

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2286/03

by Ozan Ceyhun (PSE)

to the Commission

Subject: Customs regulations at the Serbia and Montenegro (former Yugoslavia) border

I have received a fax from the Consul-General of the Republic of Turkey in Frankfurt drawing attention to border and entry regulations in Serbia and Montenegro (former Yugoslavia). This information relates to Turkish citizens legally resident in the Union and EU citizens of Turkish extraction. I subsequently read an article on the subject in the Turkish newspaper 'Millyet'. The newspaper reported that, under these regulations, foreign citizens travelling to Serbia and Montenegro are required to declare the amount of foreign currency they are carrying to the customs office if that amount exceeds EUR 2000. Otherwise, the authorities of Serbia and Montenegro withhold the amount in excess of EUR 2000 on their departure from the country. Around EUR 1 million have been withheld in this way from more than 190 Turkish citizens who were travelling to Turkey over land through Serbia and Montenegro. Refunding the money is reported to take between two and five years, owing to the lengthy bureaucratic and legal procedures. Oral declarations on sums of money exceeding EUR 2000 are not accepted. It is compulsory to fill out written declaration forms.

Does the Commission have any information regarding this problem? We would request the Commission's assistance in finding a solution. What steps is the Commission prepared to take in order to resolve this problem?