

**Question for written answer E-000674/2011
to the Council**

Rule 117

María Muñoz De Urquiza (S&D), Antonio Masip Hidalgo (S&D) and Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez (S&D)

Subject: Spanish in the EU and maximising its potential worldwide

Spanish is one of the world's most important languages, with over 500 million speakers. Its use is not limited to Spanish-speaking countries: it is the third most widely studied language in the world. In countries with which Europe maintains a very close relationship, such as the USA, there are already more than 50 million Spanish speakers.

According to forecasts, Spanish will be more widely spoken than English in 2030 and, by 2045, Spanish could overtake Mandarin Chinese as the world's number one language in terms of speakers.

Moreover, it is the third most widely used language on the Internet and it is expected to grow in a similar manner.

In view of these facts, the EU's role as an actor on the global stage and the ascent of Spanish in Europe and beyond:

What mechanisms are planned to maximise the economic and cultural potential of Spanish for the benefit of the EU as a whole? What initiatives has the Council launched to give Spanish a position commensurate with its importance, both in the EU and beyond? Does the Council consider that forthcoming initiatives to increase the EU's global competitiveness, such as establishing the European patent, should take account of the potential of Spanish as the first language of, or a lingua franca for, a great many newly industrialising countries?

Does the Council not think that it should reconsider its internal rules on use of languages and make Spanish a working language for its day-to-day business?