

(2001/C 318 E/164)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0915/01**  
**by Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL) to the Commission**

(28 March 2001)

*Subject:* Urban audit in Braga

On 17 June 1998 the Portuguese newspaper 'Diário do Minho' reported that the European Commission was to promote an urban audit of Braga to be carried out in the context of a programme to increase knowledge about the quality of life in cities, which would involve 58 European cities, the aim being to gather information for the drafting of urban policies as well as to increase knowledge about urban areas.

It added that the assessment, scheduled to take a year, was to be carried out by the European Economic Research and Advisory Consortium.

Can the Commission say what assessment was made of the Portuguese cities involved, which according to the newspaper article were Braga, Lisbon and Oporto?

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

(21 May 2001)

The urban audit was carried out by the Commission in 58 of Europe's largest cities to gather information on the quality of life.

The results, including a comparison of all the cities covered, were published in April 2000 and are available on following website: <http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/urban/audit>

In Portugal, the audit was carried out in Lisbon, Oporto and Braga. Information on the three cities is given under the heading 'Search by city' on the above site and can be compared with that for the other cities covered under the heading 'Search by domain'. These sections exist only in English.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0917/01**  
**by Anneli Hulthén (PSE) to the Commission**

(28 March 2001)

*Subject:* Amalgam and health

Does the Commission consider that the use of amalgam is a public health problem in the Union? If it does, does it have a plan for future action?

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

(18 June 2001)

Dental amalgams are medical devices covered by the Directive 93/42/EEC of 14 June 1993<sup>(1)</sup> on medical devices. In 1997, a Working Group, set up under the Medical Devices Experts Group, composed of representatives of national authorities, patients, the dental profession and industry produced a report on the use of dental amalgams in relation to health risks. It concluded, inter alia, that all dental restorative materials have the potential for causing some adverse reactions and that most contain components which are toxic. However, it also concluded that currently available data indicate that mercury from dental amalgams will not cause an unacceptable risk to the general population. Local reactions to dental amalgams fillings and other dental restorative materials do occur but are relatively rare; cases have also been reported of such reactions to materials used as alternatives to dental amalgams. According to the report, the benefits of restoring teeth with dental amalgam outweigh significantly the documented risks, and the risk-benefit ration corresponds to the currently acknowledged and accepted state of the art.

Commission and national authorities, in close co-operation with other interested parties, keep the use of dental amalgams under constant scrutiny and follow attentively the development of substitutes and their impact on health.

(<sup>1</sup>) OJ L 169, 12.7.1993.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0928/01**

**by Jonas Sjöstedt (GUE/NGL) to the Commission**

(28 March 2001)

*Subject:* Dismissal and pensions

A Danish documentary shown on Swedish TV has outraged the public. It reported on a number of problems involving the EU administration and organisation.

One item referred to Hubert Onidi, an official who used to work in ECHO. He was dismissed from the Commission for involvement in fraud relating to ECHO projects. According to the documentary, the aid money was found in his wife's bank account in Luxembourg.

Despite being sacked for irregularities, Mr Onidi is receiving a pension from the Commission. Many employers refuse to pay a pension if the employee is dismissed for irregularities. Why does the Commission not follow the same principle?

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

(5 June 2001)

In the case referred to by the Honourable Member, the appointing authority decided to remove the official from his post and to reduce his pension rights.

The sanctions of dismissal and pension reduction were considered by the responsible authorities to be appropriate to the gravity of the offences for which the official was formally guilty. Those offences did not include fraud as the question says, they related to various failures to meet the obligations of independence and honesty to which officials are bound under the Staff Regulations.

Since the case is still pending before the European Court of First Instance, the Commission is not in a position to provide further information.

(2001/C 318 E/167)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0934/01**

**by Jonas Sjöstedt (GUE/NGL) to the Commission**

(28 March 2001)

*Subject:* ISO and the 'Nordic' methods

Salmonella contamination of meat can be detected using either the ISO or the Nordic method. In the EU the former has been the rule. However, on 10 March 1998 Commissioner Fischler told the European Parliament that the Council was discussing the possibility of using the Nordic method as a reference method.

How many Member States are now using the Nordic method as the reference for ascertaining whether meat is contaminated by salmonella? What is the Commission doing to promote the use of the Nordic method rather than the ISO method as the reference method?