

**Question for written answer E-009542/2015
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Richard Sulík (ECR)

Subject: Support for beekeepers

Following a change in Slovak law in 2014, financial aid is provided only to cooperatives which represent more than 30 % of beekeepers in Slovakia, and beekeepers can only receive aid through those cooperatives. Two cooperatives met the criteria before 2014, when the threshold was only 10 %. As a result of the change, which encountered considerable opposition among beekeepers – 1700 of whom signed a petition against it – only one cooperative now qualifies.

Although the cooperative supports both members and non-members, it is cutting subsidies to non-members by 20 %. The justification for this, according to the cooperative, is that members pay a membership fee: keeping subsidies the same for members and non-members alike would amount to positive discrimination in favour of non-members. Membership of another cooperative is not taken into account. Non-members who pay their membership fee to another cooperative, therefore, must forgo 20 % of their subsidies. This means that beekeepers are forced to become members of the largest cooperative, giving it a monopoly in Slovakia.

The cooperative decides what activities and which beekeepers are eligible for funding.

The consultation procedure carried out in accordance with Article 109 of Regulation 1234/2007 does not so much constitute a result-oriented exchange of ideas, either in form or in content, as a formal attempt to meet the conditions laid down by the regulation.

Is the Commission aware of the situation? Could the new arrangements be at odds with EU law? How should Article 109 of Regulation 1234/2007 be interpreted?