

- Strasbourg OJ edition

ANNEX - QUESTIONS TO THE COMMISSION

Question no 48 by Antonios Trakatellis (H-0150/05) 10 March 2005

Subject: Civil protection and cooperation as part of Euro-Mediterranean partnership arrangements H-0150/05

Since 2001 a civil protection mechanism for the rendering of assistance⁽¹⁾ in the 25 Member States, Bulgaria, Romania, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway has been in operation. At a meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) I recommended the introduction of such cooperation arrangements and the creation of an early warning system in the Mediterranean as part of the Barcelona process. It was decided that the question of natural disasters and civil protection would be placed on the agenda of the EMPA plenary of 12-15 March 2005 in Cairo.

Does the Commission support my recommendation and what follow-up measures does it intend to take in response to potential dangers in the Mediterranean area with a view to reassuring the public and assessing existing preventive mechanisms, the state of readiness for emergencies and the standard of public information and participation, so that all relevant measures can be implemented as part of Euro-Mediterranean partnership arrangements? What is its assessment of the civil protection pilot project being funded under the MEDA programme?

(EN) The issue raised by the Honourable Member was already discussed on the 9th February within an Ad Hoc group in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. This group had asked for technical expertise in order to take account of the characteristics of the Mediterranean Sea.

During the presentation by experts from Italy and Germany, it was noted that the Mediterranean lacked an early warning system for tsunamis and that the increase of the population residing in the coastal zones was an additional matter of concern.

It was also underlined that, due to the relatively small stretch of the Mediterranean, an early warning of a few minutes duration was necessary.

The need to set up an early warning centre and to ensure the efficiency of the transmission channels of information before mobilising the national systems of civil protection was recognised.

The Commission, following the mandate of the European Council of 31 January 2005, in coordination with the Common Research Centre, is aiming at identifying the most appropriate system. At this stage, research is focusing on the global dimension in response to the request made in the framework of the United Nations.

Subsequently, the sub regional dimension, in particular the Mediterranean and its adjacent seas, will be examined.

The Commission will outline a more precise position at the next General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) in April.

With regard to the EUROMED “Bridge Project”, which aims at creating a Euro Mediterranean System of Mitigation and Management of Natural and Man made disasters and covers the period 2005/2007, the Commission is satisfied with its implementation. The operational Committee of this project, chaired by France and Algeria, with the participation of the Commission, will meet in Marseille in order to organise the future activities of the Bridge Project. These activities include items such as technical and operational assistance, reinforcing the sub regional cooperation between the Southern countries, civil protection relief simulation, training courses and exchange of experts.

(1) Council Decision 2001/792/EC, OJ L 297, 15.11.2001.