

**Question for written answer E-007198/2015
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: The marble caves of Carrara

Carrara marble, which has been quarried since the days of Julius Caesar, is considered one of the most valuable natural materials in the world: it was mentioned by Dante Alighieri in the Divine Comedy, and was used by Michelangelo Buonarroti for his sculptures, with 'David' and the Vatican's 'Pietà' among the most famous examples. The marble is extracted from the Apuan Alps in Tuscany, which have numerous springs of drinkable water and a natural beauty rendered unique by the variety of flora and fauna. 'Expensive and temporary permits' are required for quarrying, given that supplies of Carrara marble are not infinite.

The present quarrying systems have exponentially increased the speed at which marble can be cut from the mountainside, but have also proved detrimental to the environment, which they have irreversibly altered and destroyed. Marble is a huge asset for the region, and the benefits should be equally distributed between the local population and businesses. However, in recent years, employment levels have fallen.

Is the Commission aware of the aforesaid problem?

What steps does it intend to take to protect this piece of collective heritage?

What tools does it intend to use to ensure that there is full and legal competition for the right to quarry these marble caves, and that these activities are conducted with total transparency and full respect for the law?