

Bruges, 24 February 2010

For the attention of Ms. Androulla Vassiliou, commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.

Subject: translation to Catalan at European Commission's office in Barcelona

Dear Ms. Vassiliou,

It is with deep concern that we knew today that the European Commission will not hire a new translator to Catalan in the EU office in Barcelona, after the contract of the current translator will be ended on 31 July 2010. Instead of, the European Commission has opened an internal competition for translator from English and French to Spanish for its Madrid office.

You may be aware of the fact that communicating the EU is not an easy task. The EU does more than citizens know, but still lags behind in catching the citizens' attention on issues that affect their daily life. It is of outmost importance that citizens are able to find EU-related information in their mother language, to better understand and participate in a process that, without the citizens' input, loses interest and appeal, besides legitimacy.

The EU of the 21st century will have to move towards multilingualism, or it will lose even more support. It is astonishing that a language like Catalan, having more than 9 million, being thus the 8th language in the EU in number of speakers, will not have a single translator in the Commission's office in Barcelona. We are not asking you to support the officiality of Catalan in the EU, which is purely a domestic issue that the Spanish state must solve on its own. We are asking you to use the instruments that are at your disposal to solve a *de facto* reality: there is demand for documents translated into Catalan and it would not suppose a huge financial burden, compared to the money dedicated to translation of official documents to EU official languages with fewer users than Catalan.

We therefore ask you to reconsider this decision within the Directorate-General for Translation, which sets a negative precedent in a recently-elected Commission. A small fact like the lack of translators to Catalan may seem just an anecdote, but at the end it sends the wrong message to citizens and puts under question the EU's policy towards diversity. As you stated in your hearing at the European Parliament on January 14th 2010 "*Linguistic diversity, including regional and minority languages as well as the languages of immigrant communities, should be respected*".¹

Looking forward to hearing from you, receive our best regards.

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Catalan-speaking students at the College of Europe in Bruges (Belgium) and Natolin (Poland).²

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http://www.europarl.europa.eu/hearings//press_service/product.htm?ref=20100113IPR67204&secondRef=0&language=EN

² The signatories of this letter state an individual position and are exclusively responsible for its content, which does not express an official position by the College of Europe.