

(98/C 323/106)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0821/98****by José Apolinário (PSE) to the Commission***(26 March 1998)*

*Subject:* The Community initiative, Leader, and tourism

Will the Commission give the total amount allocated, per Member State, in the 1994-1999 financial programming period to actions and projects specifically involving tourism within the framework of the Community initiative, Leader?

**Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission***(23 April 1998)*

A feature of the Community Leader II initiative is its decentralised implementation, with due regard for each regional/local authority's institutional jurisdiction and for the subsidiarity principle. The programmes approved by the Commission under the initiative for each Member State or region have an overall financial appropriation which is divided between four measures: acquiring skills, local action groups, other collective bodies and transnational cooperation.

In accordance with the notice to the Member States on the Community Leader II initiative,<sup>(1)</sup> each rural innovation programme run by a local action group (public and private partners cooperating on a multisectorial development strategy in a local-scale continuous area) may cover several operational aspects: technical support for rural development; training and recruitment assistance; rural tourism; small firms, craft enterprises and local services; local exploitation and marketing of agricultural, forestry and fisheries products; preservation and improvement of the environment and living conditions.

The Commission was not involved in selecting the local action groups (roughly 800 for the 15 Member States), and each Member State is responsible for approving the groups' rural innovation programmes. The individual selection of projects is a matter for the decision-making partnership at regional level, in compliance with Community policies and the criteria for the eligibility of measures under the Structural Funds.

Since rural tourism covers a wide range of activities, its importance will vary between Member States and Leader groups, depending on the opportunities for tourism projects and the priority they are given in the development plans submitted by each local action group.

Based on the experience of Leader I and the first reports for Leader II, it is estimated that 40% of the Community contribution of ECU 1 700 million (i.e. ECU 680 million) will be invested in rural tourism projects during the current programming period (1994-1999). Local Leader investment in rural tourism can be estimated at around ECU 1 300 million when national and private funding is taken into account.

The Commission will very shortly have available a retrospective assessment report on the Leader I programme, which will enable a more detailed overview of activities connected with rural tourism.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 180, 1.7.1994.

(98/C 323/107)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0838/98****by Roberta Angelilli (NI) to the Commission***(26 March 1998)*

*Subject:* Alleged irregularities committed by Enfap Uil in the management of ESF vocational training funds

There have recently been reports of further suspect episodes concerning the management of funds for vocational training in Latium. On 7 February 1998 the Director-General of the INPS (National Social Security Institute),