

WRITTEN QUESTION P-4527/08
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to the Commission

Subject: Promotion of Calabria using EU funding

Despite the injection of huge financial resources, Calabria remains one of the two convergence objective (former Objective 1) regions, as reflected in the failure of the measures taken to date by local administrations and the ineffectiveness of the controls implemented by the competent authorities, including Community ones.

The Calabria Regional Council has recently placed great emphasis on the decision to sponsor the Italian national football team between now and the 2010 World Cup, with a view to promoting the region. According to the press, around EUR 8 million is to be invested, all of which will come from the funding the region receives from the EU under the 2007-2013 programming period with a view to its achieving the economic development and social inclusion objectives established for regions lagging behind the European standard.

Just one year previously, in 2007, the same region is said to have invested EUR 6 million in another promotional campaign that was not just debatable, but disastrous, and for which it commissioned the photographer Oliviero Toscani. Those funds would seem to have been channelled away from the tourist and commercial port sector, which is far more important to the development of a region which boasts around 800 km of coast.

The European Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control recently made an inspection visit to Calabria and Sicily, which are the two Italian regions with the highest incidence of fraud against the Community, and we await the findings and recommendations contained in its report.

This area may be a Member State competence, but is the Commission aware of the above facts? What steps will it take to ensure that an immediate in-depth check is performed? How does it view the decision to divert funds earmarked for priority and strategic objectives for use in questionable initiatives, which are more complex to assess and difficult to monitor?