

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0277/06

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to the Commission

Subject: Meeting on culture and integration - 12 January 2006

On 12 January 2006 the Commission President - Mr José Manuel Barroso - and the Commissioner responsible for culture called a meeting of 18 prominent representatives of the European cultural world for the purpose of identifying ways of promoting culture and identity within the European Union. Particular attention was devoted to the role played by culture in the process of European integration, with specific reference to the plan to promote 2008 as the 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue'. The event was attended by writers, artists, singers, teachers and museum, theatre, academy and festival directors from a number of Member States and from other countries too. In the light of this information, would the Commission answer the following questions?

1. What criteria were used by the Commission for the purpose of selecting the experts and assessing the Member States' degree of representativeness ?
2. On what grounds did the Commission decide not to involve Italy in the debate on culture and integration, even though Italy is a country which is universally acknowledged as having always made major contributions to the world of art and culture and which is visited each year by thousands of artists and art lovers from all over the world?
3. Does the Commission not think that its decision not to involve Italy (a founder member of the European Union and a country which has always been a leader in the promotion of European citizenship and integration) in an event on European culture which was attended by (amongst others) some of the new Member States, a representative of Geneva University, a Serbo-Croat writer and an American opera singer was a serious failing and that Italian artists or representatives of Italian cultural institutions could have made a significant contribution to the debate?
4. Is the Commission planning to organise other, similar events for the purpose of continuing the debate on the cultural sector's priorities (a sector to which the EU allocates approximately EUR 35 million per year)? If it is, does it not think that all the Member States should be given the same opportunity to attend?