

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0743/05  
by Antonio De Poli (PPE-DE)  
to the Council

Subject: Free library lending and infringement proceedings against Italy

On 16 January 2004, the European Commission launched infringement proceedings against certain states, including Italy, in respect of national legislation governing free book lending in libraries and other public establishments.

Under article 5 of Directive 92/100/EC<sup>1</sup> on rental and lending, each Member State is able to continue to provide for free library loans, in promoting the right to information and pursuing a policy aimed at the dissemination of culture to all.

Libraries already meet the obligation of paying royalties at the time books are purchased, and ensure that these books are in circulation for a period considerably longer than the logic of the market dictates.

The number of people that use libraries is already fairly limited, at least in Italy, and introducing a rental system would simply have the effect of alienating those people too, rather than kindling a passion for reading, and would penalise those social groups, children, adolescents and the elderly, who make the greatest use of library services for studying and in their free time.

Is the Council aware of these infringement proceedings, and of the serious effect they could have?

Will it uphold and promote article 5 of the aforementioned directive, rather than letting the infringement proceedings jeopardise the dissemination of literary and scientific culture, given also that on the basis of Article 14(1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which forms Part II of the European Constitution, 'everyone has the right to education and to vocational and continuing training'?

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 346, 27.11.1992, p. 61.