

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0272/01
by Christian von Boetticher (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Electronic postage stamps and compliance with EU data-protection directives

The German post office service, Deutsche Post AG, and the Netherlands and Italian Post Offices are planning to introduce electronic postage stamps, with stamps being downloaded directly from the Internet and printed on the envelopes. To that end, however, specific data concerning the user, such as sender, addressee, cost of postage, creation date, etc. would have to be stored. Further conclusions could then be drawn from such data (frequency of postal traffic with certain addresses and, subsequently, private information such as membership of a trade union, name and address of general practitioner, etc.).

Does the Commission take the view that these plans comply with the EU directives on the protection of natural persons when personal data is being processed – especially the issues of the storage of data which is not exclusively required for the forwarding of items by post and of security against counterfeiting? Does it further take the view that it is possible to preclude the danger of trade in the addresses thus acquired? Finally, does it take the view that a system which does not require the storage of data of this nature is preferable to the systems developed by the postal services?