

Can the Commission state the reasons put forward by the Italian Government to justify the financial dealings involving the Istituto Poligrafico?

What action would the Commission take if the Istituto Poligrafico were to be found guilty of contravening European anti-trust laws?

(1999/C 348/024)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0087/99

by Roberta Angelilli (NI) to the Commission

(27 January 1999)

Subject: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato (IPZS) (Italian State Printing Works and Mint)

Commissioner Van Miert has started proceedings against the Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato (IPZS — Italian State Printing Works and Mint) for the breach of European competition law. In Italy too the Italian Parliament, the media and the Rome Public Prosecutor's Office are concerning themselves increasingly with the disastrous situation in the IPZS which in 1997 made a loss of LIT 614 thousand million out of a turnover of around LIT 1 000 thousand million.

This loss is largely the result of the management of the former chairman, Ruggeri, and a former director, Maggi, who, with other directors, created an empire of 35 subsidiary companies which they could use at will without being accountable for them even to the Board of Governors. For 5 years, a former governor, Mr Tribuni, has been informing the Italian Treasury of this state of affairs, which has only led to his being irregularly removed from office.

The reason for these possible cover-ups by the ministry in charge might be that thousands of millions of lire in counterfeit government bonds are in circulation (in other States as well), looking identical to the genuine bonds produced by the IPZS.

In view of the above, can the Commission:

1. indicate whether it believes it is essential to investigate the activities of the IPZS;
2. give a general opinion on the matter.

**Joint answer
to Written Questions E-0072/99 and E-0087/99
given by Mr Van Miert on behalf of the Commission**

(12 March 1999)

The Commission began its investigation of the state aid allegedly granted to Poligrafico in April 1997. The information provided by the Italian authorities on several occasions, at the Commission's request, was not such as to convince it that no state aid was involved.

By decision taken on 28 October 1998, the Commission initiated proceedings under Article 93(2) of the EC Treaty. This decision was notified to the Italian Government by letter dated 26 November 1998. The Italian Government asked for an extended period within which to submit its comments and the information requested.

The proceedings initiated will enable the Commission to determine whether the capital increases granted to Cartiere Miliani di Fabriano, a company controlled by Poligrafico, and the exclusive contracts awarded to Poligrafico to supply goods and services to the State constitute state aid, and, if so, whether that aid is compatible with the common market. The Commission will also examine the additional aid granted for the group's restructuring. The aid measures will be assessed in the light of the Treaty provisions on state aid and the guidelines on state aid for rescuing and restructuring firms in difficulty.

Should the Commission find that the measures are incompatible with the common market, it will order the recovery of the sums paid out to the recipients.

It is not for the Commission to judge whether the case involves criminal law matters in relation to the former managers of Poligrafico and the possible existence of forged government bonds.