

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0898/01

by Renato Brunetta (PPE-DE), Francesco Fiori (PPE-DE), Vitaliano Gemelli (PPE-DE), Raffaele Lombardo (PPE-DE), Cristiana Muscardini (UEN), Francesco Speroni (TDI) and Antonio Tajani (PPE-DE)

to the Commission

Subject: Divergences between estimates and final figures in Italian macroeconomic data: impact on the Commission's assessments

On 1 March 2001 ISTAT (the Italian National Statistical Institute) published the annual final figures for the Italian national accounts, with its estimates for gross domestic product (GDP) for 2000 and corrections of the estimates for 1997-1999 with respect to the estimates given last year.

These data reveal considerable variations concerning household consumption (+1.5%), imports (+1.5%), investments (+1.3%) and GDP (+0.7%).

It is difficult to reconcile the data issued for 2000 with the statistical information that had been made available to date. The average revision to the GDP growth rate for the three-year period 1997-1999 is over 14%, the household consumption growth rate has been revised by over 30% and the growth rate in investments by over 70%.

ISTAT has also issued a list of the new statistical sources on which it has based the revision of its estimates. There is a significant discrepancy between the signals which emerge from data on economic trends (including the national quarterly economic accounts) and the annual final data.

The conflict between the information on economic trends and the annual data prompts the fear that the short-term economic indicators on which ISTAT bases its own quarterly accounts are becoming more and more biased and less reliable.

Can the Commission say:

whether the new statistical sources used by ISTAT are known to the Community institutions?  
whether the revisions made by ISTAT have any effect on the assessments of the Italian economy, which under the EC Treaty it is bound to evaluate?  
finally, what action it intends to take in this regard?