

WRITTEN QUESTION E-5471/07  
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to the Commission

Subject: Using the margins of Heading 2: Preservation and Management of Natural Resources

On Wednesday, 19 September, the European Commission adopted two communications concerning the Galileo Programme and the revision of the multiannual financial framework.

In order to have sufficient scope to be able to finance Galileo to the tune of 2 409 million euros, the Commission proposes to make use, inter alia, of the margins of Heading 2: Preservation and Management of Natural Resources available in 2007 and 2008.

As the Commission explains, 'There are sizeable margins, of 2.1 and 2.5 billion euros respectively, in Heading 2 of the current 2007 budget and the Preliminary Draft Budget (PDB) for 2008. These margins result almost entirely from the foreseeable implementation within the 'market related expenditure and direct payments' subceiling.'

The Commission considers that this way of setting off the raising of one ceiling by the lowering of another will have no effect on farmers, among others. It therefore suggests 'reducing the annual commitment appropriation ceilings in Heading 2 by 1 689 million euros in 2007 and by 500 million euros in 2008.'

Given the current situation of the rising price of agricultural raw materials in world markets, export refunds for European agricultural products are certainly much lower than anticipated for 2007 and, in all probability, 2008. It is also true that Galileo is a project of major European importance in economic, technological and social terms.

However, it is clear that, at the same time, there is a lack of funds for other preservation and natural resources management programmes in Heading 2. We should not forget that the figure proposed by the Commission for the rural development budget has been reduced by 20 billion euros – which is clearly insufficient – and that the continuation of action undertaken under the Natura 2000 network is under threat.

Could the Commission not, instead, propose that the available margins in Heading 2 which result from funding not being implemented within the 'market related expenditure and direct payments' subceiling should remain within the same heading and be allocated to rural development and the preservation of the environment?