

ORAL QUESTION H-0142/05
for Question Time at the part-session in March 2005
pursuant to Rule 109 of the Rules of Procedure
by Inés Ayala Sender
to the Commission

Subject: Closure of the Spanish-French border to large vehicles at the Somport tunnel

The Commission was informed in a letter of 10 February 2005 that as of 9 February 2005, in the wake of a landslide affecting the RN-134 at Vallée d'Aspe (European axis E-07), vehicles of over 3.5 tonnes are not being allowed to use the Somport tunnel between Spain and France. This tunnel is the only crossing-point for public passenger and goods transport in a 200-km stretch of the Pyrenees. According to the French authorities, it will be three months before transit is re-established. This is a serious obstruction of the principle of the free movement of people and goods, and is creating substantial costs which will make competition on a basis of equal conditions more difficult. The impact on the already fragile regional economies on both sides of the border is at present enormous: lorries and buses have to make huge detours, and the ski resorts and holiday camps, especially on the French side, are standing empty.

What action is the Commission taking to ensure that, in the light of past experiences, the French authorities accelerate their work to the maximum, thus avoiding even greater disturbance to the local economies and ensuring freedom of movement? Does the Commission not believe that in view of imponderables such as this it is essential, as a matter of urgency, to implement the part of TEN Project 16 that concerns the central crossing of the Pyrenees (Vignemale passage)?

Tabled: 24.02.2005
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