exposure for infants and children to Bisphenol A. In this context the Commission has already contacted the plastic industry to urge them to consider the use of alternative plastic food-contact materials to replace Bisphenol A.

Restrictions on chemicals in other consumer products than food contact materials and articles are regulated by Title VIII and Annex XVII of Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH). Currently, REACH does not contain any restrictions on Bisphenol A, as a comprehensive risk assessment performed in the framework of Council Regulation (EEC) No 793/93 on the evaluation and control of the risks of existing substances, which was published in 2003 on the website of the European Chemicals Bureau, and an update to that assessment published in April 2008 concluded that there was no

need to adopt restrictions²⁰. The results of the review on the safety of Bisphenol A which is being undertaken by EFSA may provide further input to be considered in the framework of the processes foreseen by REACH.

On the wider question of substances that disrupt the functioning of the endocrine system, the Commission is carrying out a major study, to be completed by Autumn 2011, bringing together all the latest scientific information. The findings from this study will be taken into account in a review of the existing Community Programme on Endocrine Disruptors.

Question no 55 by Silvana Koch-Mehrin (H-0239/10)

Subject: Budget review

The Budget review mandated by the Council and Parliament in 2006 was launched by the Commission in 2007 (SEC(2007)1188). Parliament and the Council mandated the Commission 'to undertake a full, wide-ranging review covering all aspects of EU spending, including the CAP, and of resources, [...] to report in 2008/2009 [...] preparing the ground for a renewed consensus about the direction of EU spending policies able to meet the challenges of the next decade and beyond'.

This Budget review now seems unlikely to be completed before the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is proposed in the first quarter of 2011, because Commission President Barroso wants prior agreement on the EU 2020 Strategy – scheduled for the June 2010 European Council.

It is crucial to determine Parliament's role in EU 2020 in the context of the Budget review or identify other routes to budget reform ahead of the next MFF. Can the Commission please confirm that there will be a budget review process involving Parliament, as previously set out and in accordance with the Treaty?

Answer

Now that the new College has defined its policy priorities through the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Commission Work Programme, it can be confirmed that the document on the Budget Review is foreseen for the third quarter of 2010.

The Commission has engaged in very fruitful discussions with the Parliament on all budgetary matters, and wishes to continue this in-depth dialogue with the Parliament on the future guidelines of the European budget.

It is fundamental at this stage to be able to develop a consensus between the institutions and with the Member States on the best manner of reflecting political priorities in the European budget. This entails examining the fields in which the European value added is the highest and making choices, especially in this period of severe economic and budgetary difficulties.

The document on the review of the budget foreseen for 2010 will serve as a preparatory phase of the discussions on the future Financial Perspectives. And it will also constitute an occasion to present the underlying principles that should guide the longer-term budget reform.

And the Commission believes the full involvement of the Parliament is not only necessary but fundamental for the success of the exercise.

²⁰ Reports available at : <http://ecb.jrc.ec.europa.eu/esis/index.php?PGM=ora>, EINECS Number 201-245-8