

**Question for written answer E-001873/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: The 'new poor' and SMEs

Since the onset of the crisis, poverty has affected many more people in Greece and in the rest of the EU. Unemployment and a reduction in wages and social benefits mean that people who had, until recently, enjoyed job security and a secure income have fallen below the poverty line, thereby joining the ranks of the new poor. Recent estimates by the GSEBEE (General Confederation of Greek Small Businesses and Trades) indicate that one third (1/3) of these are employees of small and medium-sized businesses and that one million self-employed people have been left without medical and pharmaceutical care.

At the same time, we are witnessing in Greece the excessive taxation of SMEs, while the fines provided for in the tax code have leaped from approximately 46 to 364 percentage points.

Similarly, it has become much more difficult for SMEs to borrow money, which has left many entrepreneurs without any possibility of securing funding or re-financing.

In view of the above, will the Commission say:

1. Are there any statistics about the number of the 'new poor' in Europe and the sector of employment from which they come?
2. What is the educational profile of the 'new poor' in the EU?
3. What action will the Commission take to ensure a healthy European business environment? Does it believe that high taxes, such as those in Greece, are consistent with efforts to boost entrepreneurship?
4. Does it intend to support SMEs by taking specific measures aimed at helping them to secure access to funding?