

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2272/02  
by Pere Esteve (ELDR)  
to the Council

Subject: Failure by the Council to reply to priority questions within the set time limits

My priority written question P-0296/02<sup>1</sup> on the role of the Spanish Presidency in the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva (18 March to 26 April 2002) was sent to the Council on 30 January 2002 and was registered on 5 February 2002. I received a reply to that question on 25 June 2002, by which date the session of the Commission on Human Rights had ended two months previously, and the Spanish Presidency only had five days left to run.

Under Rule 44(5) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, replies must be given to priority questions within three weeks of their being registered at the Council, which would take us to 26 February 2002 at the latest.

In the Council's joint answer to written questions E-1299/00, E-1300/00 and P-1541/00<sup>2</sup> dated 10 July 2000, the Council stated that it was not bound by the deadlines set in the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Nevertheless, it stressed that with a view to better collaboration with the European Parliament in this area, it had acted swiftly to introduce a series of internal measures enabling it to reply to written questions within two months.

In the case in point, the answer to the priority question which I had tabled came almost five months after it had been registered, at a time when that answer was inapplicable, and therefore of no use, as the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights had ended and the Spanish Presidency was nearly over.

Is the Council aware of the difficulties that failure to observe the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure create? Will the Council take genuinely effective measures to eliminate these delays, which are more frequent and much longer than is the case with replies from the Commission?

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 46 E, 13.2.2001, p. 167.