

WRITTEN QUESTION P-6110/07  
by Antonio De Blasio (PPE-DE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Invitation to tender without the required call for public debate

When drawing on the Structural Funds, European Union Member States are required, before using the support they receive from the Funds, to issue a call for a public debate on the project which is entitled to assistance, thus making it possible for representatives of the relevant sector to familiarise themselves with the project and express an opinion on it.

On 28 September 2007, Hungary's National Development Agency, which is supervised by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, issued a call for public debate on a programme for the acquisition of digital blackboards for use in education. The Hungarian State would finance the expenditure of HUF 40 billion from European Union support funds. Officially, specialist organisations were supposed to have until 15 October 2007 to debate the plan, which is to be implemented as part of the social infrastructure programme. However, on the very same day on which the call for public debate was issued, i.e. 28 September 2007, the National Development Agency issued an invitation to tender for the first tranche of the programme, worth HUF 24.8 billion. This suggests that the Hungarian Government is violating European Union rules by failing to listen to expert opinions on the use of a substantial amount of support funding, while at the same time giving the impression that it is complying with the relevant European Union rules.

In view of these facts, can the Commission answer the following questions?

Is the invitation to tender which has been issued by the Hungarian Government valid without the required public debate? Does the support awarded to the project remain available despite this serious violation of the rules? If it is not regular, and if therefore the Hungarian Government's invitation to tender is not valid either, can the Commission compel the Hungarian Government to refund the support payment which has already been awarded? What will the Commission do to compel the Hungarian Government to withdraw the illegal invitation to tender and to proceed in a legal fashion in awarding subsidies?