

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2870/03
by Maurizio Turco (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Judicial inquiry into the use of funding from the Region of Lombardy for vocational training

A judicial inquiry is under way into the use made of funding from the Region of Lombardy for vocational training. On 17 September 2003 the authoritative daily newspaper "Il Corriere della Sera" published an article according to which:

- (a) the owners of the company Eapa - Francesco Guerrini and Manuela Chiossi - have been under house arrest since 12 September on charges of aggravated fraud involving a sum of EUR 2.3 million;
- (b) during the initial investigations Guerrini apparently claimed that he had merely "transferred" pupils from one course to another in order to ensure that even the least frequented courses were provided for the benefit of all. His partner, who used to be the secretary of a former member of Lombardy Regional Council belonging to the AN party and was chosen as a director of Eapa because of her political connections, went further and confirmed that some of the courses financed by the Region were never actually held;
- (c) in order to prove their good faith the two claim that the Regional inspectors knew about and even approved the device of "filling up" the courses by means of false enrolments from pupils and teachers who had never actually been seen;
- (d) another source of embarrassment for the Region was the statement made by a young Milanese woman, who was the first to report the alleged fraud. Discovering that she was enrolled for a fictitious course she personally reported the anomaly to the Region's chief inspector in 2002. The only response she received was an unpleasant letter from Eapa reproaching her for informing the Regional authorities and threatening to sue her for damages. At this point she reported the whole affair to the Public Prosecutor's office.

Can the Commission say:

- whether it is aware of the events described and what steps it has taken or intends to take to tackle the situation;
- whether OLAF has been informed and whether it has launched or intends to launch an inquiry?