

(English version)

**Question for written answer P-001404/19**  
**to the Commission**  
**Dubravka Šuica (PPE)**  
(19 March 2019)

*Subject:* Extending the application of Rule 159 of the Rules of Procedure

The Croatian language is the only official language of the Republic of Croatia and one of the 24 official languages of the European Union, as well as the European Parliament. Rule 158 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure provides for the right of all Members to speak and use any official language of the European Union, which means that all 24 official languages should have equal rights. The fundamental principles of the European Union state that EU citizens have the right to obtain information about the EU's activities in a language that they can understand and have the possibility of participating in the EU's legislative process. Furthermore, the TFEU prohibits discrimination on the grounds of nationality, and therefore also on the grounds of language.

With this question, I would like to direct the Commission's attention to the vote held at Parliament's plenary session of 12 March 2019, which approved the extension of the application of Rule 159 of the Rules of Procedure until the end of the ninth parliamentary term. The explanation for this is that capacity in Croatian, Irish and Maltese is not expected to be such as to allow a full interpretation service in those languages from the beginning of the ninth parliamentary term. This puts the Croatian language in an inferior position to the other official languages of the EU.

What is the Commission doing to ensure equal rights for all languages within the EU, and how is it acting to ensure that all languages have the same status and can be used in the same manner?

**Answer given by Mr Oettinger on behalf of the European Commission**  
(7 June 2019)

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union explicitly provides that the Union shall respect, among others, linguistic diversity. The Commission is convinced that languages spoken in the Member States constitute an important part of the cultural heritage of all European citizens.

The extension of Rule 159 of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure applies to the European Parliament's own procedures.

As regards the Commission, to enable the recruitment of Croatian staff interpreters, the Commission's Directorate-General for Interpretation organised one internal competition and a call for temporary agents and the European Personnel Selection Office organised two competitions open to all the interpretation services of the institutions of the European Union. Although all the successful candidates from the reserve lists were recruited, their numbers did not meet the needs.

The Commission monitors — on a regular basis — the satisfaction of demand for interpretation in all European Union languages and — where relevant — takes specific measures to address the shortage in staff interpreters or free-lance interpreters.

As the Commission already stated in its reply to Question E-1335/2019, the Commission has, together with the European Parliament and the Court of Justice of the European Union, accredited 56 freelance interpreters to complement staff interpreters.

To further increase their number, the Directorate-General for Interpretation helped the Croatian authorities to establish the only conference interpretation course in Croatia at Zagreb University in 2005, which it has supported ever since financially (grants to the University EUR 1 31 206 and bursaries to students EUR 172 000) and pedagogically.

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