



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 14 September 1999 (17.09)  
(OR. f)**

**8388/99 TRA**

**NM LIMITE**

**PE-QE 124**

**PRELIMINARY DRAFT REPLY TO WRITTEN QUESTION**

**No P-1484/99 by Piia-Noora Kauppi**

from : General Secretariat of the Council  
to : Permanent Representations of the Member States  
Subject : Police action on the Via Baltica

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**1. Delegations will find attached:**

- the text of the above Written Question;
- a preliminary draft reply prepared by the General Secretariat.

**2. If no comments have been received from delegations within 10 working days of today, this preliminary draft reply will be submitted to the Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) and to the Council for approval.**

Where received, delegations' comments will be examined by the Working Party on General Affairs.



**WRITTEN QUESTION No P-1484/99**  
**by Piia-Noora Kauppi (PPE)**

Subject: Police action on the Via Baltica

During the last few weeks the leading Finnish newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat, has published on its news and comment pages worrying reports that the police on the Via Baltica, the road linking the Baltic States to Poland and central Europe, have been imposing fines on foreign drivers. According to these reports, drivers have been able to negotiate the size of the fines and pay them on the spot without receiving any form of receipt.

Although in a poor state of repair, the Via Baltica is an important route for motor vehicles travelling from northern Europe towards central Europe and offers a practical alternative to crossing Sweden and Denmark. Since these problems will concern the European Union, particularly in connection with the forthcoming enlargement, all the uncertainties surrounding the use of this road should be cleared up in good time.

1. Does the Council know whether the payments levied by the police forces of the applicant countries on EU Member States nationals using the Via Baltica are appropriate and lawful in all respects?
  2. If it emerges that the attitude adopted by the authorities is inappropriate, what steps does the Council plan to take to ensure that these unofficial administrative practices are abolished in the applicant countries and that the citizens of the EU Member States can use this road without being forced to make arbitrary payments?
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## **REPLY**

**to Written Question No P-1484**

**by Piia-Noora Kauppi**

The Via Baltica is recognised by the applicant Baltic States as an important traffic route for their integration into the European Union and for this reason it receives special support under their transport policies.

The Council has not been informed of any specific cases of charges or fines being imposed on foreign drivers on the Via Baltica in Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania. If there were any illegal practices by individual police officers, the problem raised by the Honourable Member would fall within the more general framework of the eradication of corruption in the applicant States.

In this context, it should be remembered that the Accession Partnerships, which were established by the Commission in April 1998 on the basis of guidelines and priorities defined by the Council and constitute an essential element of the strategy developed by the Union to lead the applicant States towards accession to the Union, include an important chapter on the fight against organised crime and corruption. The fight against corruption in particular is the subject of a short-term priority in the Accession Partnership with Latvia and Lithuania.

In May 1998, the experts on the fight against organised crime concluded a pre-accession pact between the Member States of the Union and the applicant States which also dealt with the fight against corruption.

Implementation of the pre-accession strategy and, in particular, the priorities defined by the Partnerships is regularly monitored in the Association bodies established by the Europe Agreements. In this context, the fight against corruption was discussed in the Association Council bodies in recent months.

If the information contained in the newspaper Helsingin Sanomat to which the Honourable Member refers is verified, and there is confirmation of illegal practices on the Via Baltica, the Union will not fail to raise this point with the applicant Baltic States concerned in the framework of the Europe Association Agreements.