

WRITTEN QUESTION E-5395/08
by Zuzana Roithová (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Situation of the glass and ceramics industry in Europe and compulsory certification of tableware

The situation of the glass and ceramics industry in Europe is very serious owing to the increasing pressure of globalisation. Unfair competition from third countries, especially in Asia, puts products on the market below their production costs and often below the proper quality standards. This situation is damaging the glass and ceramics industry in the Czech Republic and other countries and has not been helped either by the implementation of the directive on unfair commercial practices or by new rules for placing products on the market.

I think it is a serious matter that glass and ceramic wares imported from third countries are not subject to the same tests as goods manufactured in the EU. In addition, some third-country producers mislead customers by distributing their products under such brand names as LONDON, PARIS, ITALIAN STYLE, BOHEMIAN CHINA, Bavarian etc. or CE, which may lead consumers to assume that their products (tableware) have undergone similar safety tests to products originating in the EU. I therefore call for an investigation into how, in the EU Member States, checks are made of the authenticity of certificates for glassware and how tableware articles are tested for safety.

Some of the problems could be solved by speeding up the adoption of regulations on the indication of the country of origin of certain products or the proposal for EU legislation for a Community certification mark, which would provide legal protection for an unidentifiable range of entities that fulfil certain conditions laid down by the proprietor of the Community certification mark.

Does the Commission intend to revise its position towards this branch of industry so as to take into consideration the specific circumstances of the glass and ceramics industry in Europe, including the large number of small and medium-sized enterprises involved and the preservation of our cultural heritage?

Does the Commission intend to take measures to protect the traditional branch of European trade and industry that is undoubtedly constituted by the glass and ceramics industry?

How do the individual Member States check that every three years producers or importers do in fact carry out tests/certification of their products intended for use as tableware?