

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1316/09
by Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Socio-economic situation in the ornamental stone sector

During a recent visit to Pêro Pinheiro, in the Sintra administrative district (Portugal), where I held various meetings with the Lisbon District Building, Marble and Wood Workers Trade Union and with various companies, the serious situation facing the ornamental stone industry was raised. For years, it has been struggling with rising difficulties – due to war in the Middle East, the rising value of the euro, rising imports into the EU, and competition on the international market – and the situation is now critical, due to the sharp fall in demand related to the downturn in the building industry.

In the last 10 years, a significant number of companies in the region have had to close. The deteriorating economic situation in the sector goes hand in hand with rising job insecurity, attempts to undermine collective bargaining, and rising unemployment among workers in the industry.

Given this traditional industry's importance to economic activity and employment in the region in question:

- What financial resources were made available and taken up as part of the I-STONE research project, including the OSNET, LITHO-PRO and ECOMARBLE initiatives, broken down by year and by country?
- What financial resources were made available and taken up by the sector under the general incentive system (SIME), covered by the operating programme (Economia/PRIME) or under the regional programmes of the Third Community Support Framework (2000-2006) in Portugal?