

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0651/04
by Philip Claeys (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Position of the French language in the European institutions

According to press reports, the Commission is apparently earmarking some EUR 20 million in order to make French 'the' official language in the institutions. The relevant decision was apparently taken after it became clear that the vast majority of future officials from the ten new Member States had English as their second language. Still according to press reports, the aim is, apparently, to teach French to 5 000 officials by 2008. (The French Government itself is also making an effort to promote the French language in the future Member States).

Is this information correct?

While nobody would deny the desirability of promoting a knowledge of languages other than the mother tongue, primarily in the European institutions as well, it would seem that the learning of one specific language (namely French) is being promoted as a reaction to the perceived dominance of another language. Were similar measures set up in the past with the same view in mind? Which languages were then involved?

Is not the Commission giving the impression that it is trying to regulate the relationship between languages in the European Union for the benefit of one specific language and to the detriment of others? Should not the Commission be adopting an impartial stance?