

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1606/07
by María Sornosa Martínez (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Use of European funding in the Murcia region

Between 4 and 9 November 2006, a high-level delegation from Murcia's regional government, the three chairmen of the regional chambers of commerce in Murcia, Cartagena and Lorca, the chairman of Murcia's employers' association (CROEM) and the mayor of Puerto Lumbreras, along with their wives and other unidentified guests, travelled on an official trip to California in the US. The funding for this trip was organised by Murcia's Regional Development Institute (INFO) and the chambers of commerce under the Promotion Abroad plan. The portion of the cost met by the Institute amounted to EUR 50 971.

It has come to my attention that certain irregularities may allegedly have occurred as regards the management of certain aid, which INFO – a local public-sector company which is responsible for promoting the Region of Murcia abroad – grants corporate bodies that receive European funding.

INFO's annual report for 2005 makes it clear that support for international activities under the Murcia region's promotion plan is provided using EU funding, in the shape of a global grant under the ERDF as included in the Murcia region's integrated programme for 2000-2006.

According to our information, by means of the plans designed to promote its companies abroad, INFO is paying the tour operators directly for the cost of the trips, instead of following the EU rules, which stipulate that the relevant percentage should be paid after the trip upon submission by the company or institutions concerned of supporting documents demonstrating that the trip did indeed take place, as is always the case with items that may receive subsidies.

Does the Commission not think that irregularities may be occurring as regards the management of EU funding?