

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0552/09
by Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Industrial disputes in the Massa Carrara province

The Massa Carrara province was, until the end of the 1980s, one of Italy's most flourishing industrial areas, whose products had an excellent reputation both in Italy and at European level.

At present, the province as a whole is in the throes of a profound crisis, which is affecting its larger companies as well as small companies operating in related sectors. On 8 January 2009, following a long-drawn-out and draining dispute, *Eaton*, the US company which produces car tappets, decided to close down its Massa Carrara plant. As a result, 345 employees will be left without a job, following a 75-day mobility period.

570 people were employed in Massa by the company in 2000. By 2006, this figure had dropped to 375 and, by 2008, 345. The *Nuovi Cantieri Apuania* (NCA spa) company, which was set up in the 1970s, has several decades' experience of shipbuilding work and high-tech products. NCA is also facing a profound crisis which is placing at risk some 800 jobs in the company itself and related industries.

The *ICA* company in Pallerone, which produces cabling for household appliances, has been put up for sale by its owners. 85 jobs are at risk, most of them occupied by women.

Added to all this are the problems faced by many companies operating in the marble sector, which has always been of vital economic importance to the province, in addition to being a fundamental socio-cultural feature of the region's identity.

The Italian Government has been accused by local organisations of not responding quickly enough to the area's crisis 'to resolve the problems which are having a structural impact on the competitiveness of the province's economy'.

Given the above and the strategic importance of the Massa Carrara industrial base, the Commission is requested to answer the following:

- Will it approach the Italian Government requesting that it take resolute action in the infrastructure sector and in rehabilitating and reindustrialising the area, in order to eliminate the factors affecting the crisis in the Massa Carrara province?
- Does it not believe – given the high level of know-how attained by the company in question – that it should promote specific initiatives to support and further develop the professional standards so far achieved, with due respect for free market rules?
- Will it ask the Italian Government to allocate part of the ESF advance for 2009 to employment, in order to conduct refresher and specialisation courses for workers who have lost or will lose their jobs in the above-mentioned company?