

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0297/04
by Theodorus Bouwman (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: Compliance with EU law of Spanish mining company UMINSA and possible frauds

In the last few weeks the mining company UMINSA has dismissed 16 miners, eight of whom are shop stewards for the Spanish trade unions 'Comisiones Obreras' and 'Unión General de Trabajadores'. The company has justified the dismissals with allegations such as having illegally called for a strike, and a belief that these employees may have been working whilst on sick leave. UMINSA is a major beneficiary of state aid, from both the Spanish State and the European Union, despite not respecting the current Coal Plan (Plan del Carbón)'s labour agreement, which provides that the company would create four new job places for 11 retirements, and forcing the miners to carry out unpaid overtime.

All evidence suggests that these are the first dismissals from a longer list with the objective of restructuring the company's workforce; all of it done in an irregular fashion, especially if we take into account the fact that they are dismissing workers with less than three months left before they become eligible for early retirement.

UMINSA's mine where the 16 dismissed employees worked is located in Velilla del Rio Carrión, in the Province of Palencia, Castilla-León, Spain.

We believe that UMINSA's behaviour is unacceptable and that the European institutions must exercise their stewardship of jobs, especially in a deprived area receiving Objective 1 funding, by not granting or authorising public money to companies such as UMINSA that do not carry out their labour or social duties. UMINSA has in fact received since 1998 substantial public subventions through the ECSC Treaty (see answer to question E-0342/02¹, 27 March 2002).

Can the European Commission assess whether UMINSA's actions comply with European labour law?

Furthermore, can the Commission investigate whether this might be a case of fraud on public funds, as the company is not fulfilling the objectives agreed to in the concession of such EU funds?

Can the Commission investigate whether the public money which has been allocated so far to UMINSA has been properly used? Can it make sure that UMINSA has not used the same aid for the same objective twice?

¹ OJ C 205 E, 29.8.2002, p. 122.