

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0690/04
by Stavros Xarchakos (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Complaints about the infringement of the property rights of building cooperatives in Greece

The right to property is guaranteed under Community law. However, according to repeated complaints by many Greek building cooperatives and the Panhellenic Union of Building Cooperatives (representing 500 000 members) the Greek authorities are continuing to obstruct the development of the property of these cooperatives, despite the fact that they are officially recognised by the Greek State and that the Greek courts have repeatedly ruled in their favour.

The machinations of Mrs Papandreou, the Minister for the Environment, Regional Planning and Public Works, have been the subject of particularly vigorous protests (petitions have even been submitted to the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions on this subject): she even drew up a presidential decree in February 2003 which essentially ties down the property of many officially recognised building cooperatives, for instance, the Association of Bank of Greece Employees with 3 500 members, the healthcare cooperative 'Health' with 4 050 members, etc. These cooperatives complain that, although their property is clearly outside woodland and the surrounding plots have been - legally or otherwise - subjected to very intensive development (as evidenced by aerial photographs in the possession of the Greek State), the Ministry of the Environment, Regional Planning and Public Works is unjustifiably obstructing the development of their property in a way which - according to their complaints - is selective and is targeting them only.

It should be pointed out that these cooperatives have been officially recognised by the State for almost 40 years and that many of their members have already died having paid enormous amounts in contributions for years, but because of the obstructionism of the Greek authorities none of the members of these cooperatives have yet acquired the share of land to which they are entitled.

How can the thousands of citizens concerned be protected from these machinations of the Greek authorities? How can the Commission intervene effectively without delay so as to make the Ministry for the Environment, Regional Planning and Public Works and the Greek authorities aware that they are harassing thousands of Greeks unfairly and without any justification? What sanctions can be imposed on a Member State which continuously obstructs the development of the officially recognised, legitimate property of thousands of European citizens?