

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3121/03  
by Nelly Maes (Verts/ALE)  
to the Council

Subject:           Reduction of VAT on CDs and cassettes

At the recent Ecofin Council in Luxembourg 7 October 2003, Commissioner Bolkestein announced that the Commission was against any reduction of VAT on audio recording media and CDs as this might create distortions of competition. A minority of members of the Council were in favour of lower rates.

Against the background of the current discussions in Unesco concerning the creation of an international legal instrument to safeguard cultural diversity, will the Council examine whether a reduction of VAT is feasible and desirable for CDs by new artists and/or artists singing in local or regional languages and/or home-grown musicians (irrespective of whether or not they sing in their own language) and/or for certain genres of music? At the opening of the recent Unesco conference, President Ciampi said that Italy advocates the adoption of a legal instrument on cultural diversity, guaranteeing every country the protection of its own historical identity and the uniqueness of its physical and intangible cultural heritage.

Is the Council prepared to authorise some reduced VAT rates for CDs with the specific aim of safeguarding cultural diversity?

If so, what steps will the Council take to bring this about in the near future?

If not, what measures does the Council consider have higher priority in safeguarding cultural diversity?