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BETR./SUBJ./CONC.: ASBESTOS - EUROPE

recent question in EU parliament

Post-It Notes 3M No 7580

Answer given by Mr Oreja
on behalf of the Commission
(22 April 1996)

Commission is collecting the information it needs to
answer the question. It will communicate its findings as
as possible.

As regards consultative arrangements with representatives
of the sector, the consultative Committee of Cooperatives,
Mutual Societies, Associations and Foundations in the
Community was set up in November 1994. It is an external
committee, but receives the financial and practical support
and cooperation of the Commission. It will deliver opinions
on matters of common concern and evaluate the
implementation of the Commission's work programme.

Most of the cooperative sectors are also represented on
standing committees concerned with their specific area of
work, for instance in commerce, consumer affairs and
agriculture.

(1) OJ No C 236, 31. 8. 1993.

(2) OJ No C 87, 24. 3. 1994.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-561/96

by Mary Banotti (PPE)

to the Commission

(11 March 1996)

(96/C 183/73)

Subject: Public relations activities

For each of the last five years how many Restricted Offers
for public relations programmes were sought for work to be
carried out other than in Brussels?

Also, for each of the last five years:

1. How many tenders were sought:

... as restricted offers?

— as unrestricted offers?

2. How many results in a contract for supply of public
relations services (i.e. not goods)?

3. How many contracts were awarded to the same body
corporate?

WRITTEN QUESTION P-591/96

by Daniel Féret (NI)

to the Commission

(1 March 1996)

(96/C 183/74)

Subject: Banning asbestos

For some time now there have been reports in the news of
the damaging effects of asbestos which, if inhaled, can over
the long term lead to diseases such as mesothelioma or
fibrosis, which can be fatal.

The Commission has shown that it is particularly aware of
this danger since it has chosen to carry out a major,
expensive operation to strip flocking insulation from the
Berlaymont building, which housed thousands of officials
for over 30 years.

Epidemiologists claim that asbestos kills between 2 000 and
3 000 people a year in a country such as France, the leading
user of asbestos in Europe and one of the world's largest
producers of this dangerous mineral. They claim that this
figure will increase five-fold by the year 2010 unless
draconian measures are taken in the short term.

Most Member States, such as Germany, Italy, Denmark and
the Netherlands, no longer use asbestos.

In the circumstances, and in view of the fact that asbestos is a
recognized, major risk for the health of European citizens,
can the Commission explain why it has not yet proposed a
Directive on banning the use of asbestos in public buildings
and in the manufacture of domestic goods in everyday
use?

Such a measure, which is broadly supported by most
national authorities and the general public, could be
envisaged if it were implemented on the basis of the principle
of subsidiarity.

Has the Commission yielded to the scientific disinformation
campaigns mounted by powerful lobby groups, in particular
the 'Standing Committee on Asbestos' (SCA)?

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

(28 March 1996)

All asbestos fibres are classified by Commission Directive 91/632/EEC⁽¹⁾ as category 1 carcinogens. In other words, all may cause cancer in man and must be labelled.

In view of the hazards, asbestos and products containing asbestos are subject to controls. These controls, which are set down in a series of Directives, apply to marketing and use, the workplace and the environment. Council Directive 76/769/EEC⁽²⁾ is the framework Directive for limiting the marketing and use of dangerous substances and preparations. Controls on the marketing and use of asbestos have been introduced by Council Directive 83/478/EEC⁽³⁾ (Fifth amendment of Directive 76/769/EEC), by Council Directive 85/610/EEC⁽⁴⁾ (seventh amendment of Directive 76/769/EEC) and by Commission Directive 91/659/EEC⁽⁵⁾ (first adaptation to technical progress of Directive 76/769/EEC). The effect of these Directives is to:

- ban the marketing and use of five of the six asbestos fibres and of products containing them;
- ban the use of chrysotile asbestos, the only fibre not yet totally banned, in 14 categories of products;
- establish mandatory labelling requirements for chrysotile and products containing it.

According to this policy products containing chrysotile which do not feature on the banned list and which are correctly labelled may be freely marketed and used.

Seven Member States apply to chrysotile and chrysotile-containing products rules which go further than the Community legislation. Whilst this leads to a certain distortion of the internal market there does not seem to be sufficient support in the Council to extend the ban provided by the Community legislation. The Commission and most Member States believe that the first priority is to adopt a classification for the non-asbestos fibres which may also be hazardous when used as substitutes for asbestos.

The Commission is working closely with national experts on possible classifications within the framework of Directive 67/548/EEC⁽⁶⁾ for ceramic fibres, glass fibres and insulation wools. Once such classifications have been established, the Commission will study the risks from use of these fibres, including the risks where they are used as substitutes for asbestos. It will then be in a position to re-open the asbestos debate and consider afresh the

possibility of extending the existing Community ban to cover those chrysotile-containing products still on the market.

The Commission is guided in its work on dangerous substances and specifically on dangerous fibres by the principles of risk analysis and risk reduction and acts independently of any campaigns.

⁽¹⁾ OJ No L 338, 10. 12. 1991.

⁽²⁾ OJ No L 262, 27. 9. 1976.

⁽³⁾ OJ No L 263, 24. 9. 1983.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ No L 375, 31. 12. 1985.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ No L 363, 31. 12. 1991.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ No 196, 16. 8. 1967.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-595/96

by Anita Pollack (PSE)

to the Commission

(11 March 1996)

(96/C 183/75)

Subject: Hormone replacement therapy

Is the Commission aware that the oestrogen replacement drug Premarin sold widely throughout Europe and with a laboratory based in Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK, is made from pregnant mare's urine and collected by confining artificially impregnated mares for lengthy periods of time?

What is the Commission's response to growing public dismay that this system has similarities to the veal crate system we are now preparing to phase out and many women who take the medication are unaware of how it is produced?

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

(22 April 1996)

The Commission would refer the Honourable Member to its answer to Written Question E-1770/94 by Mr Hughes⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ OJ No C 75, 27. 3. 1995.