Question for written answer E-002167/2018
to the Commission
Rule 130
Paolo De Castro (S&D), Clara Eugenia Aguilera García (S&D), Elisabetta Gardini (PPE), Esther Herranz García (PPE), Ivan Jakovčić (ALDE), Marijana Petir (PPE) and Damiano Zoffoli (S&D)

Subject: Sugar market in Mediterranean Member States

The liberalisation of the sugar market is fuelling increasingly aggressive competition and causing extreme price fluctuations, which in many cases are making sugar production economically unviable.

Countries such as Italy, Spain and Croatia have thus become the main outlets for surplus sugar from the Union's major producer countries, and it is sold there at considerably lower prices than those charged in the country of origin, despite the considerable transport costs involved.

This strategy of pushing prices down is bound to have very serious repercussions for sugar manufacturers and drive down the amount paid for sugar beet, which in itself accounts for more than 50% of the total cost of producing sugar. Sustaining beet production throughout the Union, including in Mediterranean countries, is strategically important for two reasons: producing beet locally is acknowledged to be good for communities and the environment, and sustaining production ensures that supplies to agri-food companies are secure.

In a context of falling world market prices:

1. Given the gross disparities in prices and the fact that sugar production is mainly concentrated in a few Member States, what steps will the Commission take to put paid to unfair practices and anti-competitive behaviour?

2. In view of the changes recently made by means of the Omnibus Regulation to Article 222 of the Common Organisation of the Markets Regulation, what exceptional measures could be taken in times of crisis?

3. Would it be possible to revise the current sugar reference price with a view to protecting all the Member States' sugar beet industries?