

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1811/03  
by Miquel Mayol i Raynal (Verts/ALE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Erasmus World programme

The Council of the European Union recently reached a political agreement concerning the implementation of the Erasmus World programme. The aim of this programme is to create a quality framework with a view to attracting greater numbers of postgraduate students from all parts of the world.

It has been suggested in various milieux that this programme should be viewed as an opportunity to boost competitiveness and further the objectives laid down by the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 with the aim of making the EU 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world'.

Under the programme, it is planned to create grants for Masters-level courses, subject to the condition that the courses should be offered in at least two of the EU's official languages. This would have the effect of marginalising the Catalan language in the teaching of Masters and other courses. Catalan, despite being the native tongue of more than 7 m people and an official language in Catalonia, the Valencia region and the Balearic islands, has still not been granted official status at EU level. The Catalan language will, therefore, not be eligible for the above-mentioned aids. This amounts to yet another blow against the long-established Catalan language and culture - even more so considering that Barcelona, in which university-level teaching is carried out mainly in Catalan, receives more Erasmus students than any other university town in the Spanish state.

1. Does the Commission intend to take action to correct the adverse effects of this policy on the teaching of Catalan (and other European languages) at university level?
2. Does the Commission believe this policy to be compatible with its own efforts to promote multilingualism and the learning of non-majority languages in the Member States?