

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0066/03

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure

by Giuseppe Gargani, Willi Rothley, Klaus-Heiner Lehne and Toine Manders, on behalf of the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market
to the Commission

Subject: German deposit system

On 1 January 2003, the Federal Republic of Germany introduced for environmental reasons a deposit system on all non-reusable containers for beer, carbonated soft drinks and waters.

As a result, drinks importers from the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria almost completely lost their market in Germany. Mineral water importers from France, Luxembourg and Italy lost new products and new retail segments (convenience market) because of the deposit. Disastrous economic consequences for the relevant sector are the result. The consequences for the producers of cans and one-way glass bottles and its components are even worse. Production facilities in Sweden, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and France have been closed temporarily or permanently. More than € 300 million of investments in new facilities and jobs have been withdrawn. About a 1 000 people have already lost employment and more than 5 000 people are facing dismissal. According to independent calculations, more than 15 000 jobs in the European Union are at stake.

Consumers are also victims of this system because, so far, around four hundred million euros of paid deposits have not been refunded to the consumer.

The German Federal Government has stated in reply to the Commission's previous questions that a national collection and settlement system will be operational in Germany by 1 October 2003 with the result that the existing import blockade for non-reusable containers would automatically disappear.

As upon expiry of this deadline the German government has failed to come forward with any appropriate measures for an efficient coordinated nation-wide deposit system and the European Commission, notwithstanding the likely loss of 15 000 jobs and previous measures taken in a similar case against Denmark, has failed to take any concrete action, it appears desirable and necessary that the Commission replies to the following questions before Parliament:

1. Is the European Commission aware of the above-mentioned issue?
2. Is the Commission willing to immediately initiate infringement proceedings against the German government, and to force the German government to suspend the deposit system for one-way packages introduced on 1 January 2003, until a system for the collection of one-way packaging and the clearing of deposits has been put in place which covers all wholesale and retail distribution channels?
3. Is the Commission willing to check before the start of the system as mentioned under 2 whether all requirements under EU-law are met in order to prevent possible new trade barriers? Can the Commission report its findings to the European Parliament before the system becomes operational?

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Forwarded: 13.10.2003

Deadline for reply: 20.10.2003