

On 1 March 2000 the Commission decided that the south of Italy satisfied the eligibility criteria for the derogation in Article 87(3)(a) of the EC Treaty for the duration of the new regional aid map, i.e. until 31 December 2006.

In the case of the Structural Funds, the unemployment rate is one of the criteria used by the Commission to apportion between the Member States the commitment appropriations allocated under Objectives 1 and 3 for the period 2000-06. The unemployment rate is also one of the criteria used by the Commission to determine in each Member State concerned the population ceiling eligible for Objective 2.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 74, 10.3.1998, and OJ C 334, 12.12.1995.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 384, 10.12.1998.

(2001/C 89 E/016)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-1246/00**

**by Bart Staes (Verts/ALE) to the Commission**

(14 April 2000)

*Subject:* Adjustment programmes for tax systems in Southern Africa

In order to cope with the financial consequences of the free trade agreement between the European Union and South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland will have to drastically reform their tax systems. Together with South Africa, these four countries are in a customs union and are not allowed to levy duties at their common frontiers. Accordingly, EU products are bought and sold – via South Africa – duty-free, even though Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland are heavily dependent on customs tariffs for their revenue. In its answer to written question E-2382/99 <sup>(1)</sup>, the Commission announced its willingness to help the countries in Southern Africa with the tax reforms needed to diversify their sources of income.

1. Has the Commission already started programmes for advising the countries in question on the tax reforms needed to diversify their sources of income? If not, why not?
2. When will the programmes be started and by when must the adjustments be made?
3. What institutions and/or organisations are involved in the programmes?
4. What is the main thrust of the programmes with the countries in question?
5. What budget will be released for the programmes?

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 280 E, 3.10.2000, p. 36.

**Answer given by Mr Nielson on behalf of the Commission**

(15 June 2000)

The Commission would like to repeat its assurance to the Honourable Member, following the answer to the Honourable Member's Written Question E-765/00 <sup>(1)</sup>, that the Community is ready to assist Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland (BLNS) in implementing fiscal reform according to their own established timetables and their own fixed priorities.

The Commission is currently assisting the BLNS countries, at their request, with the preparation of a general support programme. The first phase will undertake analysis of adjustment issues arising from trade liberalisation and prepare activities to take advantage of the new opportunities in addition to coping with the necessary adjustment process. This phase is valued at € 6 million and is foreseen to be implemented over a three year period from January 2001-December 2003. It could be set up as a BLNS wide or a South African Customs Union (SACU) facility, while its financing would come from a mix of European

development fund (EDF) regional funds and European programme for reconstruction and development in South Africa (EPRD) resources and would thus be additional to national programme funding. South Africa has already accepted to earmark € 3 million of the EPRD allocation of 2000. A second phase will involve a package for assisting the private sector to enhance its competitiveness (through the introduction of new techniques, improved management and work practices and retraining of labour) and the design, where appropriate, of transitional budgetary support programmes within the context of coherent macro economic programmes. A third phase would focus on the implementation of such programmes.

Furthermore, a fiscal restructuring programme has been prepared at the request of Swaziland and will be presented to the EDF committee in June 2000. The project will be implemented over a four year period at a cost of 5,6 M€. The purpose of the project is to assist Swaziland in building up its capacity to formulate and implement a sound and equitable fiscal policy within a continued stable macro-economic environment. The International monetary fund (IMF) has been involved in the preparation of this programme.

Botswana recently submitted a request for support for an intended fiscal reform programme with the objective of enhancing government revenue. Its projected results will include the introduction of value added tax and the improvement of the assessment and the collection of taxes and duties. It has been agreed with Botswana that Community aid will firstly concentrate on the recruiting of a revenue adviser (July 2000) who will then assist with the design of a fiscal reform project.

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(<sup>1</sup>) OJ C 46 E, 13.2.2001.

(2001/C 89 E/017)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-1270/00**

**by Alejandro Cercas (PSE), Miguel Martínez Martínez (PSE),  
Emilio Menéndez del Valle (PSE) and María Sornosa Martínez (PSE) to the Commission**

(19 April 2000)

*Subject:* Internal competitions COM/TA/99, COM/TB/99 and COM/TC/99

On 2 December 1999 the Director-General of the Commission's Administration and Personnel department decided to 'reopen' the above three competitions until 22 December 1999, although the deadline for applications laid down in the relevant notices of competition had expired at 4 p.m. on 30 July 1999, and to postpone to a later date the written tests that were due to take place on 6/7 December 1999.

1. Would the Commission:

- indicate why, disregarding the opinion of the selection boards, it decided to admit not only candidates who, in the words of its decision of 2 December 1999, had not submitted all the documents required in accordance with point XII of the notices of competition — and thus had failed to comply with the rules laid down by the Commission itself for those competitions — but also new candidates who were permitted to apply for the competitions in question between 2 and 22 December 1999, in other words long after the officially published deadline?
- provide the names and state the number of candidates, by competition category, who were permitted by the selection boards to take part in the competition after 2 December 1999?
- certify that the candidates whose applications were accepted after 2 December 1999 did not include any persons who were related to Members of the Commission or members of Commissioners' private offices?
- indicate the nature of the guarantees offered by the Administration to persuade the selection boards to resume their duties after having tendered their resignation?