

**Question for written answer E-009852/2013  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

**Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D)**

Subject: Discrimination against the hard-of-hearing as regards access to information

Even though the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force in the European Union on 21 January 2011, in some Member States deaf people are still not able fully to participate in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their country. Television could be a particularly useful tool for enabling deaf people to access information, as it is a quick and effective visual medium, which is particularly suited to their disability and could meet their various needs in terms of information. Associations and organisations for deaf people have repeatedly stressed how important it is to remove the obstacles faced by deaf people in access to information, by providing subtitling or sign language interpretation on television programmes. Moreover, it is very important to ensure that sign language interpretation is of good quality and that subtitles are clearly legible. In some Member States, the face of the sign language interpreter appears in a window that is so small that it is simply impossible for deaf people to distinguish facial expressions, which are so important in sign language. Deaf people can therefore only partially understand the daily news.

Unfortunately, in some countries, such as Lithuania, children and young people who are hard-of-hearing or deaf have no access to TV programmes for children and young people of their own age, due to a lack of subtitling or interpretation into sign language.

Does the Commission not think that swift action should be taken to eliminate the obstacles encountered by the hard-of-hearing as regards access to information, to combat discrimination against deaf people and to provide them with equal opportunities in access to information?

In its report on mobility and inclusion of people with disabilities and the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (2010/2272 (INI)), adopted on 25 October 2011, Parliament once again called on the Member States and the Commission to take steps to ensure that sign language was recognised as an official language in the Member States.