

2666/2000<sup>(1)</sup>). In view of the legitimate concerns of the European public over the 'Balkans syndrome', why should this agency not be given the additional task of combining environmental rehabilitation with the simultaneous provision of information and assistance to local residents?

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 306, 7.12.2000, p. 1.

**Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission**

(30 March 2001)

As the Honourable Member is aware, the investigation of the alleged 'Balkans syndrome' is still ongoing in various fora. UNEP and the Community's Article 31 Committee have concluded that there is no immediate environmental or health risk. Should it be decided, to implement specific Community environmental rehabilitation programmes in this regard, it is most probable that the European Agency for Reconstruction would be responsible for the implementation of such Community programmes and associated information tasks. However, the primary responsibility for providing information to local residents as regards potential issues of public health and environment lies with the governments of the States concerned. Environmental aspects are, wherever relevant, an integral part, where relevant, of programmes implemented by the Agency, in line with Article 2(2)(d) of Council Regulation (EC) No 2666/2000 of 5 December 2000 on assistance for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, repealing Regulation (EC) No 1628/96 and amending Regulations (EEC) No 3906/89 and (EEC) No 1360/90 and Decisions 97/256/EC and 1999/311/EC.

(2001/C 235 E/144)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0154/01**

**by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission**

(31 January 2001)

*Subject:* Orderly operation of the Agency for the Reconstruction of the Balkans

The Agency for the Reconstruction of the Balkans has extended its activities to Serbia and Montenegro. Branches need to be set up in Podgorica and Belgrade so that it can carry out its duties. Can the Commission provide information on the staffing of these services? How will staff be hired in these two areas, and how will transparency be ensured?

Why did the Commission suggest that for 2001 the number of meetings of the governing board of the committee referred to in Article 10 of Regulation 2666/2000<sup>(1)</sup> be reduced from 12 to 4, at a time when the volume of work is increasing due to the extension of the committee's responsibilities to the above areas?

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 306, 7.12.2000, p. 1.

**Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission**

(23 March 2001)

As the Honourable Member is aware, the European Agency for Reconstruction is an autonomous agency with full independence in the management of its administrative functions. As far as the set up of its operational centres in Belgrade and Podgorica is concerned, the Agency is currently in the process of hiring the best qualified professionals to implement the Community assistance programmes in the region. Most of the posts for these two offices have been published in the international press and on the websites of the Commission and the Agency.

The Director of the European Agency for Reconstruction regularly informs the Governing Board of the Agency, composed of the Commission and the representatives of the Member States, of the staffing levels

and recruitment procedures of the Agency. The latest information on recruitment progress was provided by the Director at the meeting of the Governing Board that took place in Thessaloniki on 15 December 2000, which approved a new Staffing Table (33 international and 61 local staff for Belgrade, and 7 international and 10 local staff for Podgorica).

The provisions of Article 10 of Council Regulation (EC) No 2666/2000 of 5 December 2000 on assistance for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, repealing Regulation (EC) No 1628/96 and amending Regulations (EEC) No 3906/89 and (EEC) No 1360/90 and Decisions 97/256/EC and 1999/311/EC, do not apply to the Governing Board of the Agency but to the Management Committee established under the CARDS programme. As far as the number of meetings of the Governing Board is concerned, the Commission has followed the principles laid down in Article 4(9) of the Council Regulation No 2667/2000 on the European Agency for Reconstruction<sup>(1)</sup> which stipulates that the governing board shall be convened by the Chairman whenever necessary and at least once every three months. This Regulation was adopted by the Council, which agreed with the Commission that it would be more operationally efficient for the Board to plan to meet every 3 months, instead of every 4 weeks.

However, as the Commission chairs the Governing Board of the Agency, it may, if workload or other reasons make it necessary, propose additional meetings or meetings of longer duration. Meetings can also be convened at the request of the Agency's Director or at least a simple majority of its members.

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(<sup>1</sup>) OJ L 306, 7.12.2000.

(2001/C 235 E/145)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0158/01**

**by Jorge Hernández Mollar (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(31 January 2001)

*Subject:* Delay in the provision of ERDF funds to Malaga University

Some of the projects planned for the near future by the current governing body of Malaga University in Spain have been on hold since last spring, as they await the resources they need from ERDF funds.

This is the situation as set out to Malaga University's teaching staff by its vice-chancellor. The university has requested ESP 2 billion from ERDF funds over the next two years, which would be spent on its medical research centre, its skills centre at the Andalusia Technology Park, communications networks and the purchase of equipment for its research departments.

Will the Commission give the reason for the delay in the provision of ERDF funds to Malaga University cited by its vice-chancellor, and say how the difficulties preventing those funds from being used for the aforementioned purposes could be overcome?

**Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission**

(15 March 2001)

Part-financing from the Structural Funds for projects located in Andalusia is dependent on approval by the Commission first of the Community support framework (CSF) for the Spanish Objective 1 regions and then of the integrated operational programme (OP) for Andalusia and of the other multiregional programmes likely to provide assistance in this region, in particular that devoted to research, development and innovation. The national authorities have then to draw up the programme complement for approval by the Monitoring Committee for the various items of assistance.