WRITTEN QUESTION E-1461/03
by Bárbara Dührkop Dührkop (PSE) to the Commission
(29 April 2003)

Subject: European Social Fund and intercultural education

In its resolution of 21 January 1993 on cultural plurality and the problems of school education for children of immigrants in the European Community(1), the European Parliament called on the Commission to submit to it, within twelve months, a detailed report on the contribution of the European Social Fund to the teaching of the mother tongue of the country of origin to children of immigrants.

In its answer to my Written Question 815/95(2) on mother-tongue teaching for the children of migrants in 1995, the Commission stated that it had undertaken to carry out a thorough evaluation of all operations being co-financed by the ESF over the period 1994-1999.

Did the Commission indeed carry out that evaluation? If so, what was the outcome thereof?

In any case will the Commission give details of the number of projects co-financed by the ESF for intercultural education (whether for teaching in the mother tongue or in the native language of the host country) and of the appropriations earmarked for them, with a breakdown by country, over the period 1994-2003?

(1) OJC42, 15.2.1993, p. 187.
(2) OJC190, 24.7.1995, p. 28.

Answer given by Mrs Diamantopoulou on behalf of the Commission
(13 June 2003)

According to Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999 of the Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 1999 on the European Social Fund(1), the European Social Fund (ESF) intervenes in five policy fields: active labour market policies, equal opportunities, life-long learning, adaptability and gender equality. On the basis of their labour market situation and workforce skills needs, Member States decide which priorities they wish to be funded under these policy fields.

Language skills are important for facilitating the integration of immigrants in the labour market and can be co-financed by the ESF. Activities related to the education and care of children can be supported by the ESF to facilitate the integration or re-integration of parents, especially women, in the labour market. However, the intercultural education of children of immigrants (in the sense of teaching children of immigrants in their mother tongue or in the language of the host country) is not an ESF priority as such.

The Commission is currently in the process of undertaking an overall ex-post evaluation of the mainstream ESF interventions in the programming period 1994-1999. This evaluation will be completed in Autumn 2003 and shall be submitted direct to the Honourable Member.

Evaluations have also been carried out on the former Community Initiatives, Adapt and Employment, which included the integration in the labour market of socially excluded people, including migrants (in particular the Integra strand). The Commission is sending these evaluations direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat.

As the Member States are responsible for the implementation and management of the funds in accordance with the provisions of the Structural Funds regulations, the Commission has no details of the number of ESF projects for particular activities, such as intercultural education, and of the appropriations earmarked for them.