

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3556/01
by Arlette Laguiller (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Firework explosion in Lanhelas (Portugal) on 2 June 2000

At Question Time on 5 July 2000, Commissioner Wallström undertook, on behalf of the Commission, to examine the problem of fireworks and the transport of hazardous substances in the Community, and stated: 'A proposal for amendments to the Seveso II directive should be ready by the beginning of next year, that is 2001. This can only be done when we have evaluated the experiences following the accident in Enschede as well as the accident in Romania. This process will be carried out in close cooperation with the Member States, the European Parliament and other interested parties.' (answer to question H-0548/00, tabled by the author of the present question).

Since then, several other accidents have occurred in other localities in Portugal. On Easter Monday, 16 April 2001, near Ponte de Lima, a bungled firework display killed one person and injured several others, as well as causing significant material damage. In July 2001, an explosion in a firework production unit near the town of Taipas killed five employees and left several other people with serious injuries. Other firework-related accidents have included one in summer 2000 which led to a spectacular fire on a yacht (in this case, fortunately, there were no victims).

The victims of the 2 June 2000 accident have not been properly compensated, even though virtually none of them could be considered privileged members of society.

What action is the Commission taking to tighten the rules and safety standards governing this activity, for both the workers who handle fireworks and those who live in the vicinity of firework displays? What action is it taking to ensure that the victims are swiftly and properly compensated?