

WRITTEN QUESTION P-4550/07
by Amalia Sartori (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Obstacle to social and economic cohesion in Italy

In view of the combined provisions of Articles 159 and 158 of the EC Treaty as regards social and economic cohesion, the provisions of Article 87 on state aid (in particular the third paragraph on aid for regions which are lagging behind) and the economic situation of special-status Italian regions by comparison with that of ordinary regions, attention should be drawn to the fact that special-status regions make no contribution to the payment of interest on public debt but only to the payment of interest on the debt contracted for institutional purposes by their authorities. On average, special-status regions are subject to much lower per-capita State taxation: EUR 3146 in the case of Trento Province and EUR 3228 in the case of Bolzano Province, whereas the citizens of an ordinary-status region such as Veneto are required to pay EUR 7958. Consolidated public-sector expenditure in Trentino Alto Adige amounts to EUR 15 632 per inhabitant in Trento Province and to EUR 16 169 per inhabitant in Bolzano Province, compared with the EUR 9960 received by the citizens of Veneto Region. The per-capita fiscal balance calculated as the difference between final revenue and expenditure is on average in surplus in the case of Trento and Bolzano provinces but in deficit in the case of Veneto.

Will the Commission consider whether such an imbalance between neighbouring regions is compatible with the above-mentioned articles? Does it not constitute an obstacle to the achievement of the aims expressed in Article 158 and a form of unfair competition (especially within Italy, where businesses established in special-status regions enjoy greater opportunities underwritten by State funding)?

In particular, will the Commission assess the competitive advantages enjoyed by a producer who he is subject to the taxation scheme of a special-status region? Are such advantages compatible with free market competition or do they constitute a form of State aid?