

**Question for written answer E-010768/2010  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Cross-border provision of information on combating small-scale economic crime

The cumbersome procedure for the exchange of information between Member State investigative authorities engaged in combating small-scale economic crime often results in failure to apprehend the persons concerned and the failure of investigations.

The authors of this question have been told by the competent Austrian authorities that obtaining commercial information from another Member State can take up to six months.

The value of information received so late is likely to be lost.

The same is true in the field of benefit fraud. For example, it is hard to investigate the case of beneficiaries of the Hartz IV scheme in Bavaria who moonlight across the border in Austria due to the current lack of a simple data exchange mechanism between German and Austrian authorities (which would not of course give details of the individuals involved).

The Commission is therefore requested to answer the following questions.

- Is the Commission currently making an effort or undertaking an initiative to make it easier in real terms for data to be exchanged between national authorities in the cases described above?
- If so, can the Commission say what the state of progress with its initiative is?