

**Question for written answer E-002322/2014  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

**Nikos Chrysogelos (Verts/ALE)**

Subject: Unregulated state aid from Bulgaria to Dundee Precious Metals, a Canadian-based mining company

According to Bulgarian National Radio, the Thracians who lived in the lands of today's Bulgaria were known to be skilful miners and metallurgists. One of the places where traces of their activity are found is the Ada Tepe Hill in the Eastern Rhodopes, near the town of Krumovgrad. This is the oldest gold mine in Europe known to archaeologists. The mine dates back to the second millennium B.C. Scientists have discovered that gold could still be extracted from the mine nowadays.

During the Communist rule in Bulgaria, the gold deposit at Ada Tepe was investigated by the Bulgarian state in detail, financed by state geological research. There are archives on this research carried out by the state. On 9 February 2011, the Bulgarian Government granted, without a call for tender procedure, a 30-year concession to Dundee Precious Metals, a Canadian-based company, and to its Bulgarian branch, Balkan Minerals and Mining, for extraction of gold at Ada Tepe. The 'argument' for granting the concession without a call for tender was that 'the company discovered the gold'!

The Commission is asked to reply to the following:

1. Does it accept the argument used by the Bulgarian Government for granting the concession without a call for tender?
2. Does this practice constitute unregulated state aid?
3. Where the state sells or grants the contractual right of use of an asset at a price below market value, does this entail an advantage to the buyer which constitutes state aid?
4. What measures will be taken by the Commission to urge the Bulgarian Government to grant the concession of the Ada Tepe gold mine following an open, transparent and non-discriminatory call for tender procedure?