

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2915/05

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

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

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.

- Would the Commission provide detailed statistics indicating how many (and which particular) languages are taught in the Member States in the course of compulsory education, as first, second and third languages, at university level, as part of vocational training and in adult education? For each language, would it indicate what percentage of the total number of students are studying it? Would it also state the percentage of scientific publications and of speeches at major international congresses which appear or are made in the various European languages? If such statistics are not available, would the Commission not agree that they need to be collated without delay?

- Is the Commission aware that, according to the UNESCO Atlas of Languages in Danger (which has recently been published in Italian), about 60% of Europe's languages could soon disappear? Could it provide precise information as to how many and which particular languages are at risk in the EU and what each language's current degree of impoverishment is? Does the Commission not think that it should monitor the state of health of the EU's languages and language policies - for example, by setting up a Language-Policy Monitoring Centre as proposed in the UNESCO Stockholm Conference Action Plan and the Resolution on Multilingualism in Cyberspace, which was adopted by UNESCO in 2003?

- Does the Commission not think that a European Conference on Languages (at which the future of Europe's languages - and hence of its peoples - could be discussed) should be organised as a matter of extreme urgency?