

E-5002/05 10 January 2006

WRITTEN QUESTION by Christoph Konrad (PPE-DE) to the Commission

Subject: Introduction of an EU SOS symbol for emergencies Answer(s)

In recent years the Commission has demonstrated, through numerous initiatives, its commitment to the important area of civil protection and the fight against terrorism. However, there is to date no mandatory uniform symbol used throughout the EU for recognising emergencies.

How does the Commission view the proposal to introduce such an emergency rescue symbol for all EU citizens (and if necessary worldwide) in order to facilitate and speed up recognition of emergencies and accidents?

Is the Commission aware that Germany already has, in the shape of the SOS rescue cross, an emergency symbol internationally registered as a trademark? Does the Commission know of similar symbols in other EU countries?

Does the Commission envisage the possibility of introducing the SOS rescue cross on a mandatory basis as an EU-wide emergency symbol? If so, what precisely would this look like? If not, why not?

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Answer given by Mr Frattini on behalf of the Commission

In cooperation with Member States, the Commission is taking action to improve the possibilities for assistance in cases of emergency. The Civil Protection Unit in the Directorate-General for Environment runs different projects and activities to reinforce the assistance provided. In particular, the Commission regularly publishes calls for proposals on civil protection issues. A list of the most recent projects carried out under these calls can be found at the following website:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/civil/prote/cp03_2004_en.htm

The Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection undertakes work to improve rapid response to health threats. It is implementing, together with Member States, a specific programme on cooperation in preparedness and response to biological and chemical agent attacks (health security).

So far, the Commission did not receive notification of implementation of the SOS rescue cross as an official emergency rescue symbol in Member States.

Implementation of the SOS rescue cross is the national competence of Member States. In the case where the authorities of Member States ask the Commission to support an EU-wide implementation of an emergency symbol, the Commission would contribute towards it.