

(98/C 174/136)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3609/97****by Esko Seppänen (GUE/NGL) to the Commission***(13 November 1997)*

*Subject:* Improving the position of general linguistic research in EU research funding

In the future, a growing proportion of the funds spent on European linguistic research will come direct from the EU. In the EU's research programmes, linguistic research is divided into four main categories:

- information-gathering systems and programmes which develop and exploit computerized language analysis,
- general cultural research programmes,
- programmes focusing on research and technological development in the former Soviet Union, former socialist countries and developing countries,
- programmes to promote cooperation between researchers and training.

At present, however, the EU's language research programmes comprise very few sectors concerned with fundamental or theoretical research.

The problems associated with the funding of fundamental linguistic research arise primarily from the fact that it is generally a long time before the findings can be exploited. Nonetheless, in two individual Member States for example — the Netherlands and Germany — funding of theoretical linguistic research has been regarded as an economic investment. In both countries, theoretical research into language is being pursued at a very advanced level.

What possible measures has the Commission considered with a view to improving the position of general linguistic research? Would it be possible, for instance, to link linguistic research to the work of the JRC (Joint Research Centre) or to institute a special fundamental linguistic research programme?

**Answer given by Mrs Cresson on behalf of the Commission***(23 January 1998)*

The Commission's proposed 5th Framework Programme for research <sup>(1)</sup> does not include a specific programme concerning basic linguistic research. However, within the specific programme entitled 'Developing a user-friendly information society' there is a plan to conduct activities on new language technologies in order to make information and communication systems more user friendly, more particularly as part of key-activity III 'Content and multimedia tools'. These activities will, inter alia, be aimed at certain aspects of basic research.

The activities of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) do not at the moment include any linguistic research.

Moreover, at least in the short term, the JRC would be in no position to begin work in this area.

<sup>(1)</sup> COM(97) 142 final.

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**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3610/97****by Pervenche Berès (PSE) to the Commission***(13 November 1997)*

*Subject:* Invalidity card

On 1 September 1997 I asked the Commission about the possibility of adopting a harmonized invalidity card throughout the Member States (Written Question E-2815/97) <sup>(1)</sup>.

In its reply of 3 October the Commission surprisingly stated that 'on the basis of the powers and responsibilities conferred on it by the Treaties, the Commission currently has no plans to harmonise the invalidity cards issued in the various Member States'.