

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3210/03
by Pietro-Paolo Mennea (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Unfair competition in the textile sector

The Italian textile sector has been in difficulty for some years now.

The causes of this crisis include, first and foremost, competition from Asian companies following their incorporation into the WTO. These companies not only have infinitely lower labour costs, but also lack adequate and minimum internal rules as regards the labour market and the protection of their workers, who are often minors, and thereby violate the most fundamental citizens' rights and seriously infringe the freedom of the individual.

This unlawful conduct culminates in the customs clearance of the goods at Community ports, often without any invoices being presented or with the wrong qualities and quantities being declared, and with the systematic counterfeiting of local trade marks, including the most general trade mark 'Made in Italy', and frequent bypassing of tax legislation.

This unlawful situation subsequently becomes the basis for the sale of the finished product at a price considerably lower than the Community price, with the accompanying risk of closure of a significant proportion of the EU's textile firms and a serious knock-on effect on employment levels.

The manner in which these extra-Community companies compete on the EU market is unfair, unlawful and fraudulent.

In the light of the above, will the Commission intervene with the competent institutional bodies of the Member States to ensure they apply more frequent and stricter checks on goods entering Community countries?

Will it monitor and check whether extra-Community legal entities that own individual or collective companies and operate on Community territory conform to EU law, or in other words that they respect the right of competition and Member States' rights in the area of the labour market?

Is it within the Commission's powers to launch an official investigation in respect of the textile sector?