

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3978/00
by Willy De Clercq (ELDR)
to the Commission

Subject: The 'everything but weapons' initiative in favour of LDCs

We have noted the Commission proposal for all products, with the exception of weapons, from 48 least-developed countries (LDCs) to be granted duty-free access to the European market. For some sensitive products (sugar, rice and bananas) however, the Commission lays down a transition period of three years.

We welcome the humanitarian and political concern underlying that initiative. It puts into effect a previous European Union commitment to the World Trade Organisation that was reaffirmed at the end of 1999 in Seattle.

The Commission wishes to implement the proposal by way of a review of Council Regulation 2820/98¹ applying a multiannual scheme of generalised tariff preferences. The procedure followed is based on Article 133 of the Treaty. That procedure includes no provision for consulting the European Parliament.

In view of the potential impact, both socio-economic and on agricultural production, of the proposed measure on the abovementioned sensitive products, we wonder if the Commission is not perhaps being over-ambitious in its planning. Might it not be that the need to monitor the implementation of regulatory provisions is being underestimated? Would it not therefore be appropriate for the opinions of the Council of Agriculture Ministers and the European Parliament to be sought?

We have also noted the Commission proposal for renewing the common organisation of the market in sugar. The procedure used there lays down compulsory consultation of the European Parliament. Should the Commission initiative in favour of LDCs not also be subject to a procedure commensurate with that used for the Commission proposal for a new common organisation of the market in sugar?

¹ OJ L 357, 30.12.1998, p. 1