Question for written answer E-001359/2017
to the Commission
Rule 130
Zoltán Balczó (NI)

Subject: Inhabitants of Eastern Europe as second-class consumers

The Hungarian National Food Chain Safety Office (Nébih) compared certain products marketed by multinationals in Hungary with the same products sold in Western Europe. Tests carried out on the foodstuffs revealed significant variations in quality between foodstuffs bearing the same name sold in the two regions. It found foodstuffs in Western Europe to be better quality, with the (theoretically) same-sized packaging containing a greater quantity: there is more tuna in tins of tuna, the peanut butter is more buttery, and the cocoa powder has more flavour.

Slovakia's food monitoring agency tested soft drinks marketed in the EU's eastern and western markets and reported similar findings: some drinks reach consumers in the west with a lower sugar content and are better quality.

The topical nature of this issue is shown by the written declaration produced by MEPs on the subject.

According to the EU's official website, the advantage of the single market is that there is a greater choice of goods available to consumers. However, differentiating between consumers in this way gives reason for concern.

In the light of the above I would like to ask the Commission the following:

Does the practice of multinationals outlined above not reduce shoppers in Eastern European countries to the status of second-class consumers?

Does the practice of multinationals whereby the same product is provided to consumers in some Member States at a higher level of quality qualify as fair business practice?