

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0662/09
by Kinga Gál (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Proper use of Schengen Fund in Hungary

Public opinion in Hungary is following the 'water cannon affair' with great interest and is keen to know the truth in this matter without delay. Throughout the years 2006, 2007 and 2008, the Hungarian government maintained that it had purchased water cannons from the Schengen Fund, on the basis of a public procurement procedure which also appeared in the Public Procurement Bulletin. On 22 October 2007 the police used the new water cannons to disperse crowds in the streets of Budapest.

However, in December 2008, Minister of Justice and Law Enforcement Tibor Draskovics announced that the purchase was not accounted for from the Schengen Fund. On 13 January 2009, Commissioner Jacques Barrot announced that the water cannons had not been purchased from the Schengen Fund.

On 14 January 2009 the State Secretary at the Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement announced that, starting from spring 2008, the Hungarian Government was accounting for the purchase of water cannons from Hungary's share of the Schengen Fund.

I would like to ask if the Commission investigated which fund the payments were made from and whether the preliminary information was relevant for the execution of the public procurement.

If, as a result of the investigation procedure, the Government still considers its statements and invoices, which are inconsistent with the above, to be relevant, how can it reconcile this with the January 2009 announcement of the Government spokesman that the crowd dispersal equipment was purchased from Hungary's share of the Schengen Fund? Has the Commission investigated this matter in order to find out the truth in the matter of the water cannons?

Public opinion has a right to see this matter resolved as soon as possible. I therefore think it is important that the journalists following it are given detailed answers to their questions by the Commission.