

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0701/08
by Anne Ferreira (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Sheltered employment opportunities for disabled people and the single market

In 2007 the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All gave the European Union an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to non-discrimination against people with disabilities. This commitment extends to work carried out in the protected environment of workplaces designed to integrate disabled people into the workforce by providing:

- structured professional or occupational opportunities geared to each individual's degree of disability,
- medical and social services to support individual life plans tailored to the needs of people with a very high degree of dependence.

Facilities offering this dual support are provided by organisations operating in the European social economy sector and fall into the category of social services in the general interest. This being so,

1. Would the Commission clarify the conditions on which facilities of this kind would (or would not) be subject to the rules applying to state aid and calls for tender in the single European market, even though they perform tasks in the general interest in accordance with each Member State's sovereign choice?

2. Would the Commission state to what extent these activities are exempt from European competition policy by virtue of their marginal economic impact, given that their purpose is to promote social integration?