

Question for written answer E-005625/2014
to the Commission
Rule 130
Jan Keller (S&D)

Subject: Church restitution in the Czech Republic

Church restitution is currently taking place in the Czech Republic, under Act 428/2012 Coll. on Property Settlement with Churches and Religious Communities.

As part of this restitution process, churches are being granted a range of advantages, such as tax relief on the first sale of restituted properties, cash compensation for property which cannot be returned for a variety of reasons, and contributions to churches to cover their activities during the so-called 'transition period', which is to last 17 years.

Given their economic activities, it is clear that churches display defining characteristics of businesses. This begs the question as to whether EU law on economic activities – specifically as regards compliance with state aid rules and the impermissibility of economic advantages that pose a threat to competition and affect the EU market – also apply to them.

In view of the above, could the Commission say whether the tax advantages granted to the churches, the rules on property settlement with churches as regards the appraisal of properties that cannot be restituted, and the contributions that are supposed to be paid to churches during the so-called 'transition period' are consistent with the rules established by the Commission as regards permissible state aid and do not distort economic competition and the EU market?