

**Question for written answer E-003750/2020
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Maria Spyra (PPE)

Subject: Smuggling tobacco products

The smuggling of tobacco products is a major problem for small retail businesses that operate legally because it reduces their turnover, as it deprives them of a large proportion of their potential consumers. Restrictions imposed due to the pandemic have temporarily reduced the problem, as the market has come to a standstill and also greatly reduced smuggling, which is a parasitic activity. However, with the lifting of restrictions, the problem is reappearing and making life even more difficult for the struggling small retail market and operators acting within the law.

In view of the above, will the Commission say:

1. In the light of the information available to it, what is its assessment of the annual economic loss from the illegal trade in tobacco products sustained by Member States of the European Union?
2. What steps will it take to combat tobacco smuggling at European level?