backdrop, private sector involvement and experience are essential. This must be reflected in the design, formulation and implementation of programmes, especially in order to avoid red tape.

4.3. Resources for promotion on the single market must match the ambitions. Inadequate resources will not only limit the effectiveness of the instrument, but will also generate unnecessary tensions between eligible sectors and products.

Brussels, 29 November 2000.

The President

of the Economic and Social Committee

Göke FRERICHS

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the animal-health requirements applicable to non-commercial movement of pet animals'

(2001/C 116/12)

On 10 October 2000 the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Articles 37 and 152(4)(b) of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the above-mentioned proposal.

The Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 15 November 2000. The rapporteur was Mr Leif E. Nielsen.

At its 377th plenary session of 29 and 30 November 2000 (meeting of 29 November) the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 110 votes to one with one abstention.

1. **Introduction**

1.1. Fears of rabies and other diseases transmitted by household pets have prompted certain Member States to introduce restrictions on the non-commercial movement of dogs, cats and other pets from other Member States and third countries. The Commission's proposal harmonises the common rules governing external protection and limits internal restrictions. A number of the diseases concerned solely affect animal health while others ('zoonoses', and especially rabies) also impact on human beings. Hence the Commission's view is that harmonisation should be implemented under the common decisionmaking procedure.

1.2. The rabies situation in the EU has radically improved as a result of oral vaccination of foxes in regions where rabies is endemic. Sweden and the United Kingdom have therefore done away with their earlier quarantine arrangements and introduced less restrictive provisions. The cases of rabies that have been recorded in the EU primarily relate to animals from regions in non-EU countries where rabies is endemic. The proposal provides for more stringent control on entry from third countries and is based on the opinions of several groups of experts, including the Scientific Veterinary Committee.

1.3. Under the proposal, dogs and cats moving between the Member States or from specified third countries and territories which can, in line with a regional approach, be assimilated to the Community (Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway, San Marino, Switzerland, the Vatican, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands), must be accompanied by their owners or a natural person who has responsibility for them during travel. Animals must be identified by a tattoo or transponder and be accompanied by a rabies vaccination certificate; except in the case of first vaccination, such vaccination must have been carried out less than one year beforehand with an inactivated vaccine complying with WHO standards.

1.4. Sweden, Ireland and the United Kingdom may additionally require a neutralising antibody titration more than six months prior to the movement and more than 30 days after the preceding vaccination. However, these countries may waive all rabies requirements in the case of movement from Member States and third countries and territories with the same status.

1.5. For movement to the EU from third countries other than those listed above, the same rules regarding rabies vaccination and antibody titration apply as for movement to Sweden, Ireland and the United Kingdom, thereby tightening up the rules of some Member States. Further, Sweden, Ireland and the United Kingdom may introduce quarantine rules, to be communicated to the Commission.

1.6. The proposal does not provide for any animal health requirements regarding movement between Member States, or from the specified third countries or territories, of a number of species other than dogs or cats: all species of arachnida and insects, fish, amphibia, reptiles, birds and ferrets, rabbits, guinea pigs and hamsters, as listed in Annex I to the proposal.

1.7. However, on the Regulation's entry into force, a Member State may apply to the Commission, in special circumstances, for additional guarantees regarding diseases other than rabies. The Commission also wishes to have the powers to amend and supplement the annexes regarding animal species, countries and territories and veterinary requirements respectively, in consultation with the Standing Veterinary Committee. The inclusion of further third countries in the annex shall take account of the structure and organisation of their veterinary services, their status with regard to rabies, regulations applicable to imports of carnivores and regulations in force on the marketing of antirabies vaccines.

2. **General comments**

2.1. The ESC feels that it is vital to take the broadest possible action to prevent and curb contagious diseases among household pets in the EU and in the applicant countries and to avoid the propagation of such diseases through the entry of animals from other third countries. Following enlargement the new neighbour countries and the movement of animals over larger distances will increase the risk of contagion. As in the case of the present proposal, the relevant measures must be based as far as possible on the scientific evidence.

2.2. It is greatly to be welcomed that the rabies situation in the EU is now under control in the Member States. On the other hand, there is a major risk of rabies spreading through the entry of animals from regions where the disease is endemic. It is therefore vital to harmonise national rules and introduce a common regime for movement of animals. Nonetheless, the ESC observes that the proposal aims at regionalisation, as opposed to full harmonisation, which may often be called for in the veterinary sector. The countries which are 'historically free of rabies' therefore attain a special level of protection, which for the time being must be considered justified.

2.3. The proposal's rabies prevention provisions are essentially based on the Member States being in a position to carry out adequate controls on the entry of pets from third countries other than those specified. The ESC would recommend that the Commission and the Member States do their utmost to achieve effective border control.

2.4. As proposed by the Commission, it is appropriate for third countries and territories which, in terms of geography and disease prevention, can be considered comparable with the EU to be treated in the same way as the Community. That presupposes, however, that entry into these countries and regions from other third countries is subject to just as stringent controls as apply to entry into the EU.

3. **Special comments**

3.1. As rabies is not the only disease risk associated with the movement of pets, measures may also need to be taken to avoid contagion of livestock, with the resulting costly measures to deal with it. All bird species, including pet hens, pigeons, parrots etc. may be carriers of dangerous contagious diseases (Newcastle Disease, Ornithosis and zoonoses, including Salmonella DT 104). Camphylobacter, which can infect poultry, can be transmitted through pets (dogs, snakes, tortoises, etc.) which have been in contact with polluted water.

3.2. Though there can therefore be many arguments in favour of introducing measures to reduce the risk of contagion from these and other diseases in connection with the movement of pets, the ESC feels that the administrative situation is unclear, and that the impact of such measures is disproportionate compared with the risk of contagion from wild fauna.

3.3. The slaughter of animals which do not comply with the requirements must be carried out in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Amsterdam Treaty protocol governing animal protection.

3.4. The ESC also feels that it is necessary to reduce the problem of cruelty to animals in the commercial importation of exotic species to the EU.

3.5. The Commission should submit a report in five years' time on the implementation of the rules, accompanied by any proposals they may have for amendments.

4. **Conclusion**

4.1. Subject to the above comments, the ESC supports the Commission's proposal.

Brussels, 29 November 2000.

The President

of the Economic and Social Committee

Göke FRERICHS

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Council Regulation extending for a period of up to one year the financing of certain quality and marketing improvement plans approved under Title IIa of Regulation (EEC) No 1035/72'

(2001/C 116/13)

On 20 October 2000 the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Article 37 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, on the above-mentioned proposal.

The Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 15 November 2000. The rapporteur was Mr de las Heras Cabañas.

At its 377th plenary session (meeting of 29 November 2000) the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 107 votes to one with two abstentions.

1. **Introduction**

1.1. The proposed regulation follows on from the first part of the agreement reached by the Council of Ministers meeting in Brussels on 17 July 2000 whereby it invited the Commission to propose that the payments to nut (almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts and pistachios) and locust bean growers, which expire in 2000, be continued for one year within the budget for 2001. In addition, it instructed the Commission to carry out a specific study of the nut and locust bean sector in the context of the report which it has to present before the end of 2000 on the fruit and vegetables regime.

2. **Background**

2.1. The 10-year improvement plans launched in 1989 under Title IIa of Regulation (EEC) No 1035/72 have had a substantial impact in some Member States on the organisation of production, the concentration of supply and the improvement of production and marketing structures. These plans have helped to maintain producers' incomes and slow down the abandonment of nut and locust bean growing in the producer regions of the EU.

2.2. However, the special problems of nuts and locust beans were not taken into account by Regulation (EC) No 2200/96 on the reform of the common organisation of the market in the fruit and vegetables sector, which revoked the existing measures. The measures laid down in this regulation have not proved adequate because they are not geared to the specific features of these crops.