

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0097/02  
pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure  
by Luciano Caveri, on behalf of the ELDR Group  
to the Commission

Subject: Sustainable development in mountain regions

2002 was the International Year of Mountains and the Commission appropriately held a seminar on this topic in October 2002 entitled 'EU policies and the mountain'. That meeting served to review the situation, with President Prodi himself making a speech. In addition, the subject of mountain areas was addressed in paragraph 40 of the final document adopted at the Johannesburg summit on sustainable development.

A number of fundamental questions remain for European mountain areas, which can be summed up as follows:

- a) The word 'mountain' does not appear in the Treaties. What is the Commission's view of its possible insertion?
- b) This insertion and a possible framework directive should be linked to a common classification of mountain areas in Europe. What stage has been reached in the study being carried out by DG Regio to this effect?
- c) Virtually all European mountain areas currently fall within areas covered by regional policy and specific measures for farming as part of the CAP. Is there any prospect of a specific fund for areas facing geographical or natural handicaps, such as mountain areas, in the next programming period 2007-2013, and will the new CAP take account of mountain agriculture?
- d) The Commission has two key responsibilities. The first concerns competition rules from the point of view of state aid, and the second concerns minimum criteria for services of general interest (such as postal services, telecommunications and energy networks). Is it reasonable to assume that account should be taken of the specific features of mountain areas when setting out these policies?
- e) Finally, there is the crucial matter of the Alpine Convention, where the Commission has not played a constant or active part despite EU ratification of the Convention. What protocols will be signed and ratified in the future and, in particular, what timescale is envisaged for ratification of the Transport Protocol, which could provide the legal basis for specific measures to regulate the flow of heavy goods vehicles in an Alpine region which is in danger of being paralysed and suffocated? What action might be taken to boost the problematic funding of the two key rail tunnels, the Brenner and the Turin-Lyon tunnels?

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Forwarded: 10.12.2002

Deadline for reply: 17.12.2002