

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0062/00
by Evelyne Gebhardt (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Increase in air fares

1. Is the European Commission aware that the major European airlines, acting in unison, have terminated their current agency contracts with travel agencies and offered them new contracts involving lower agency fees, those fees being in every case identical?
2. Is it also aware that the travel agencies have offset the consequent reduction in their revenue by levying a new 'transaction fee' on travellers who, being final consumers, are therefore unable to avoid a hidden and mutually agreed increase in air fares?
3. Does the Commission share my view that, although travellers may circumvent this increase in air fares by booking with the airlines directly, they must, if they do so, put up with poorer service and accept that a large number of jobs in travel agencies may be lost?
4. Does the European Commission consider that such price agreements, the cost of which is ultimately paid by the final consumer and which jeopardise the job security of people working in travel agencies, are compatible with current European law? When, and how, will the Commission intervene if there has been a breach of Community law or if even the slightest whiff of suspicion exists that Community law has been breached?