

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1511/07
by Timothy Kirkhope (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Progressive beer duty

1. The answer to E-5827/06 states that the Commission proposed a reduced rate for small independent breweries of 20% below the standard rate, but the Council Directive ended with a 50% discount. Could the Commission state which Member States proposed the larger discount and what their reasons were for proposing this amendment?
2. Did the Council Directive end with a 50% discount because a 20% discount in low-duty Member States would not have been sufficient to provide incentives for smaller breweries?
3. If the answer to point 2 is yes, was there any analysis undertaken to suggest what monetary value of discount might be appropriate to overcome the disadvantages encountered by the smallest breweries?
4. Council Directive 92/83/EEC¹ states that 'In the cases where Member States are permitted to apply reduced rates, such reduced rates should not cause distortion of competition within the internal market'. What are the standards the Commission uses to determine any terms of market distortion?
5. Deriving figures from the Excise Duty Tables Ref 1.023, July 2006, the total value of the annual discount to a brewer producing 5000hl of beer at 10 degree plato [4% abv] would be € 17 000 to a German brewer, € 11 000 to a Belgian brewer, € 195 000 to a UK brewer and € 198 700 to an Irish brewer. Given such discrepancies in different Member States in terms of the amount of subsidies given, does the Commission consider if any market distortion has already taken place and if there have been any claims that it has indeed taken place?

¹ OJ L 316, 31.10.1992, p. 21.