

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0003/05  
by Antonio De Poli (PPE-DE)  
to the Council

Subject:           Privatisation of the Padua Trade Fair Centre

The Padua Trade Fair Centre, which is a large exhibition area in north-eastern Italy, is undergoing radical changes in ownership and major restructuring, starting with the separation of the real estate facet from the management of exhibitions and brands, and ending with this being entrusted to a new company, on the way to privatisation.

The trade fair services are becoming, especially with regard to the management of activities, integrated into and interdependent on the specialist economic functions of the region, in which the Padua Trade Fair Centre is already of major commercial importance. In these circumstances, integration with the other trade fair centres in the north-east of Italy - starting with those in Verona and Vicenza - could create a strong hub that would act as an international shop window for local products and at the same time as an engine for innovation and new business services, thereby preventing the marginalisation of the Venetian system that has already occurred in the field of credit and local public services.

The 'Lisbon Strategy' decided on by the Lisbon European Council in 2000 and put into effect by the Barcelona European Council in 2002 aims to make Europe 'the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world' by 2010. Trade fairs provide major opportunities for promoting - at all levels and not just a local one - aspects of the economy and of business, good practices and exchanges of technological and cultural know-how.

Could the Council indicate whether Community-level measures exist to promote the creation of trade fair groups which can contribute to the realisation of the objectives established at Lisbon? Does the Council intend, if necessary, to adopt a strategy aimed at promoting and fostering the creation of European trade fair hubs at a regional level in order to avoid sterile competition between individual cities and generate positive synergies between the various bodies concerned?