

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2625/05

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Subject: Illegal harassment of Hungarian/EU businesses providing services in Germany

Pursuant to an inter-state agreement signed in 1998, Hungarian firms are permitted to employ six or seven thousand workers in Germany: in practice, the provisions of this agreement operated virtually flawlessly until 2001. However, since 2001 the German authorities have been almost constantly harassing Hungarian businesspeople with baseless accusations, and in the process have even - without cause - enlisted the assistance of armed units.

In April 2004, as part of an operation codenamed 'SoKo Pannonia', 1200 German commandos, armed to the teeth, raided 23 Hungarian businesses' offices in Germany. After this, the German authorities searched the premises of a number of Hungarian - i.e. EU - businesses, seized documents and froze bank accounts, thus making it impossible for the businesses to operate. In the meanwhile, the only thing that the Hungarian authorities can do is to continuously remind Hungarian businesses of their right of complaint, but they are unable to exercise it because the cases have not yet been closed. Since the ordering of the SoKo Pannonia raids, [Hungary's] Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Justice, National Health Fund and representations of the interests of businesses have repeatedly requested an explanation for the operation at the highest (minister and under-secretary of state) level. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has twice addressed verbal notes to the German Ambassador. As long ago as June 2004, a group of Hungarian firms operating in Germany requested the assistance of the EU's DG Internal Market through the intermediary of a German lawyer (letter in reply: ref. MARKT/E1/MaF/se D(2004)9196).

Despite the protests, the German authorities are continuing their actions against Hungarian businesses. On 26 April 2005 they again raided Hungarian businesses in many places, this time under the codename SoKo Bunda, and on 20 June 2005 in Munich they halted work at a meat plant.

What measures is the Commission considering in order to put an end to this situation, which is seriously discriminatory and violates the EC Treaty? Is it planning to address to the German authorities a call or any kind of statement drawing their attention to the above problems in order to defend the interests of Hungarian (EU) businesses which provide services in Germany in accordance with EU law?