

**Question for written answer P-014382/2013
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Susy De Martini (ECR)

Subject: Health - cuts to the number of grants for doctors training to be specialists

Given that:

- doctors training to be specialists are the future of the national health systems of the Member States;
 - Commissioner for Health, Tonio Borg, is responsible for protecting the health of European citizens;
 - on 23 October 2007, under Decision No 1350/2007/EC, the Health for Growth programme was established – the multi-annual programme of EU action in the field of health for the period 2008-2013; paragraph 16 of that decision states that ‘the Programme should help to identify the causes of health inequalities’;
 - EU Directive 93/16/EEC, subsequently amended by Directives 98/63/EC and 1999/46/EC, lays down rules governing specialist medical training, stipulating that such training should be remunerated;
 - Italy transposed the directive belatedly, implementing Law 389/99 but suspending Articles 37-42 concerning the adoption of a contract, until the necessary funds were made available; it was only with Law 266/2005 (the 2006 budget) that the funds were released and the contract for the academic year 2006-2007 was applied; this delay resulted in many doctors undergoing specialist training having to appeal to the courts, forcing Italy to award compensation in numerous cases;
 - under the Lisbon Treaty the EU guarantees that all EU citizens will be treated equally;
 - only at the end of their specialist training can young doctors apply to sit public competitive exams in order to be able to work as doctors in national hospitals;
 - in the 2012-2013 academic year the general situation became even worse due to financial provision being made for only 4500 ministerial contracts nationally, as opposed to the 10 000 graduates that used to be granted such contracts; this meets less than half of all medical requirements in the various regions;
 - for the academic year 2013-2014, the so-called Stability Law adopted by the Italian Parliament provides for cuts to reduce the number of training contracts to 2000 – insufficient to meet hospitals’ staffing needs;
1. Does the Commission not consider it advisable to take action to prevent the national health service, in future, from being short of the necessary medical staff to meet the needs of the people?
 2. If so, what measures are being taken, or does the Commission intend to take, to help the Italian Government reverse this trend?
 3. Will the Commission invest in the co-financing of the national health services of the Member States to prevent such excessive gaps from being created, for instance through the European Social Fund or the 2014-2020 programmes in support of secondary or higher education?