

A recent independent study, conducted under the authority of Professor Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, winner of the Nobel Prize of Physics showed that the amount of nickel released from the EUR 1 and EUR 2 coins is significantly lower than from the national coins used prior to the introduction of the euro.

(2003/C 242 E/070)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3620/02
by Wolfgang Ilgenfritz (NI) to the Commission

(9 December 2002)

Subject: Position of Jersey in the EU

Is Jersey a member of the European Union?

Do businesspeople in Jersey have a sales tax identification number for tax-free purchases in the European Union?

If Jersey has a special status in the EU, the Commission is asked to forward the relevant provisions.

Answer given by Mr Prodi on behalf of the Commission

(14 January 2003)

Jersey, a British Crown dependency, is part of the Union in so far as the United Kingdom is responsible for its external relations. It does, however, have a special status. Pursuant to Article 26(3) and Article 27(d) of the Act concerning the conditions of accession to the Communities of the Kingdom of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a new paragraph was added to Article 299 of the EC Treaty and Article 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community. The paragraph reads as follows:

This Treaty shall apply to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man only to the extent necessary to ensure the implementation of the arrangements for those islands set out in the Treaty concerning the accession of new Member States to the European Economic Community and the to European Atomic Energy Community signed on 22 January 1972.

The special arrangements laid down for the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are set out in Protocol No 3 attached to the Act of Accession, of which, under Article 158 of the Act, they form an integral part.

As regards VAT, Jersey does not belong to the tax territory as defined in Article 3(2) of the Sixth VAT Directive⁽¹⁾. Firms in Jersey do not therefore have an individual Union VAT identification number. However, deliveries of goods from or to the Channel Islands are treated as exports and are exempt from VAT as set out in Article 33a of that Directive.

⁽¹⁾ 77/388/EEC: Sixth Council Directive of 17 May 1997 on the harmonisation of the laws of the Member States relating to turnover taxes — Common system of value added tax; uniform basis of assessment — OJ L 145, 13.6.1977.

(2003/C 242 E/071)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3661/02
by Rosa Miguélez Ramos (PSE) to the Commission

(18 December 2002)

Subject: Black tide in Galicia: Natura 2000 network

The pollution caused by the accident involving the Prestige and its subsequent sinking has already seriously affected ten natural sites put forward as 'sites of Community interest' by the Galician administration and is threatening a further six. All of them form part of the Natura 2000 European network.

The sites already affected are Betanzos-Mandeo, in the Betanzos estuary; Carnota-Monte Pindo; Corrubedo; Costa Ártabra; Costa da Morte; Costa de Dexo; Estaca de Bares; Monte and Lagoa de Louro; Río Xubía-O Castro and Río Anllons.

The sites at serious risk are Ría de Ortigueira-Mera, Ría de Foz-Masma, Río Eo, Río Ouro, and Esteiro do Tambre.

What environmental measures will the Commission take to regenerate these areas, which are of high ecological value?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission

(26 February 2003)

The Honourable Member has expressed her concern in relation to the accident caused by the Prestige and its impact on the Natura 2000 network in Galicia, Spain. The incident poses a serious threat to marine wildlife and coastal habitats in Galicia.

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora⁽¹⁾ is the main Community instrument for safeguarding European bio-diversity. The preservation, protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, including the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, are essential objectives of general interest for the Community. The main instrument to reach these goals is the Natura 2000 network of protected areas. Therefore, any site included in the Natura 2000 network has to be considered as of high ecological value. Each Member State is responsible for identification, designation and conservation of the sites, which are important for the protection of the species and habitats of Community interest.

In the provisions of the aforementioned Directive, it is stated that Member States shall take the appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of natural habitats and habitats of species as well as the maintenance and restoration at a favourable conservation status.

However, the Commission is aware of the exceptional circumstances of this situation. Although the Commission is not itself answerable for restoration activities, it is clear that the Commission recognises that some measures have to be reinforced, in particular those linked to the establishment of effective systems to protect the European environmental heritage from similar incidents.

In addition, the Commission would like to remind the Honourable Member that, under the regulation in force, the Spanish government has the possibility of using certain appropriations of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and of the Cohesion Fund which have already been allocated to Spain for the period 2000-2006 in order to counter the consequences of the disaster.

The Commission would like to inform the Honourable Member that, to date, the Spanish authorities have only indicated that they intend to use the measure 3,5 ('Actuaciones medioambiental in costas') of the Operational Programme Galicia 2000-2006. It has a budget of EUR 64 516 472 to carry out some rehabilitation measures.

The Spanish Authorities submitted a formal request to the Commission on 14 January 2003 to mobilise the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) and to seek immediate financial assistance to deal with the consequences of the Prestige accident.

The Commission will proceed immediately with a thorough examination of this application on the basis of the information received. It will respond as quickly as possible in accordance with the requirements of the EUSF Regulation.

The Honourable Member is also referred to the Commission's reply to Written Question E-3659/02⁽²⁾ on aid to those affected by the oil slick caused by the sinking of the oil tanker Prestige.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 161 E, 10.7.2003, p. 125.