

**Question for written answer P-001512/2016
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Gianluca Buonanno (ENF)

Subject: 1994 Piedmont floods: differential treatment in respect of social security derogations

Following the floods in Piedmont in 1994, measures were adopted which allowed those affected to benefit from certain derogations.

Companies hit by flooding were entitled to a 90% reduction in their social security contributions for the three following years and could choose not to pay those contributions or to pay them and have them refunded later.

In 2011, the Commission opened an investigation into the legitimacy of that assistance, which had not been notified, and whether it therefore constituted state aid. In Decision C(2015)5549, the Commission set out that 'in areas hit by natural disasters more than ten years before the date of the present decision, recovery of the aid should not be ordered'. However, it said nothing about companies that had paid the contributions with the intention of exercising their option to have these refunded.

The same treatment should also be applied to companies that duly paid the charges and contributions, since taking the opposing stance would be illogical, undermine legal certainty and constitute unjustified differential treatment in the same circumstances, thereby breaching the very Community ideals referred to in the decision.

Does the Commission not feel it should rectify this differential treatment and grant a derogation also to companies that paid the contributions so that they can receive a refund, as is just and fitting?