

**Question for written answer E-007559/2012
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Vladko Todorov Panayotov (ALDE)

Subject: Cartels of tour operators and tourism policy

Cartels of tour operators result in the creation of a collective dominant position on the part of some of the big operators and in cases of abuse, reflected in refusal to sell and in obliging hotels to accept lower rates or all-inclusive practices. Consequently, hotels are operating below cost and are having to make cuts in order to survive, and are accepting all kinds of concessions imposed by the tour operators under the 'threat' of refusal to sell. As a side-effect, the phenomenon of last-minute tourists receiving very poor-quality services is becoming more and more common. This situation is clearly affecting the survival of these hotels, which are mostly SMEs, and can also lead to refusal to sell a destination should the hotel owners refuse to reduce rates further or to accept excessive requests.

1. Will the Commission consider opening a comprehensive investigation of this situation under the competition law rules?
2. Will it consider undertaking an initiative to regulate and limit the all-inclusive practices that have repercussions on all the other services provided at the selected destinations, recalling that these affect restaurants and small traders, as well as cultural services, as tourists can end up being 'blocked' in hotels (all-inclusive practices in fact originated in third countries, owing to safety and security considerations concerning tourists)?
3. In this period of worsening climate change, has the Commission taken account of the disproportionate carbon footprint arising from charter flights and the artificial market for tourist services created by tour operators under the conditions described above?
4. Will the Commission consider allowing state aid to SME hotels, to enable them to survive and improve their services, given the gravity of the ongoing economic crisis?
5. Why is the Commission not developing a tourism policy under the Lisbon Treaty (Article 6 TFEU)?