

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4822/07

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to the Commission

Subject: Tax investigation and competition

According to reports in the press the Commission has decided to carry out a fiscal investigation of the Italian Catholic Church's charitable activities, in order to ascertain whether concessions on property tax or other taxes are not distorting the market and damaging competition. Since there are various entities that benefit from tax relief for one reason or another, such as the Coop and Arci, why is the investigation being confined to one entity only?

1. Can the Commission say who asked that this inquiry be carried out?
2. How far does its competence in tax matters extend?
3. Can it say precisely what link there is between competence in the field of taxation and powers relating to competition?
4. Might the investigation also cover the activities of the Coop, which apparently benefits from substantial tax relief (according to the figures for 2006 the Coop paid tax amounting to EUR 73 million, compared with the 152 million paid by the rival group Esselunga, whose turnover was EUR 4.9 billion compared with the Coop's 7 billion)?
5. Is it true that the Coop operates like a bank (even though the law bans credit activities), by collecting members' savings, using them as it sees fit and paying out interest, which is taxed at a rate less than half that charged on banks (27%)?