

2. At its meeting of 1 December 1999, the Commission adopted the report <sup>(1)</sup> in order to allow the European Council in Helsinki to deal with this issue.

3. The Commission has already adopted its contribution <sup>(2)</sup> for the purposes of the intergovernmental conference. It was decided not to include an article on sport.

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<sup>(1)</sup> COM(1999) 644 final.

<sup>(2)</sup> COM(1999) 592 final.

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(2000/C 219 E/203)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-2425/99**

**by Ioannis Souladakis (PSE) to the Council**

(16 December 1999)

*Subject:* Protection of European companies in Kosovo

In reply to my oral question H-0608/99 <sup>(1)</sup> of 16 November 1999 to the Commission concerning protection of the interests of European Union companies in Kosovo, Commissioner Patten indicated that he had no information concerning pressure being brought to bear or threats being made against European companies in Kosovo. To fill the gaps in his information concerning the subject, I personally gave him a copy of correspondence between the 'Mytilinaios' company and Mr Kouchner and Mr Dixon. I also asked him to investigate the current situation regarding the functioning of telecommunications in Kosovo in order to obtain a full picture.

Effective communications between the European Parliament and the Commission will help to protect the interests of the EU wherever they may be under threat. The sovereign rights of European companies are currently what is at stake in Kosovo. The Greek Telecommunications Organisation (OTE) and the Italian STET International, which have respectively a 20 % and 29 % holding in Srbija Telekom, are suffering losses as a result of non-payment of fees to Srbija Telekom for use of telecommunications services in Kosovo, while, at the same time, the UCK and its covert supporters are insisting on the restoration by the two companies of the damaged network and its subsequent nationalisation by Albania, in violation of international agreements. However the most serious breach of the law occurred recently when a 'special committee' made up of UN representatives and Kosovar Albanians quite illegally transferred mobile telephony rights to the French company Alcatel. These rights are the exclusive property of the OTE and STET International, in accordance with international agreements currently in force, which state that Kosovo is part of the key area in which these two companies are entitled to operate and export their profits.

What action will the Council take to protect the legitimate rights of European companies in Kosovo which at this moment are under threat by illegal networks in which even UN officials are starting to be involved, contrary to their instructions regarding observance of the law in this area?

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<sup>(1)</sup> Debates of the European Parliament (November 1999).

**Reply**

(14 February 2000)

So far, the Council has not been approached by any of the firms mentioned in the Honorable Member's question. The Council assumes that these firms have taken up the issues raised by the Honorable Member directly with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Country in which their headquarters is established and/or with the UN Secretary General Special Representative for Kosovo, Mr Bernard Kouchner.

The Council remains firmly attached to establishing a viable and functioning market economy in Kosovo and the EU has taken on a special responsibility in this regard, since UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, entrusted the management of UNMIK's pillar IV (responsible for the area of reconstruction and economic development) to the European Union.

Furthermore, the General Affairs Council has repeatedly called for intensified efforts by the Kosovars and the international presence to fight against organized crime in Kosovo. In this context, the Council welcomed, in its meeting on 6 December, the intention of the Commission to include the fight against organized crime in its programming for assistance to Kosovo in the year 2000 and invited member States to identify appropriate assistance in this field.

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(2000/C 219 E/204)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-2432/99**

**by Michl Ebner (PPE-DE) to the Commission**

(16 December 1999)

*Subject:* Reintroduction of wolves, bears and lynx

Will the Commission say whether there are any specific measures in progress (co-financed or not) to reintroduce wolves, bears and lynx? Have any measures been co-financed in the past for this purpose and are there any plans to do so in the near future?

**Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission**

(11 January 2000)

Many projects have been financed under the financial instrument LIFE-Nature and its predecessors since 1988 aiming either directly or indirectly at the conservation of wolf, brown bear and lynx.

In particular the wolf has been one of the species targeted in 21 projects, the lynx in 14 and the brown bear in 17.

These projects certainly represent the major Community investment for the protection of these species.

Further to that, Member States may have taken similar or complementary initiatives in the framework of other Community funds.

Other projects for the conservation of these species may be financed in the future under LIFE III, provided good quality projects are presented for this purpose.

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(2000/C 219 E/205)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-2436/99**

**by Diana Wallis (ELDR) to the Commission**

(16 December 1999)

*Subject:* Data-Protection Directive

Is the Commission aware that, owing to disparities in implementation at national level of the 1995 EU Data-Protection Directive, national data-protection laws are prejudicing cross-border trade and that this will have a considerable impact on the development of e-commerce within the EU?

One example is the extension of the scope of data-protection laws to cover not only personal data, as envisaged by the Directive, but also the processing of corporate data.

Does the Commission plan any action to limit the damage to the principle of the internal market caused by excessive 'gold-plating' of the Directive on its transposition by the Member States?