

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2286/09
by Iles Braghetto (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Italian Government legislative decree on foreign language learning at variance with the European principle of multilingualism

Article 25(3) of Legislative Decree 226/2005 enacted by the Italian Government and concerning the language options offered in Italian secondary schools stipulates that students may be taught a second Community language as an 'optional' activity or course. Paragraph 2 of Article 25, meanwhile, proposes that students should attain a level of learning of the English language similar to that attained for the Italian language and that in order to learn English they should also use the number of hours allotted to the second Community language.

This clearly conflicts with the European policy to protect and promote multilingualism, which is based on numerous Commission initiatives starting with the White Paper on education and training (COM(95)0590); the fourth objective of that text states that the knowledge of at least two Community languages, in addition to one's own mother tongue, is now a prerequisite to allow EU citizens to benefit from the professional and personal opportunities offered by the great internal border-free market.

The second paragraph of Leg. Dec. 226/2005 is also in clear breach of the provisions of the Commission, the Council of Europe, the 2000 Lisbon Summit, the European Council meeting in Barcelona (March 2002), the Treaty of Lisbon of 13 December 2007 and the Commission Communication on multilingualism by Leonard Orban (COM(2008) 566 of 18 September 2008) (provisions endorsed also by Italy); the latter text, in a European Union with 23 official languages, calls for a *'harmonious co-existence of languages'*, which are *'part of a shared inheritance'* in the European Union, since languages *'can serve as a bridge to other people and open access to other countries and cultures, promoting mutual understanding'*.

Does the Commission agree that the provisions of Legislative Decree 226/2005 are at variance with the EU policy to protect and promote multilingualism?

Does the Commission intend to take action against Italy to protect the legitimate interest of students to be able to choose independently, without government interference, which foreign language to choose in the curriculum offered by the education system?