

The Commission is aware of the preoccupations of Member States regarding the impact of the introduction of the euro on agricultural markets. As the Honourable Member acknowledges, the creation of the euro area zone, particularly given the expectation of participation of a large number of Member States, will considerably lessen the importance of the agrimonetary mechanisms in the third stage of EMU. Given that the decision has not yet been made on the list of participants in EMU, it would be premature to present any proposals now for any alterations to the compensation mechanism, which is currently in operation. The Commission will return to this topic once the configuration of Member States participating in EMU is known.

(98/C 174/207)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3822/97

by Roberto Mezzaroma (UPE) to the Commission

(28 November 1997)

Subject: Sign language

There is a need for a common sign language to ensure that Europe's deaf and dumb citizens are able to communicate wherever they are in Europe. At present a different sign language is used in each country, which creates serious problems with regard to communication and to training people to work with the deaf and dumb.

What action does the Commission intend to take to solve this problem while taking into account both the Member States' respective cultural traditions and the need to facilitate communication with and between the deaf and dumb?

Answer given by Mr Flynn on behalf of the Commission

(16 January 1998)

In 1995, the Parliament allocated the amount of 500 000 ecus for measures related to sign languages in the Community.

The Commission then took steps to ask the non-governmental organisation, the European Union of the deaf, to set up sign language projects in 1996 and 1997 which had to take into account the 1988 Resolution of the Parliament to help promote the right of deaf people to use sign language. The results of the 1996/1997 projects were examined at a special conference on sign languages, held in Brussels in September 1997. This conference aimed inter alia, at harnessing public support for deaf people to use their chosen medium, sign language, to participate on an equal basis in society. That is an aim which the Commission shares.

However, given that there are as many, or perhaps even more, sign languages than spoken languages in the Community and that deaf people are educated in the sign language of their region, which reflects that region's particular history and culture, there are no plans to propose a common sign language for the Community.

(98/C 174/208)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3825/97

by Roberto Mezzaroma (UPE) to the Commission

(28 November 1997)

Subject: Protection of artists in Europe

What does the Commission intend to do- or has it already done -to ensure a decent standard of living for those artists, writers, journalists, sculptors, painters and musicians who have promoted the arts in their own countries and in Europe by their efforts, thus contributing to its gradual integration; in particular, what is done to ensure that those artists who do not earn enough to make a living, and who do not receive welfare payments or have access to suitable premises in which to exercise their talents, receive financial support to provide them with an adequate standard of living?