

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3089/03  
by Bruno Gollnisch (NI)  
to the Council

Subject: Alstom

Article 87 of the Treaty lays down the rules governing State aids and specifies which types may be considered as compatible with the common market, e.g. aid to promote the economic development of certain areas or activities, or to remedy a serious disturbance in the economy of a Member State, etc.

If Alstom, which employs tens of thousands of workers in Europe, were to go bankrupt, this would have a devastating effect on employment and the economy of entire regions and would undoubtedly cause a 'disturbance'. And yet the Commission has decided to be particularly strict on this issue.

It is not uncommon for states to support companies experiencing difficulties. In such cases, consideration of the strategic nature of the industrial activity or the jobs situation should take precedence over a purely financial or economic analysis of the measures since the aid is clearly of a temporary and non-structural nature.

Does the Council consider that the EU texts, which have remained virtually unchanged since the beginning, are still appropriate for responding to the challenges of competition, which is now worldwide and, in many cases, unfair?

Is it prepared, in particular, to remove references in the relevant articles of the Treaty to competition and the operation of the common market and replace them with references to the need to preserve jobs and fight for the survival of strategic sectors?