

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0008/04  
pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure  
by Philippe Herzog, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group  
to the Commission

Subject: European Commission's strategy on Services of General Interest (SGI)

Following the adoption by the European Parliament on 14 January 2004 of Resolution P5\_TA(2004)0018 on Services of General Interest, the Commission must announce what proposals it intends to make in this area. At the Brussels mini-session of 28 January 2004 Commissioner Mario Monti confirmed that the Commission is currently discussing a 'package' (communication, decision, framework) which would govern the financial compensation pertaining to SGIs and interpret the rules on State aid. This package, which takes no account of either the consultation on the Green Paper or the European Parliament resolution, could be put to the College of Commissioners in February. The adoption of such a package, which carries the risk that the measures in force will become more stringent, with increased insecurity for SGI providers, would be unwelcome and, to put it baldly, unacceptable. It is the duty of the Commission first to draw the political conclusions from the wide-ranging consultation that followed the Green Paper. These conclusions must be incorporated fully, bearing in mind Parliament's repeated formal calls for a codecisional legal framework, and the arrangements and decisions on compensation. Separate conclusions on compensation would be both unlawful and premature; what we in fact need is a considered, balanced text which respects the freedom of choice and administration of public entities. For these reasons the Commission must answer the following questions:

Exactly what link is the Commission making between the conclusions of the Green Paper (White Paper on SGIs) and the 'package' on financial compensation?

In particular, will it conscientiously examine these conclusions in the light of the comments that emerged from the public consultation before presenting any package of specific proposals on compensation?

How does it intend to take account of the European Parliament's resolution on SIGs of 14 January 2004?

What, taken overall, is its exact timetable?

Tabled: 04.02.2004

Forwarded: 06.02.2004

Deadline for reply: 13.02.2004