

**Question for written answer E-003239/2019  
to the Commission**  
Rule 138  
**Manuel Bompard (GUE/NGL)**

Subject: Fight against the illegal tobacco trade

The Commission, OLAF and the four biggest tobacco manufacturers have stressed that the tobacco industry is being harmed by parallel trading and that it must be involved in the efforts to find solutions.

This is the idea underpinning the 'cooperation agreements' they have signed, although the request to renew the first of these – the one with Philip Morris International – was rejected in March 2016 by the European Parliament.

The idea is also central to the European tobacco traceability system, which is consistent with the Tobacco Directive, but certainly not with the WHO's Protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products.

Nearly 99% of cigarettes in the parallel trade come – directly or indirectly – from the factories of the four major tobacco companies. Counterfeiting and 'illicit whites' account for just 1.2%, according to data published by the cigarette manufacturer Seita-Imperial Tobacco in a November 2016 study.

The cigarette companies should therefore not be given any role in the fight against the parallel trade.

When is the Commission planning to put an end to its cooperation with the companies directly responsible for the illicit parallel trade in tobacco products?

When is it planning to bring its own efforts into line with the Protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products?