

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2914/05

by Marco Pannella (ALDE) and Emma Bonino (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Fairness and effectiveness of language policies and the state of multilingualism in Europe's education systems

According to a report by Professor Grin (Director of the SRED in Geneva) which was commissioned in France by the HCEE, the United Kingdom earns a net amount of up to EUR 18 billion per year as a result of the predominance of English, whereas the teaching of Esperanto would enable Europe as a whole to save a net amount of approximately EUR 25 billion per year.

This is consistent with what has already been stated in other important documents, such as the Dell'Alba report drawn up for the European Parliament's Institutional Affairs Committee in 2003, the project paper entitled 'The costs of linguistic non-communication in Europe' (which was published in 1996 with a contribution from the Commission), and Circular No 21-22, issued on 25 May 1995 by the Italian Education Ministry.

- Is the Commission aware of the above documents and of what they have to say as regards the fairness and effectiveness of language policies? If so, what view does it take of the statements made in the documents? If the Commission is not aware of them, is it willing to note them, assess them and express an opinion on them?

- What view does the Commission take of the fact that, according to the February 2001 edition of Eurobarometer 54 [cf. EB55.1, Spring 2001], the people in Europe who spend the least time studying foreign languages and who have the least knowledge of them are those from the countries (Ireland and the United Kingdom) in which the language which is most widely learnt by the other peoples of Europe is spoken?

- What view does the Commission take of the fact that in February 2004 the compulsory study of English with effect from the first year of primary education was made a legal requirement in Italy and may soon become a similar requirement in France when the Fillion Law is enacted? Does the fact that, in Italy, English has been stipulated by decree (Decree No 59 of 2004) as the only possible first foreign language not constitute an infringement of Community law on language-teaching and in particular of the 14 February 2002 resolution on linguistic diversity and language-learning? How does the Commission intend to tackle these issues?