

ORAL QUESTION H-0573/03

for Question Time at the part-session in October 2003

pursuant to Rule 43 of the Rules of Procedure

by Ozan Ceyhun

to the Commission

Subject: Travel through the Republic of Bulgaria by EU citizens

Following my questions to the Commission concerning travel through Bulgaria and the information I sent regarding events in September 2001, I myself travelled along the main transit routes in Bulgaria and Serbia and Montenegro from 6 to 8 September, where I was able to confirm that the complaints passed on to me were well-founded.

I learnt from transit travellers that foreigners are often asked to pay EUR 5 to customs officials. When travellers do not comply with this demand, officials threaten to keep their vehicles waiting at the border for a long time. I was able to see for myself how police and customs officials imposed arbitrary and unjustified fines and charges of between EUR 70 and 200 per vehicle after carrying out unnecessary checks. This behaviour is in stark contravention of the rules and procedures which the EU expects applicant countries to observe.

Can the Commission clarify this situation and say what action it has taken to address the problem?

Tabled: 24.09.2003

de