

**Question for written answer E-002451/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Nikos Chrysogelos (Verts/ALE)

Subject: State aid in sales of public lands in Bulgaria

In 2012 excavators entered a plot with protected dune habitats and forests near the town of Nesebar, Bulgaria, and levelled them in preparation for the construction of a new tourist complex¹. A newspaper report² revealed that that the plot, No 51500.204.152 in the land registry, was in 2012 sold without a bidding procedure by the Ministry of Agriculture and Foods to a private person for BGN 581 212 (EUR 290 000). The following day the latter sold the plot to a private company for BGN 4 009 451 (EUR 2 000 000), a price indicative of the real market value of the plot.

In response to strong public interest, the Anti-Corruption and Conflict of Interests Committee of the Bulgarian Parliament has published a register listing all instances of public plots previously excluded from the State Forest Fund and later sold as urban plots without bidding procedures to private investors³. The difference between sale price and market rate of these plots often ranges between some thousands of EUR to millions of EUR⁴. As described in the Commission's procedure 'State aid SA.26212 – Alleged aid in the form of swap of ownership of privately owned forest estates for governmental ones'⁵, Bulgarian law allows for independent expert evaluation of sales of public land at prices far below market rates.

With regard to the above, can the Commission state whether it has received notification from Bulgaria on the legal mechanisms allowing the sale of public lands without bidding procedures and at prices far below market rates?

If not, will the Commission investigate the alleged state aid granted in the sale of public lands which were previously excluded from the State Forest Fund?

¹ http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=146505

² <https://bivol.bg/gerb-razgrabvane-duni.html>

³ <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/parliamentarycommittees/members/1479/documents>

⁴ <http://www.24chasa.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=1700128>

⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:273:0013:0025:EN:PDF>