

**Question for written answer E-000120/2012  
to the Commission**  
Rule 117  
**Elisa Ferreira (S&D)**

Subject: Possible suspension of structural funds

The compromise reached in the negotiations on the economic governance package was the result of a long and demanding negotiating process between the Council and European Parliament, with the Commission playing an important mediation role.

This compromise makes provision for various possible forms of sanctions against Member States that do not comply with the commitments agreed upon either within the scope of the Stability and Growth Pact or in relation to correcting macroeconomic imbalances.

Many Members of Parliament considered these reinforced sanctions to be exaggerated and counterproductive, especially because the lack of policies to promote growth, convergence and employment in the Member States renders compliance with the deficit and debt targets unsustainable in the medium term. Despite this, the sanctions were accepted as part of the spirit of cross-party and interinstitutional compromise evident at the time of the agreement.

At no time during the negotiations was the possibility raised that the range of sanctions could be strengthened, particularly by suspending the structural funds.

1. Why does the Commission, weeks after the adoption of the economic governance package of legislation, now propose extending sanctions in the event of an infringement of the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact or the macroeconomic supervision process, introducing the automatic suspension of payments and commitments under all the structural funds (COM(2011)615 final (2011/0276 (COD), Chapter IV, Article 21 on 'macroeconomic conditionalities' of the Structural Funds, in particular paragraphs 6 and 7)?
2. What is the justification for a sanction that will penalise precisely those Member States which have structural convergence problems, since the divergence between real economies in the monetary union is one of the reasons for non-compliance?
3. How is this option consistent with the correct and fair decision taken by the President of the Commission to increase the structural funds (and to reduce national contributions) for the countries currently 'under the programme', thereby stimulating their economic recovery?