

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0113/04

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to the Commission

Subject: Maltese language for the next parliamentary term

Languages are one of Europe's greatest assets, therefore it is vital that the European institutions protect and promote the diversity of languages and cultures in Europe. Both the European Parliament and the Commission have always given importance to having proper working tools in order to translate and interpret into all the official languages of the European Union. However, it has been brought to our attention that it is likely that there will be a shortage of translators and interpreters in the Maltese language. Thus, there is a strong risk that Maltese parliamentarians and officials will not be able to use Maltese in any EU institution, as from 1 May 2004.

As part of the enlargement process, Malta should have been able to supply enough interpreters and translators in order for Maltese to be an official language of the European institutions. However, the current university course for such disciplines held at the University of Malta has only been activated this year for the first time, on a part-time basis which has not provided a sufficient number of professionals in this field.

In this context:

1. Does the Commission know for what reasons this part of the enlargement process has not been respected?
2. Would it be possible for the Commission to address this situation by offering financial assistance to the University of Malta so that the above course is run on a full-time basis, thus enabling Maltese interpreters and translators to qualify in a shorter space of time?