

European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1976 - 1977

20 December 1976

DOCUMENT 501/76

ORAL QUESTION (0-89/76)

with debate, pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure,
by Mr PISONI, Mr LIGIOS, Mr LIOGIER, Mr FRÜH, Mr PUCCI,
Mr FIORET, Mr BERSANI, Mr VERNASCHI, Mr RIPAMONTI, Mr BRUGGER,
Mrs CASSANMAGNAGO, Mr COLOMBO, Mr GRANELLI, Mr MARTINELLI,
Mr NOÈ, Mr RIZ, Mr SCELBA and Mr MURSCH

to the Commission of the European Communities

Subject: Excise duties and other taxes on wine

In view of the fact that

- some Member States have recently introduced a substantial increase in consumption taxes on wine;
- in consequence, the excise duty on a litre of normal table wine of an alcoholic strength of about 12° is now 7.50 kroner in Denmark, £0.65 in the United Kingdom, Bfrs 12 in Belgium and the Netherlands and £0.38 in Ireland;
- in recently increasing the excise duties on wine, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands have disregarded the recommendation addressed to them by the Commission on 5 December 1975¹, asking them to reduce appreciably the rate of excise duties levied by them and to forego any planned

or recently introduced increase in the rate of these duties;

- at its sitting of 3 April 1974, the European Parliament, in delivering its opinion on the Commission proposal for a directive on a harmonized excise duty on wine had considered the introduction of such a duty to be unjustified and invited the Commission to submit fresh proposals for abolishing the duty in Member States where it exists²;
- the EEC Commission itself has repeatedly declared³ its strong opposition to the extremely high duties levied on wine in some countries which create a distinction between this product and beer and flavoured non-alcoholic beverages;
- the loss of revenue to the exchequer resulting from any reduction in the excise duties on wine would be very small overall, given the very low per capita consumption of this product in States imposing these excessive rates;
- even a modest increase in the per capita consumption of wine in these countries, helped by a reduction in the rate of the excise duties and other taxes, would promote trade in this important area of Community production and therefore make it easier to resolve a crisis which threatens the economy of vast regions in the Community;

would the Commission answer the following questions:

1. What measures does it intend to take in respect of those countries which have disregarded its recommendation of 5 December 1975?
2. What proposals does it envisage submitting in order to abolish excise duties on wine in the Community or at least to harmonize them by reducing them to a reasonable level?
3. What measures does it intend to propose to reduce the excessive discrepancy between the taxes currently applied in non-wine producing countries to beer produced nationally and wine imported from other Community countries?

¹OJ No. L 2 of 7.1.1976, p.13

²OJ No. C 48 of 25.4.1974, p.7, and Debates of the European Parliament, No. 174, April 1974

³See, for example, the statements made by Commissioner Lardinois at the European Parliament's July 1975 part-session - Debates of the European Parliament, No. 193, July 1975.