

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2199/09

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to the Commission

Subject: Unilever restructuring

Unilever, a firm which operates in the chemical and food industry and has been present in over 100 countries around the world for some time, is carrying out a reorganisation and restructuring plan which will involve significant downsizing.

Unilever is a major player in Europe. In 2007 it had a turnover of €15 205 billion and a profit of €1 678 billion. The number of employees has been reduced from 307 000 in 1994 to 174 000 in 2007. For Europe, the repercussions of the restructuring process will be a major drain on the economy: from 2007 to 2010, 20-25 factories are expected to be closed and 12 000 workers made redundant.

Unilever's presence in Italy will therefore also be drastically downsized, as is the case with its factory in Casalpusterlengo.

Could the Commission clarify whether it has intended, or intends, to take action to obtain clearer explanations from the company?

Does it not think that, in the case of a company which continues to make substantial profits, that company should be encouraged to be more responsible, especially in a period of economic crisis and unemployment such as the one we are going through at present?

In accordance with the directives on CAE and on corporate social responsibility, does the Commission not consider it necessary to make arrangements for more urgent consultations, with a view to modifying the existing reorganisation plan in order to safeguard employment levels and avoid factory closures?

Does the Commission intend to take such a measure directly, as soon as possible, also in view of the imminence of the redundancies?

Precisely because of the critical phase that Europe is currently undergoing, Commission intervention would be warranted in order to achieve such objectives.