

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2662/05
by Jean-Claude Martinez (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Wine-bottle labels

I should be grateful if the Commission would give me some information about the language which must be used on wine bottles with effect from 25 November 2005.

On health grounds, it has been decided that wine bottles will have to bear a label including the words 'contains sulphites'. However, when bottling their wines, the grower, the cellarman, the bottler and the wine merchant have no way of knowing in advance to which of the 25 Member States of the Union his bottles will be dispatched. Accordingly, he cannot know in advance which language to use on the label.

On 10 June 1991, the Court of Justice of the European Communities ruled that a Member State may not hide behind the exclusive nature of its language, otherwise that 'non-tariff barrier to trade' might be held to be a 'measure having an equivalent effect to a quantitative restriction'.

In practice, what rules is the Commission envisaging? May the label be written in one single language, for example in the language of the exporting country, or must it be in two languages, one of which is understandable by the consumer? In those circumstances, what would that second language be?