

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2441/08  
by Alessandro Battilocchio (PSE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Problems experienced by non-profit-making organisations

On account of their proximity to ordinary people's needs and requirements, voluntary organisations and non-profit-making associations play a social role which is essential to the European Union.

The importance of such social-support associations and foundations as a means of promoting social inclusion, on-the-job training, youth policies, information concerning Europe, environmental protection and (more generally) the development of a 'social' Europe is acknowledged by the EU, which since 1997 has had a budget heading devoted to cooperation with social-support associations, non-governmental organisations and associations which protect the interests of the elderly.

Establishing contact, allowing such bodies to take part in Community tendering and organising the European Social Policy Forum are important steps which have been taken towards the recognition of the role of the so-called 'third sector'.

However, non-profit-making organisations are required on a daily basis to cope with financial burdens stemming from the activities they pursue, with the cost of equipment and with heavy taxation imposed by the Member States, which sometimes thwart the contribution made at European level and/or the efforts made by operators in the sector. It is still the case that, in Italy, such organisations are treated as profit-making companies as regards security costs, although paradoxically they are unable to take advantage of the benefits to be derived from the status of profit-making company - hence they are increasingly to be found on the verge of bankruptcy.

Will the Commission say what action it intends to take in order to persuade the Member States to introduce special measures for voluntary and non-profit-making associations in order to make it easier for them to pursue their social activities, possibly by granting tax exemptions and ad hoc facilities or funding for purposes including the purchase of machinery and in particular the provision of security for the premises and equipment which they need in order to pursue their activities?