

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0020/04

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to the Commission

Subject: Bridge over the Straits of Messina

In an interview that appeared in *Il sole 24 ore* on 17 December 2003 the Italian Minister for Infrastructure Pietro Lunardi revealed that European Commissioner Loyola de Palacio had said that the Commission was prepared to fund the construction of a bridge over the Straits of Messina.

If this report is correct, is the European Commission sure that such a bridge would satisfy all the necessary requirements to be eligible for Community funding?

In particular, does the Commission not think that it would be more viable, not least in economic and environmental terms, to support an alternative solution to a bridge over the Straits such as a marine highway linking Sicily with the mainland?

Does the European Commission not consider that, contrary to the statements made by the Berlusconi government, this project is too costly to attract private investors and would ultimately impose a severe burden on the Italian treasury?

Does the Commission not consider that Straits of Messina bridge should be seen as a private project of trans-European interest as defined by the relevant Commission proposal and the Van Miert report?

Finally, has the Commission received the requisite guarantees from the Italian government as to the environmental sustainability of the project?