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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.
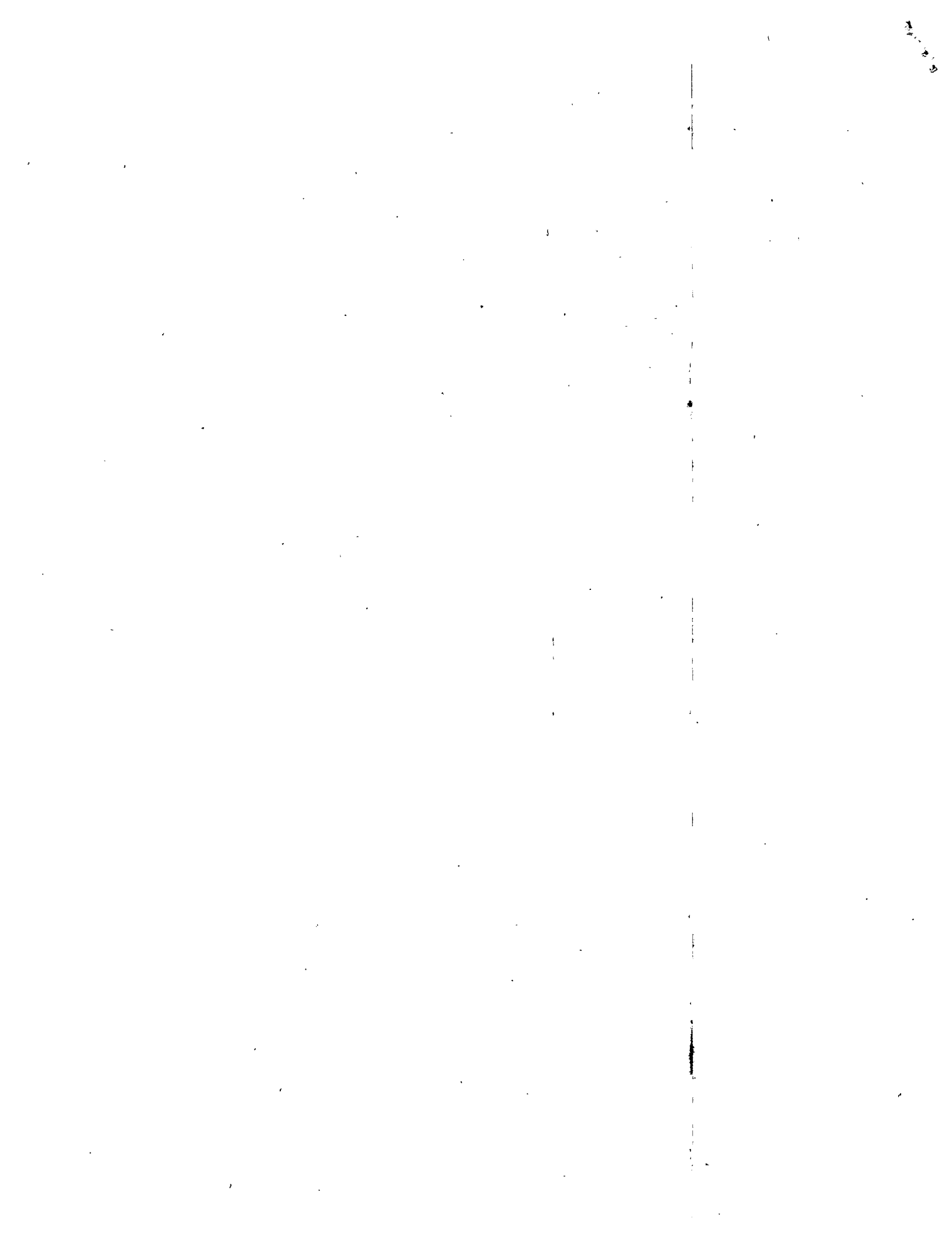
Working Documents

1982-1983

REPORT

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on the Rules
of Procedure and Petitions

on the multilingualism of the European Community

Rapporteur: Mr K. NYBORG

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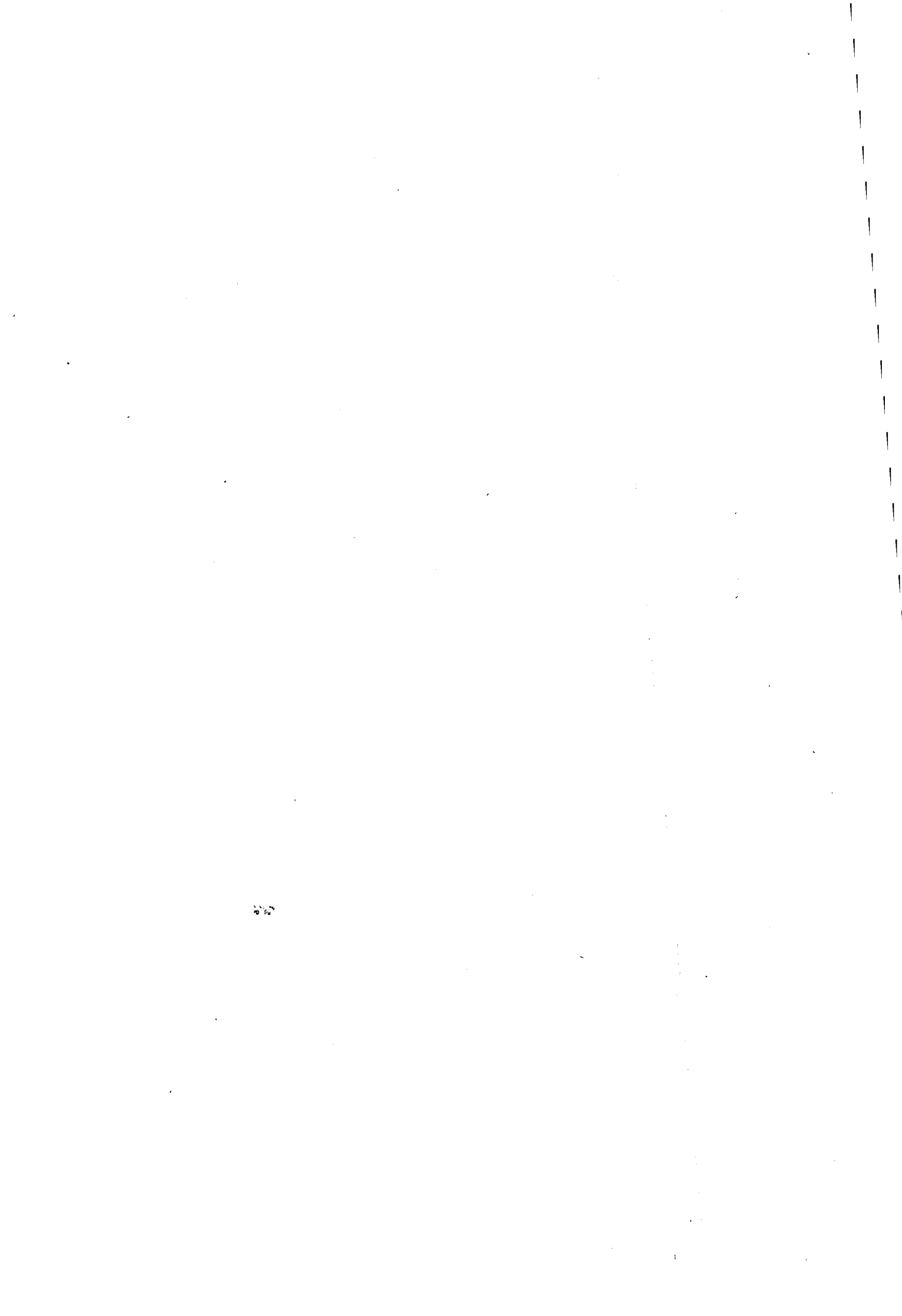
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

CORRIGENDUM

to the NYBORG report on the multilingualism of the European Community
(Doc. 1-306/82)

The following paragraph in the motion for a resolution has been deleted:

3a. 'Urges, in particular, continued research into machine translation systems
and other technological possibilities which may reduce costs;'

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16 July 1982

On 26 September 1979 the President of the European Parliament referred the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Coppieters on the problems arising from the multilingualism of the European Community (Doc. 1-331/79) to the Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions.

At its meeting of 19-20 November 1979 the committee appointed Mr Nyborg rapporteur.

It considered the motion for a resolution at its meetings of 17-18 December 1979 and 23-24 April 1981. At the latter meeting it decided not to recommend the setting up of a special working group or an ad hoc committee on language problems, but to deal with language problems itself in so far as they were connected with the Rules of Procedure.

On 16 June 1981 the President of the European Parliament referred the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Colla and others on the use of languages in the European Parliament (Doc. 1-286/81) to the Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions.

At its meeting of 12-13 May 1981 the committee was informed of the discussions that had taken place in the College of Quaestors on translation, printing and distribution problems.

The committee considered the language problems at its meetings of 21-22 September 1981, 21-22 December 1981, 31 March-1 April 1982 and 25-26 April 1982. At this last meeting it adopted the draft report by 11 votes to 4 with no abstentions.

The following took part in the vote: Mr Nyborg, chairman and rapporteur; Mr Poniridis, first vice-chairman, Mr Verroken, second vice-chairman, and Mr Adonnino, third vice-chairman; Mrs Baduel Glorioso (deputizing for Mr Ferrero), Mrs Cinciari Rodano (deputizing for Mr Chambeiron), Mr D'Angelosante, Mr Forth, Mr Herman, Mr Papaefstratiou, Mr Patterson, Mr Prout, Mr Sassano (deputizing for Mr Lima), Mrs Vayssade and Mr Wedekind.

The opinions of the Political Affairs Committee and the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport are attached.

C O N T E N T S

The Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the multilingualism of the European Community

The European Parliament,

A. having regard to Article 217 of the EEC Treaty

B. having regard to Articles 1 and 6 of Council Regulation No. 1 of 15 April 1958[1] as amended by the 1972[2] and 1979[3] Acts of Accession,

C. having regard to Rule 61 of the Rules of Procedure,

D. having regard to the report of the Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions and the opinions of the Political Affairs Committee and the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport (Doc. 1-306/82),

E. whereas any limitation of the number of languages used by the European Parliament would interfere with the democratic nature of Parliament,

F. whereas discrimination against certain languages in favour of others in the European Parliament would be an infringement of the democratic voting rights of Community citizens as they should be able to elect their representatives exclusively on the basis of political criteria and of who will best represent their interests, without any additional linguistic criteria being laid down,

G. whereas all Members of Parliament are entitled to equal treatment irrespective of their active or passive knowledge of languages,

H. whereas, although the costs entailed by the multilingualism of the Community are considerable, they nevertheless represent only about 2% of the Community's total budget,

1. Unequivocally affirms that the official languages and the working languages of the Community institutions are Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek and Italian;

2. Confirms the rule that there is to be absolute equality between the Community languages, whether used actively or passively, in writing or orally, at all meetings of Parliament and its bodies;

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[1] OJ No. 17, 6.10.1958, p. 385

[2] OJ No. L 73, 27.3.1972, p. 14

[3] OJ No. L 291, 19.11.1979, p. 113

3. Supports any measure to speed up its work and to effect savings in connection with the Community's language arrangements, provided such measures are compatible with the principle that all the languages have equal status;

4. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Introduction

1.   On the basis of the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Coppieters (Doc. 1-331/79)[1] the Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions has considered the language problems of the Community institutions and particularly the European Parliament.   In his motion for a resolution Mr Coppieters proposes the creation of a special committee to study the language problems of the institutions of the European Community.   This proposal was rejected in principle by the committee at its meeting of 23-24 April 1981;   at the same time the committee undertook to consider these language problems itself in as far as they were connected with the Rules of Procedure. Mr Colla and others have since tabled a motion for a resolution (Doc. 1-286/81) on the use of languages in the European Parliament[2], which is annexed to this report.

2.   It is undeniable that the use of at present seven, and perhaps shortly nine, languages within the Community institutions is liable to give rise to problems and does involve the Community institutions in considerable expenditure and requires a large staff of translators and interpreters.   It has for instance been calculated that approximately 60% of Parliament's expenditure and 33% of the Commission's administrative expenditure is accounted for by the use of so many languages.   In this connection, the opinion drawn up by Mr Patterson on behalf of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport provides an estimate of expenditure in 1979 as a result of the Community's multilingualism[3].   If these figures were updated on the basis of the Community's budget for 1982, the total costs entailed by multilingualism would be about 450 m EUA.   Although this is a very considerable amount, the committee nevertheless wishes to point out that all in all it represents only about 2% of the Community's total budget of 22,000 m EUA.

3.   There is therefore good reason for looking at whether it would be possible to carry out improvements, rationalization and savings in connection with the use of several official languages in the Community, but if possible linguistic changes were to call into question the equal status of the official languages there would then be a problem of principle of a quite fundamental nature for the institutions of the Community which would have repercussions on the costs.

A motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Cottrell and others (Doc. 1-9/81) based on the designation of four languages - English, German, French and Italian - as 'principal working languages' was therefore rejected by the Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions at its meeting of 23-24 April 1981 as an unsuitable basis for further work on language problems.

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[1] See Annex I

[2] See Annex II

[3] See opinion of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport, pp. 31-32

4.   The Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions has been informed
that efforts are being made in Parliament to rationalize and organize more
efficiently the translation, printing and distribution services, as described
in the draft report by Mr Ryan on behalf of the Quaestors for the enlarged
Bureau (PE 71.149/Quaes/fin. II). This document contains many concrete
proposals concerning the use of official languages on which the committee
does not however wish to express an opinion on this occasion. The Committee
would however like to put forward a few observations of a more general nature.

The present regulations concerning languages

5.   The regulations concerning the use of languages in the European
Communities are not laid down by the Treaties but in Council Regulation
No. 1/58[1] which was unanimously passed by the Council in accordance with
Article 217 of the EEC Treaty. This regulation lays down German, French,
Italian and Dutch as the official languages and working languages of the
Community of the time, which consisted of six Member States. Later, with
the two enlargements of the Community, the regulation has been changed so
that Danish, English and Greek have become official languages and working
languages of the Community institutions.

6.   The above-mentioned regulation lays down certain general principles
for the use of official languages. It is laid down that a Member State
or a citizen may send documents to the Community institutions in any one
of the official languages according to choice. The reply from the
institution must be in the same language (Article 2).

     Documents sent by a Community institution to a Member State or to a
citizen in a Member State shall be drawn up in that Member State's
language (Article 3).

     Regulations and other documents of general application which thus
apply throughout the Community must be drawn up in all the official
languages (Article 4). There is a special provision that the Official
Journal of the European Communities shall be published in all the official
languages (Article 5).

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[1] See Annex III

7.   On the other hand the regulation also lays down that the institutions of the Community may stipulate in their Rules of Procedure further provi- • sions for the use of languages (Article 6)[1].   This means that, subject to the general principles for the use of the official languages, each of the Community's institutions has the power to lay down further rules in this respect.

8.   In the case of the European Parliament, Article 142, second paragraph, of the Treaty states that 'The proceedings of the Assembly shall be published in the manner laid down in its Rules of Procedure'.   This provision is interpreted to mean that the Rules of Procedure should stipulate <u>which</u> documents are published.   When a document is published it is published <u>in</u> all official languages.   But even in the Treaty provision there is nothing to prevent Parliament from laying down in its Rules of Procedure that certain documents or parts of documents should not in special cases be published in all the languages.

<u>Competence as regards language problems</u>

9.   At all events, the Treaty provisions and those of Regulation No. 1/58 mean that it is the Committee on the Rules of Procedure which is the committee responsible for all questions of principle regarding the use of languages where Parliament's activities and duties as laid down in the Rules of Procedure are concerned.

The purely administrative organization of these provisions is naturally the responsibility of the Secretariat acing on directives from the Quaestors and the Bureau.

Other aspects of regulations on the use of languages may, however, interest other committees.   The Committee on Youth and Culture, for instance, has adopted a report by Mr ARFE on regional languages and cultures (Doc. 1-965/80) which deals particularly with the cultural aspects of the question of language, and Mr ADAM has drawn up a report for the Committee on Energy and Research on a research programme for a machine translation system (Doc. 1-193/81), which considers the possibilities of EDP applications in translation work.

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[1] Here there is a disagreement between the English text and the other languages, the English text reading: 'The institutions of the Community may stipulate in their rules of procedure which of the languages are to be used <u>in specific cases</u>.'

Questions of principle

10. In the matter of languages, the institutions of the EEC are often compared with other international organizations and here it is immediately evident that, due to the multiplicity of languages, the EEC employs far more translators and interpreters than they do. But in making this comparison it must also be remembered that <u>the EEC's activity is of quite a different nature</u> from that of other international organizations such as the UN or the Council of Europe. Resolutions passed in the UN and the Council of Europe are only presented in a limited number of languages but on the other hand they have no validity in any country until they are converted into national legislation. In contrast to these organizations, the EEC takes decisions which are directly binding on individual citizens and companies of the Member States without being converted into national legislation.

11. A limitation of the number of official languages of the Community would, if taken to extremes, mean that legal provisions would obtain in certain Member States without being drawn up in those States' languages and consequently without being understood by all the citizens of those States. This is of course quite unreasonable and the national authorities of such States would certainly, in the event of anything of the kind being decided, immediately ensure that a translation was made into their language, or in other words: <u>a saving at European level would become a national expenditure</u>.

12. So when we consider the use of languages in the Community, the comparison should rather be with <u>multilingual States</u> where there is also a joint decision-making process and common legislation which applies equally to all language groups. In this connection the rapporteur refers to Annex IV which summarizes the language arrangements in 19 multilingual parliaments and clearly shows considerable attention is paid to languages in these parliaments.

The <u>Yugoslav</u> Parliament for instance works in 4 languages. There is simultaneous interpretation into all languages, all documents are translated into all languages, and facilities even exist for interpretation and translation into certain minority languages. Texts adopted by the Yugoslav Parliament are adopted simultaneously in all the languages (a system comparable to that employed in the Communities, where texts are valid in all languages). In a state such as Yugoslavia it would be unthinkable to limit the number of languages. As mentioned above, account is also taken of the minority languages in the Yugoslav Parliament.

13. Within the Community it is also important to note that there is a considerable difference in the structure and operation of the individual institutions and this may also be reflected in their different requirements as regards languages. Provision is also made for this in the regulation concerning the use of languages; Article 6, as mentioned above, gives each

institution the possibility of laying down further rules concerning the use of languages. Whilst it may be appropriate for a considerable proportion of the Commission's preparatory work to be drafted in a limited number of languages, a _parliamentary_ institution obviously cannot work in only a minority of the languages used by the population. Like national parliaments, the European Parliament has a democratic representative function, and also of course an opinion-forming function.

14. The representative function is based on the democratic principle that each citizen is entitled to be elected to the Parliament irrespective of knowledge, previous experience or other qualifications. This is an important principle in elections to our national parliaments and in the case of the European Parliament it was clearly underlined in the transition from indirect to direct elections. This principle also of course applies particularly to the linguistic abilities of candidates and Members. Every citizen, regardless of his or her linguistic abilities, must be able to stand for the European Parliament and be elected if he or she obtains sufficient votes.

15. It is for this reason that the European Parliament has always functioned in such a way as to ensure that Members can work in their own country's language both in committee and in the plenary assembly. Any change in this system, even in the form of the so-called restricted or asymmetric systems[1], in which the Member could possibly speak in his own language but would have to listen to speeches in other languages and also read documents in another language would be a considerable break with democratic principles.

16. This question of principle does not of course mean that it is not of great practical value for a Member of the European Parliament to be able to speak several languages other than his own if, for example, he wishes to address his colleagues directly. There are other kinds of knowledge connected with economics, business or social conditions which may also be useful for Members both of national parliaments and the European Parliament, although we would never dream of making this a formal requirement by stipulating that a candidate should have certain specific training before being allowed to stand.

17. Like other parliaments, the European Parliament carries out its opinion-making function by making its proceedings public. It is nowhere laid down in the Treaties that the European Parliament's meetings should be public but this is normal parliamentary practice.

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[1] As proposed earlier by the head of the Commission's interpretation service, Mrs Renée van HOOF (see opinion of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education. Information and Sport pp.35-36)

One obvious consequence of the principle of public proceedings is
that all the citizens of the Community should have the possibility of
following the activities of the European Parliament in their own country's
language, i.e. all documents, speeches and decisions should be available
in all official languages, and that proceedings at meetings should be
immediately interpreted into all the official languages, as indeed has
been the case so far.

18. A limitation of the number of languages into which documents are
translated or meetings interpreted would be tantamount to making it impos-
sible or at all events more difficult for certain sections of the European
population to follow what is happening in the European Parliament.   This
situation would be all the more serious since our debates in the European
Parliament represent the only opportunity for public discussion of propo-
sals for new Community legislation.   Proceedings in both the Commission
and the Council are confidential.

19. The majority of the committee therefore rejected the proposal put forward in
the opinion of the Political Affairs Committee[1] to limit the number of
languages to 2 (or possible 3) over a 15-year period. This would merely
make contacts between the Community institutions and large sectors of the
European public more difficult. Nor, in the committee's view, would it
be realistic to envisage such a situation over a period of 15 years. The
European Institutions would merely fall in the estimation of the public if
any attempt were made to force through such a reduction in the number of
languages.

However, a minority in the committee expressed support for the
establishment of a special working party to study the problems connected
with languages in greater detail, as proposed in the opinions of the
Political Affairs Committee and the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education,
Information and Sport.

20. Even though the Community's language arrangements are expensive and
require a large staff, the committee's view is that they are based on
important democratic principles that we should be very careful not to
violate. But this should obviously not preclude changes in the use of
languages in specific areas, provided they continue to have equal status
and receive equal treatment.

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[1] See opinion of the Political Affairs Committee

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (Doc. 1-331/79)
tabled by Mr Maurits COPPIETERS pursuant to Rule 25 of the Rules of
Procedure on the setting up of a special committee to study the problems
arising from the multilingualism of the European Community.

The European Parliament,

- confronted with the difficult problems arising from the multilingualism
  of the European Community;

- convinced of the complete equality of all the languages of the European
  Community;

- aware that the forthcoming accession of three new Member States will
  exarcerbate these problems;

decides to set up a special committee to study the language problems of
the institutions of the European Community.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (Doc. 1-286/81)

tabled by Mr COLLA, Mr VERNIMMEN, Mrs GREDAL, Mr FICH, Mrs VIEHOFF,
Mrs CASTLE, Mr ENRIGHT, Mrs VAN DEN HEUVEL, Mr WOLTJER, Mr MUNTINGH,
Mr JACQUET, Mr VAN MIERT, Mr GEORGIADIS, Mr ABENS, Mr PULETTI, Mr GALLAGHER,
Mr SEEFELD, Mr BOYES, Mr ORLANDI, Mr FOTILAS, Mr ALBERS and Mr GLINNE on
behalf of the Socialist Group

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on the use of languages in the European Parliament

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 217 of the EEC Treaty,

- having regard to Article 1 of Council Regulation No 1 of 15 April 1958[1],
  as amended by the Treaty of Accession of 1972[2], as amended by the Treaty
  of Accession of 1979[3],

- having regard to Rule 61 of the Rules of Procedure,

- whereas respect for the cultural diversity in the European Community
  calls for absolutely equal value to be placed on all these cultures,

- whereas restriction of the number of languages in the European Parliament
  would distract from its democratic character,

- whereas a restriction on or unequal treatment of any of the languages
  implies a restriction of the democratic electoral rights of the people
  since citizens must be able to elect their representatives solely on the
  basis of political criteria and optimum representation of their interests
  without having to take into account additional linguistic criteria,

- whereas all members of Parliament must be treated equally as regards their
  active and passive use of languages and whereas, therefore, no additional
  requirements should be placed on any of them, in particular during technical
  discussions,

- whereas the creation of the 'bureaucratic elites' by the European Parliament
  or Parliamentary delegations must be avoided,

- whereas Parliament's budget appropriations must be used rationally and
  responsible savings made, without this leading, however, to language
  discrimination,

- whereas savings may be possible as a result of the technological progress
  in computer translation,

- having regard to the discussion in the Legal Affairs Committee, the
  Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Budgetary Control on Parliament's
  budget, the savings to be made and the prevention of all wastage,

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[1]OJ No 17 6.10.1958 page 385
[2]OJ No L 73 27.3.1972 page 14
[3]OJ No L 291 19.11.1979 page 113

- and having regard to the report of the working party of the Bureau
  of Parliament on Parliamentary delegations,

1. Reconfirms unequivocally that the official languages and working
   languages of the Community Institutions are Danish, German, English,
   French, Greek, Italian and Dutch;

2. Reconfirms the principle of absolute equality in the active and passive
   use of Community languages in particular for all documents and papers,
   for all parliamentary meetings and for Parliamentary delegations;

3. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission
   and the Bureau of Parliament.

PE 73.706/Ann.II/ fin.

Council Regulation No 1 determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY,

Having regard to Article 217 of the Treaty which provides that the rules governing the languages of the institutions of the Community shall, without prejudice to the provisions contained in the rules of procedure of the Court of Justice, be determined by the Council, acting unanimously;

Whereas each of the four languages in which the Treaty is drafted is recognized as an official language in one or more of the Member States of the Community;

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

The official languages and the working languages of the institutions of the Community shall be Dutch, French, German and Italian.

Article 2

Documents which a Member State or a person subject to the jurisdiction of a Member State sends to institutions of the Community may be drafted in any one of the official languages selected by the sender. The reply shall be drafted in the same language.

Article 3

Documents which an institution of the Community sends to a Member State or to a person subject to the jurisdiction of a Member State shall be drafted in the language of such State.

Article 4

Regulations and other documents of general application shall be drafted in the four official languages.

Article 5

The Official Journal of the Community shall be published in the four official languages.

Article 6

The institutions of the Community may stipulate in their rules of procedure which of the languages are to be used in specific cases.

Article 7

The languages to be used in the proceedings of the Court of Justice shall be laid down in its rules of procedure.

Article 8

If a Member State has more than one official language, the language to be used shall, at the request of such State, be governed by the general rules of its law.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done at Brussels, 15 April 1958

For the Council

The President

V. LAROCK

Official languages of parliaments in multilingual countries[1]

Country	Name and status of official languages	Simultaneous interpretation	Language of official documents and publications
BANGLADESH	Bengali is the official language. With the permission of the Chair a Member may speak in English if he is unable to express himself in Bengali.	Yes	Only in Bengali
BELGIUM	French and Dutch are the official languages and have equal status	Yes	In both languages
CAMEROON	French and English are the two official languages and have equal status	Yes	In both languages
CANADA	French and English are the official languages and have equal status	Yes	In both languages
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	Czech and Slovak are the official languages and have equal status	No	The documents of the Federal Assembly are published in both languages. The proceedings are published in the language used by the Members.
FIJI	English is the official language. Any Member may speak in Fiji or Hindustani.	No (but planned)	Only in English
FINLAND	Finnish and Swedish are the official languages and have equal status	No (but consecutive interpretation is possible)	Documents are published in both languages. Minutes and appendices are published in Finnish, and a summary of the minutes in Swedish

[1] Study carried out in September 1974 by the Interparliamentary Union, published in 'Parliaments of the World. A reference compendium' 1976

Country	Name and status of official languages	Simultaneous interpretation	Language of official documents and publications
INDIA	Hindi is the official language, but English may be used for official purposes. A Member may speak in one of 15 regional languages if he is unable to express himself in either Hindi or English	Yes, from Hindi to English and _vice versa_. In the House of People and the Council of States, 5 and 7 regional languages respectively are translated into English and Hindi	In English and Hindi
IRELAND	Irish is the first official language, English the second.	House of Representatives: Yes Senate : No	Both languages are used for the official gazette and documents. The texts of the official Report of debates, questions and proposals by Members are not translated.
ISRAEL	Hebrew and Arabic are used in debates	Yes, from Hebrew to Arabic (with consecutive translation from Arabic to Hebrew)	In Hebrew (with subsequent translation into Arabic)
MALAYSIA	Malay is the official language, but the Speaker or the Chair may allow the use of English in debates.	Yes	In Malay and English. The proceedings are published in the language used by the Members.
MALTA	Maltese and English are the official languages and have equal status. In practice only Maltese is used.	No	Legislation is published in both languages. The proceedings of the House and other documents are published only in Maltese.
PAKISTAN	Urdu is the official language, but English may be used for official purposes.	Yes	In both languages

Country	Name and status of official languages	Simultaneous interpretation	Language of official documents and publications
ROMANIA	Members usually speak in Romanian. Members who represent national minorities may speak in their maternal language.	Yes	In Romanian and Hungarian
SOUTH AFRICA	English and Afrikaans are the official languages and have equal status.	Yes (from Afrikaans to English)	In both languages
SRI LANKA	Sinhalese is the official language, but Members may use Tamil or English	Yes	Sinhalese with translations into English and Tamil
SWITZERLAND	German, French and Italian are the official languages and have equal status	National Council: Yes Council of States: No	In German, French and Italian: the proceedings are published in the language used by the Member
USSR	There is no official language for debates in the Supreme Soviet which comprises Members of 61 nationalities: each may speak in his own language	Yes	The documents of the Supreme Soviet are published in the languages of all the Union Republics
YUGOSLAVIA	Serbo-Croat, Croato-Serbian, Slovenian and Macedonian are the official languages and have equal status. Members representing national minorities (e.g. Albanians or Hungarians) may speak in their maternal language.	Yes	The four official languages. Federal laws and documents of general importance are also translated into the languages of the national minorities.

OPINION OF THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Draftsman: Mr O. HABSBURG

At its meeting of 8 July 1980 the Political Affairs Committee decided to draw up an opinion for the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Petitions.

At its meeting of 24 September 1980 Mr von HABSBURG was appointed draftsman.

The Committee considered the draft opinion at its meeting of 24-26 February 1982 and adopted it by 18 votes to 5 with three abstentions.

The following participated in the vote: Mr RUMOR, chairman, Lord BETHELL, vice-chairman, Mr von HABSBURG, draftsman, Mr BARBI, Mr BOURNIAS, Lord DOURO, Mr FERGUSSON, Mr GAWRONSKI (deputising for Mr BETTIZA), Mr HÄNSCH, Mr von HASSEL, Mr JAQUET, Mrs LENZ, Mr LOMAS, Mr MAJONICA (deputising for Mr KLEPSCH), Mr van MINNEN (deputising for Mrs van den HEUVEL), Mr MOORHOUSE (deputising for Lady ELLES), Mr PELIKAN (deputising for Mr ZAGARI), Mr PENDERS, Mr PLASKOVITIS, Mr RIPA DI MEANA (deputising for Mr CARIGLIA), Mr ROMUALDI, Sir James SCOTT-HOPKINS, Mr SEGRE, Mr J.M. TAYLOR, Mrs THEOBALD-PAOLI (deputising for Mr MOTCHANE), Mr WALTER (deputising for Mr BRANDT).

1. On 26 September 1979 Mr Maurits COPPIETERS tabled a motion for a resolution (Doc. 1-331/79) on the setting up of a special committee to study the problems arising from the multilingualism of the European Community This motion for a resolution was referred to the Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions as the committee responsible, and to the Political Affairs Committee for an opinion.

2. Mr Kai NYBORG's draft motion for a resolution, points out, inter alia, that 'any limitation of the number of languages used by the Community institutions would interfere with the democratic nature of the Community' and that 'discrimination against certain languages in favour of others in the European Parliament would be an infringement of the democratic voting rights of Community citizens as they should be able to elect their representatives exclusively on the basis of political criteria and of who will best represent their interests, without any additional linguistic criteria being laid down'.

3. Mr NYBORG calls on Parliament to affirm unequivocally that the seven existing official and working languages of the Community institutions will be retained. He recommends that Parliament should confirm the rule 'that there is to be absolute equality between the Community languages, whether used actively or passively, in writing or orally, at all meetings of Parliament and its bodies.'

4. The rapporteur for the Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions is undoubtedly correct in the basic view that the multilingualism of Europe is one of the essential features of its culture and civilization. Multilingualism means in fact that all European languages may be used and, of course, that they have equal status. The seven existing official languages in the European Community will, in all probability, be supplemented in the near future by two new official languages, Spanish and Portuguese. Since it is not entirely unrealistic to suppose that other European nations may exercise their right to submit an application for membership of the European Community in accordance with the Treaties, the number of official languages could rise above the present potential figure of nine. If account is also taken of increasing importance being attributed to the regions of the Community, which, as a result of their cultural development, have individual languages of their own, it is possible that even within an enlarged Community of twelve Member States demands may be made for full recognition of these languages in the oral or written translation of legal texts, speeches, etc.

It is ꞏꞏea ꞏrom these few remarks that the motion for a resolution by Mr COPPIETERS touches on an extremely complex problem in the process of European integration. Quite apart from the practical implications, the problem also has a political dimenꞏꞏꞏ.

5. What is at issue? The countries of Europe, which wish to unite to form an economic and political community, have the right to demand greater economic and political efficiency from this community. The political bodies of the Member States of the European Community must see to it that this demand is met. No right-minded person would wish to deny or discriminate against the cultural and linguistic identity of a country or a region of the Community. On the contrary, a united Europe can and must be the expression and guarantee of the qualitative cultural diversity of its members and the assured maintenance of this diversity. A Europe built in this way must, however, be politically 'articulate', that is it must, above all, be capable of representing its interest both internally and externally as clearly as possible, i.e. in a linguistically comprehensible manner. This is obviously not possible in a Tower of Babel. Faced with similar problems, large international organizations like the United Nations and the Council of Europe have therefore decided to restrict themselves to specific working languages.

6. Mr NYBORG includes among the considerations in his draft motion for a resolution the fact that 'although the costs entailed by the multi-lingualism of the Community are considerable, they nevertheless represent only about 2% of the Community's total budget'. The original motion for a resolution by Mr COPPIETERS probably had considerations of cost in view also, but it went a step further. The question is not how many million units of account written and oral translation cost the Community, but whether the use of all languages without distinction is beneficial to the development of the Community.

7. Any realist will be aware that the choice of certain more important languages spoken more widely throughout the world will be a political issue. On the other hand, the realistic observer will also see the advantages to be gained by the European Community in the long term, in the areas of politics, economics, trade, science and technology, if intensive teaching at all levels of education – from primary school to university – could provide the necessary linguistic knowledge to make it

possible to meet and understand political and economic partners from out-
side the Community without the difficulties which have existed until now.
It would be of great symbolic importance if the Member States were to
agree, for example, on a 15-year plan providing for the use of two or
three working languages in the Community by 1995. If such a decision
were taken, schools and universities would at last be able to adapt to
a new situation. (For the European Parliament this would still mean a
transitional period of three terms of office.)

8.   These general remarks must be considered in the light of the prac-
tice adopted by the European Parliament and the other Community institu-
tions.

While it has become the custom in the Council and Commission, for
example, to hold discussions in one of the 'major' working languages, i.e.
English or French, there have been only initial efforts in this direction
in the European Parliament. Since 1958, however, there has been an in-
creasing tendency in this House to use the two languages referred to.
The efforts of the Members have no doubt played a part here. This devel-
opment is to be wholeheartedly welcomed and should be fully encouraged.

9.   For years to come, it will, of course, still be necessary in the
European Parliament, the representative body of the Community, to inter-
pret the spoken word of those who do not know the important languages
and to translate essential texts into the differnet languages. This
situation cannot, however, carry on indefinitely. In this respect the
draftsman disagrees with Mr NYBORG; the costs of oral and written trans-
lation increase in almost geometric progression as the number of languages
increases, i.e. the addition of more official languages will lead to an
enormous rise in costs which no European citizen and taxpayer can be ex-
pected to accept. It is therefore the duty of this Parliament to tackle
the problem of multilingualism and, before the elections in 1984, to offer
the European electorate at least some ideas as to how this development
may be controlled in the long term (e.g. 15 years).

10.   The ultimate goal must be to adopt working languages which are
used throughout the world. Obviously this requires a transitional
period. The draftsman therefore proposes that Parliament should urge
the Ministries of Education or government bodies responsible for cultural
affairs in the Member States to confine their syllabuses for all levels
of language teaching primarily to two or three languages to provide the
next generation with the necessary means for communication within the

Community and in an international context. If such a decision is taken, it is quite possible that within a period of 15 years the new circumstances will become the accepted norm for everyone, and the citizens of the Community will adjust to these official languages – which, in the view of the draftsman, should be English, French (and Spanish after enlargement) – and will therefore be able to participate more fully than in the past in promoting the economic and political interests of the Community.

11.   The draftsman therefore considers that the idea behind Mr COPPIETERS' proposal should be followed up and that a <u>small joint committee should examine the proposals made above and submit a report to Parliament within one year</u>. This ad hoc committee, which would have a limited term of office, could be composed of members of the Political Affairs Committee, the Legal Affairs Committee, the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport and the Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Petitions.

. B

CONCLUSIONS

The Political Affairs Committee proposes the following amendments to the draft motion for a resolution by Mr NYBORG:

1.   – The third, fourth and sixth indents of the preamble to be deleted.

2.   – Paragraph 1 to be replaced by the following:

'Observes that the official and working languages of the Community institutions are at present Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek and Italian;'

3.   – Paragraph 2 to be replaced by the following:

'Confirms the principle of the fundamental equality of all the languages of the Community; hopes, however, that over a long transitional period, for example 15 years, the institutions of the European Community, and in particular the European Parliament, may adapt their working methods to reduce the numbers of languages used, and that emphasis will be laid in the educational systems of the Member States on English, French (and Spanish after accession), the languages understood in all parts of the world.

4.   - Paragraph 3 to be deleted and replaced by the following:

       'Decides to set up a working party to study the problems
        arising from the multilingualism of the Community in the
        institutions of the European Community and to submit pro-
        posals.'

Draftsman: Mr G. B. PATTERSON

At its meeting of 18/19 December 1979 the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport appointed Mr G B Patterson draftsman of the opinion.

At its meetings of 22/23 April, 29/30 May and 9 July 1980 the committee considered the draft opinion and adopted it at the latter meeting by twelve votes to nil with two abstentions.

Present: Mr Pedini, chairman; Mr Hahn, vice-chairman; Mr Patterson, rapporteur; Mr Arfe', Mr Coppieters, Mr Del Duca, Mrs Gaiotti De Biase, Mr Henckens, Mr Papapietro, Mr Price, Mr Schall, Mr Schwencke, Mrs Viehoff and Mr Welsh.

I. INTRODUCTION

The impending increase in the number of official and working
languages in the European Community from six to seven - with the
prospect of a further increase to at least nine within the next few
years - has made a thorough study of the problems involved a matter
of urgency. Already the use of six official and working languages
is proving extremely costly: one third of all Commission staff and
over half of Parliament's staff are made necessary solely because
of the Community's multilingualism. There are also simple administrative
problems, which impair the efficiency of Community institutions: for
example, the delays caused through the need to have all documents
translated and printed in the six languages.

Adding new official languages increases these costs and administrative
problems geometrically rather than arithmetically. Interpreting the
original four official languages of the Community involved, theoretically,
twelve potential 'operations'. The present six languages generate
thirty potential 'operations'. Nine official languages would increase
the figure to seventy-two.

Nor is the problem confined to the existence of official languages.
Irish, for example, has official status for limited purposes under
current arrangements; and there are many 'non-official' languages
spoken in various parts of the present Community. The addition of
Greek has itself illustrated the matter: the language of official and
legal documents is different from the 'popular Greek' in current use.

Any study of multilingualism would cover a wide field. There are
legal questions: what are the rules governing official and working
languages? Budgetary questions: how can the costs of translation,
interpretation and publication be reduced? Political questions: does
the parliamentary privilege of free speech imply an absolute right to
speak and receive interpretation in one's native tongue? Technical
questions: what scope is there for the introduction of machine
translation? And finally there are important social and cultural
aspects: the position of the 'non-official' languages, and the possible
consequences of using only some of the official languages.

The subject, indeed, spans the competences of several - if not
all - Parliament's present committees.

II. THE LEGAL STRUCTURE

The basic text concerning the Community's languages is Article 217 of the EEC Treaty:

'The rules governing the languages of the institutions of the Community shall, without prejudice to the provisions contained in the rules of procedure of the Court of Justice, be determined by the Council, acting unanimously'.

Acting under this Article, the Council adopted Regulation No. 1 on 15 April 1958 (published in the Official Journal of the European Communities on 6.10.58).

The text of this Regulation bears close examination. In the preamble, there is established a criterion for the determining of an official language:

'Whereas each of the four languages in which the Treaty is drafted is recognized as an official language in one or more of the Member States of the Community'

which would seem to imply that any language which is recognized as 'official' by a Member State within its own jurisdiction could also become an official language of the Community.

This, however, is not the case with Irish (nor, indeed, with Welsh, which has official status within the United Kingdom for certain purposes). When the Community was enlarged, the Irish Government did not insist on applying the principle of Regulation No. 1 to the letter; with the result that only Treaty and legal documents are now translated into Irish.

The practical implications of establishing a language as 'official' are expanded in the remaining articles of the Regulation. Article 8 specifically refers to the situation arising when a country has more than one official language:

'If a Member State has more than one official language, the language to be used shall, at the request of such State, be governed by the general rules of its law'.

'Official' and 'Working' Languages

The use of the phrase 'the official languages and the working languages' in the Regulation raises the issue of whether any distinction should be made between them. In a reply to Written Question No 1576/79, tabled in the name of Mr Patterson, the Council points out that neither the Treaty nor Regulation 1 'throws any light on this matter'. Indeed, Article 1 of the Regulation declares the official and working languages to be identical. In these circumstances, it might be thought that the use of the single world 'official' would be clearer.

Spoken word and written word

Nevertheless, a basis for variation _would_ appear to exist in Article 6:
'The institutions of the Community may stipulate in their rules of
procedure which of the languages are to be used in specific cases.'

How far, in practice, does this possibility of variation extend?
The director of the Commission's Interpretation and Conference Services,
Renée van Hoof, has pointed out[1] that 'while these decisions require
documents to be translated into certain languages, they are generally
silent on the question of interpreting'.

Indeed, the Regulation stipulates the language to be used in documents
sent or received by a Community institution, and provides for the _Official
Journal_ and 'regulations and other documents of general application' to be
drafted in the official languages. But the only specific reference to the
spoken word concerns the 'languages to be used in the proceedings of the
Court of Justice' (see below).

This position is reflected in Parliament's own Rules of Procedure.
Rule 15(1) states uncompromisingly that 'all documents of Parliament shall
be drawn up in the official languages'. In this case, Article 6 of
Regulation 1 would allow of some relaxation of the Rule - but not much, since
other Articles would apply.

Rule 15(2) also states that 'speeches delivered in one of the official
languages shall be simultaneously interpreted into the other official
languages and into any other language the Bureau may consider necessary'.
Here it is worth noting:

(a) that Rule 15(2) applies to plenary, and not to committees (see Rule 41);
    and

(b) that it is possible to have interpretation into other languages,
    including minority languages like Welsh, Basque or Catalan both in
    committee _and_ plenary.

In sum, the regulations would seem to allow Parliament, under existing
Rule 15, to increase the number of languages used in either committee or
plenary; to increase or decrease the number of languages used in committee;
and, by changing Rule 15, to decrease the number of languages used in either
committee or plenary 'in specific cases'.

The Court and legal texts

A special word needs to be said about the linguistic regime in the Court,
since Article 217 of the EEC Treaty specifically makes this subject to its
Rules of Procedure rather than to Council decision.

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[1] Report presented at Bruges Week organised by the College of Europe,
    16 to 18 March 1978.

These Rules are primarily designed to determine <u>one specific language</u> to be used in particular proceedings: for example, the language of an applicant to the Court, the language of a national court or tribunal from which reference has been made, etc. Supporting documents are, as a rule, translated only into the language used in the case; and, in the case of long documents, translations may be confined to extracts.

The judges and advocates-general, and witnesses or experts, are entitled to speak in their own language; but interpretation is only provided into the language of the case.

The Rules provide for <u>seven</u> potential languages of a case: the official languages plus Irish. Publications of the Court, however, must be issued in the six official languages.

For the Court, the multilingual nature of the Community presents an especial problem: possible discrepancies between different language versions of the same text. Since all versions have the same legal value, the Court takes all of them into account in its judgements, and not just that in a single language. As Dr Theodor Holtz, Advisor to the Commission, has noted[1], 'it remains a fact that the individual citizen may have consulted just the wrong text, namely the one in his own language, and he may never have acted the way he did, with perhaps substantial material engagement, if he had known the real intention of the authors as it was reflected in the other language versions'.

III. <u>BUDGETARY FACTORS</u>

The exact cost to the Community Budget of working in the six official languages is not easy to assess; but it is clearly considerable. In addition to the salaries of the linguistic (LA) staff proper, the salaries of other staff involved in the language services (e.g. secretaries, additional administrative personnel, technicians etc.) must be included. Staff time throughout the institutions is consumed merely because documents are produced in six editions. Moreover, other more or less quantifiable costs such as office rentals, mission expenses, printing, paper and distribution costs, heating and lighting, sickness insurance and pensions, etc. have to be taken into account.

A rough estimate can be obtained from the administrative budgets of the different Community institutions. In the case of the Parliament and Council, a high proportion of the total is attributable to language costs; in the case of the Commission (according to its own estimate) a somewhat smaller figure. The combined total, however, amounts to over 40% of all administrative expenditure: some 331.8 million EUA.

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[1] 'Translation and Terminology Problems in Multilingual Community'
Address before the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 24 October 1977.

Table 1.   Language-related costs in 1979

Institution	Budget	Percentage	Language Costs
	EUAm	%	EUAm
Parliament	114.2	60	68.5
Council[1]	102.8	60	61.7
Court	19.6	50	9.8
Commission[2]	581.0	33	191.8

Notes

[1] Council Budget includes the Economic and Social Committee

[2] Based on Titles I and II

How these costs will be affected in 1981 with the addition of a further official language can only be guessed at. The Commission has estimated that its own LA staff will need to be increased by some 12.5% in the current year alone (1980) in order to prepare for Greek entry.

The Report of the 'Three Wise Men' estimated the increase in translation staff as a result of adding three more languages at 200-250 translators per language, or a total increase of 50 per cent.   'The problem of interpretation at meetings', it added, 'is more severe. Simultaneous interpretation for six into six languages requires 13 to 16 separate interpreters. Simultaneous interpretation from nine to nine requires at least 30 people - twice the previous number. Personnel and running costs.... will thus be at least doubled.'

Other costs will, of course, also rise. The 'Three Wise Men' referred specifically to 'the expense of adapting old buildings or providing new ones to accommodate the extra interpreter's booths and other facilities required.'

IV. OTHER PROBLEMS

As the elected European Parliament has already discovered, the costs of multilingualism are not merely financial. The need for documents to be translated before they can be circulated has, on one occasion at least, provided an unbeatable weapon for preventing the passage of parliamentary business!

Even when the requirement is not so used deliberately, it reduces considerably the efficiency of the institution. Parliament's agendas are strongly affected by the need for documents to be translated before meetings. Committee reports are often delayed; amendments cannot be circulated in time; the possibilities for urgent action are reduced. Because there is a limit to what the staff can do, the hours during which Parliament and its committees can sit has been put into a straightjacket, with adverse consequences for speaking time.

Parliament also suffers from 'linguistic costs' which are common to the Community's institutions.

Loss of precision

Inevitably, when translation or interpretation takes place, there is a certain loss of precision.

This is a particular danger in the case of the spoken word: i.e. interpretation. Despite the high standard of training among Community interpreters, the growing number of meetings throughout the Community has put a strain on the service. When sufficient interpreters are not available for comparatively rare language combinations - for example, Danish into Italian - interpretation is by _relay_: instead of working from the original speaker, the interpreter listens to one of his colleagues in an intermediate language, and interprets at 'second hand'. The arrival of Greek, and later Portuguese and Spanish, may make the use of relay even more common.

Translation also has its problems, however. A major factor militating against accuracy is the pressure under which the translation service often has to work. As Dr. Holtz remarks[1], 'where the choice is to furnish an unsatisfactory text or no text at all, it is often the unsatisfactory text which is delivered because otherwise the item would come off the agenda of the Commission or the Council' (or Parliament, he might have added).

Loss of style

From the point of view of Parliament - a body whose very name implies contact via the spoken word - the greatest 'linguistic cost' is possibly that of style.

There is, first, the loss of direct contact between the speaker and the listener: the virtual extinction of the arts of rhetoric and oratory (though it is possible that Members will be able to devise techniques which bridge the interpretation gap). Most observers of the Parliament note the absence of humour, untranslatable as it often is; even when interpreted, the joke and the laughter can be curiously detached, a phenomenon once summed up in the phrase: 'the Danes laugh last'.

Then, there is the tendency of both the spoken and written word to degenerate towards a common denominator: the hated 'Eurospeak'. The Commission has laid some responsibility on its own translators (Reply to Written Question No. 524/79 from Lord O'Hagan[2]). But Members of Parliament themselves can find it easier to use jargon when they know that more original phrases will get lost 'en route'.

Dr. Holtz has remarked[3] on a particular problem which arises not from translation, but from the origin of texts. The 'multilinguistic composition of the services producing documents leads to texts in the formulation of which the majority of authors do not use their mother tongue: alas, the

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[1] op.cit.

[2] OJ No. C 275 of 31.10.79, page 18

[3] op.cit.

Italian text produced by a colleague from Copenhagen will not show the same glamour as the Italian text formulated by an Italian official: Thus, the so-called original text is sometimes not an original, but in itself already a 'home-made' translation'.

V. TOWARDS SOLUTIONS: BASIC PRINCIPLES

Improvements in the present situation – and the avoidance of added problems in the future – might be achieved in two ways:

1. A limitation on the number of languages to be used in general, or in particular circumstances.

2. Improvements in the language services, and new techniques of interpretation and translation.

Any general scheme for reducing the number – or potential number – of Community working languages inevitably runs up against a fundamental principle of public life. As Dr. Holtz has put it: 'we must admit that democracy cannot function without communication, or, in other words: where there is no communication, there can be no real participation in the preparation of decisions, and opportunities for rational solutions of conflict diminish.'[1]

We know from experience within Member States how dangerous it can be to make a large number of people, in linguistic terms, 'second class citizens'. Dr. Holtz warns of those excluded from the linguistic system becoming 'allergic to a Community ... which discriminates against them in offering a privileged bargaining position to competing groups in other linguistic regions...'

The problem becomes very clear in the context of the European Parliament. If basic democratic principles are to be observed, each Member must have, potentially, the same opportunities to speak, to persuade, to be reported in the media, and so on. Despite the linguistic prowess of some, these principles would be severely breached were any group of Members – some might argue, any single Member – to be obliged to speak in a language other than his own.[2]

There are also practical considerations. Most of the Community's activities are highly specialised, involving the production of evidence or information from experts. Despite the fact that many of these specialists have considerable experience of international institutions, it is not reasonable to expect all to be fluent linguists in addition to their specialist qualifications. Even if all were, the need for precision would make it imperative that they be able to express themselves in their native languages.

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[1] op.cit.

[2] The idea has, of course, been advanced that the principle would be upheld if every Member were obliged to speak in a language other than his own. This would be the case if the Community were to adopt Latin or Esperanto as its single official language (see page 16).

It seems clear, then, that no language commonly spoken within the Community can ever be wholly excluded; indeed, it may even be the case that certain linguistic minorities are already disadvantaged.

Any changes in this direction can only be made partially, or in special circumstances.

VI. THE SPOKEN WORD

In matters of cost and manpower the multiplicity of Community languages has more or less equal impact on the written word and the spoken word. Nevertheless, it is the _spoken_ word that gives rise to the most intractable problems.

There are several reasons:

(a) The growing number of meetings for which interpretation has to be provided (though there has been a parallel growth, too, in documents).

(b) The fact that interpretation always has to be provided, in principle, from any of the working languages into any other working language; whereas internal Commission documents, at least, are usually drafted in either English or French, or need only to be translated into English or French.

(c) The problem of finding enough trained interpreters in difficult language combinations (for example, Italian/Danish).

(d) The consequent necessity for relays, and even double relays.

(e) The physical problems of providing interpretation booths.

The Director of the Commission's Interpreting and Conference Services, Renée van Hoof, has concluded[1] that 'a Community enlarged to twelve members... cannot conceivably work under language rules that require interpreting from nine languages into nine languages at every meeting'. With increasing recourse to relays and double relays 'discussions at certain meetings would become totally incomprehensible'.

At the same time, it is clear that any general reduction of working languages to, say, English or French, would be quite unacceptable.

Solution 1: restricted systems

Although, in principle, the interpretation and translation services have to provide 'six into six', much of the Community's internal business works on a 'régime linguistique partiel'. This can apply to whole institutions - for example, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational training, sited in Berlin, uses only English, French and German. Or it can apply 'ad hoc' to particular meetings.

Even within the Parliament, it is common practice to reduce the number of languages in use at working parties, and even at committee meetings, when those attending are in agreement.

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[1] op. cit.

PE 73.706/fin.

A greater use of restricted systems, however, should only be made with
the utmost care. It would be only too easy for an exceptional arrangement -
for example, the absence of a Danish interpreter by agreement with the Danish
members of a committee - to become an established rule. If committees are
to use the flexibility already provided by the present Rules of Procedure
(see Chapter II), or if the Rules are to be changed, careful monitoring
of the consequences will be needed.

Solution 2: asymmetric systems

A much more promising solution is that advocated by Renée van Hoof.
'Experience proves every day that it is much easier to understand a foreign
language than to speak it in a perfectly convincing manner'[1]. Might it not
be possible, therefore, to use 'asymmetric' language arrangements: to enable
everyone to speak in his own language, but with interpretation into only the
most widely understood languages?

This solution - often popularised as 'six in, two out' - was briefly
debated in the European Parliament on 11 February 1976, where it received
a more or less hostile reception. It would provide, however, a means of
containing the cost and other problems of the interpretation service, while
at the same time not limiting anyone's ability to express himself in his
own language.

As with the greater use of restricted systems, however, the introduction
of asymmetric systems would need careful monitoring.

Renée van Hoof's paper concludes by envisaging three standard language
systems for meetings:

(a) A normal system - asymmetric, but using all official languages.

(b) A simplified system: asymmetric and restricted.

(c) A formal system: full 'six into six', or 'nine into nine'.

Plenary sittings of Parliament

Although the use of asymmetric or restricted systems in committees -
possible under the existing Rules of Procedure - is likely to prove
controversial enough, the focus of controversy is likely to be the system
used in plenary sittings. If any change is to be made, the Rules will have
to be amended.

Useful statistics have recently been published on the use of languages
in plenary:

<center>July-December 1979</center>

Language	Cols. of text	%
English	1132	30.6
French	1056	28.5
Italian	481	13.0
German	475	12.8
Dutch	419	11.3
Danish	139	3.75
	3702	

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[1] op. cit.

This would seem to indicate that a system of 'six in , two out' (that is, interpretation from all six official languages into French and English only) would be the best asymmetric choice.

VII. THE WRITTEN WORD; MACHINE TRANSLATION

The basic dilemma of the Community's translation service is already summed up in the phrase: 'Better an unsatisfactory text than no text at all'. There is an unavoidable trade-off between accuracy and speed.

The volume of paper-work generated by the Community gives some idea of the problem. In 1977, there were translated some 600,000 pages. In 1979, the figure was over a million:

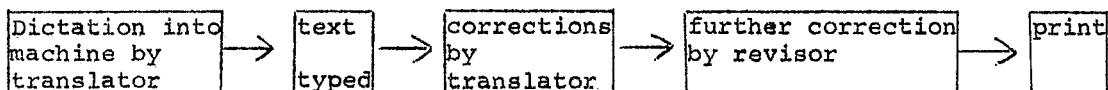<u>Pages of translation produced by the Community institutions, 1979</u>

European Parliament	196,658[1]
Commission (Brussels)	360,000
Commission (Luxembourg)	142,183
Council	257,598
ECOSOC	52,300
Court	53,000
	1,061,739

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[1] Figure for: Sept. 78 - Feb. 79 plus
Sept. 79 - Feb. 80

This twelve month period gives a more accurate picture than calendar year 1979 because of the unusual effect of elections in June.

Allied to the growing number of meetings - each of which generate agendas, minutes, working documents, etc. - the pressure upon the system is increasing all the time. This is <u>before</u> the addition of Greek, Spanish and Portuguese.

The current system of translation is best described diagrammatically:

Dictation into machine by translator	→	text typed	→	corrections by translator	→	further correction by revisor	→	print

What possibilities exist for improving the situation?

Partial regimes

The possibilities for reducing the number of working languages, as far as the written word is concerned, are perhaps greater than for the spoken word. Documents for internal Commission circulation are often drafted, or are available in only French and English. Certainly the scope for asymmetric arrangements, (such as that already described in the case of interpretation), might be greater, since the ability to <u>read</u> a foreign language is generally more widespread than the ability either to speak or to understand aurally.

On the other hand, there are many instances where a full linguistic regime is vital. In the Parliament, for example, texts are of _political_ significance, and Members need accurate translations into their own languages. Above all, documents of _legal_ significance must be translated into all official languages with great care.

Increasing efficiency

Several means exist to increase the efficiency of the system.

(a) The creation of specialised groups of translators and revisors.

(b) 'Linguistic management': e.g. to grade texts according to the degree of accuracy required in translation.

(c) Standardisation of terminology - especially important for establishing concordance and conformity of legal acts (but adding to the danger of 'Eurospeak!')

(d) Not least, increasing the linguistic ability of Community officials, Members of Parliament, etc.

By far the most promising possibilities, however, would seem to lie in the direction of automating, in part or even in whole, the translation procedure.

Data Banks and Dictionaries

The simplest form of machine translation is that provided by the computerised dictionary. This can be used in one or two ways:

(a) To provide a 'word for word' or 'pidgin' translation from which some idea of meaning can be obtained. Early IBM machine translations in the 1950's were of such a kind, and were of some value.

(b) To act as an adjunct to normal processes of translation. Since most translators have high general competence, the greatest use can be obtained from specialist dictionaries or terminological data banks.

In the second area, the Commission has already made use of such facilities as _Eurodicautom_.

SYSTRAN

One step on from the automatic dictionary are systems which aim at a full translation of texts (though, again, generally operating with limited - and usually specialised - lexical capability).

In the mid-seventies, the Commission began experiments with a system of this kind developed by Dr Toma: SYSTRAN. Two versions of SYSTRAN, working with the language-pair English/French, were tested:

- the first, experimental version in October 1976, which proved sufficiently promising for a second development contract to be concluded;

- the second in June 1978.

In the second test, specialist agricultural tests were translated by computer; and then 'post-edited' by three separate teams.

SYSTRAN was tested not only by <u>absolute</u> criteria of accuracy and style, but also for its utility in different circumstances. This was important, since there is a temptation to demand often quite unnecessary accuracy and style from both ordinary and machine translations.

The accuracy of the pre-edited translations, for example, was rated only at 73%. Nevertheless, it was felt to be of some utility by 88% of potential users: in particular where individual specialists wished to gain a general idea of the contents, but rapidly and without going to any great expense. A translation was found to be both intelligible and usable, though scoring badly on style and grammatical correctness.

The intelligibility of the machine-translated texts <u>after</u> revision was rated at 98% - exactly the same as for the same texts translated 'by hand' after revision (it is perhaps important to note that the <u>original</u> versions were only rated at 99%). However, the time-costs of post-editing were considerably higher than those for revising, though overall time was comparable.

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of SYSTRAN was the scope revealed for improvement: between the first evaluation in 1976 and the second in 1978 the average intelligibility of translations increased from 45% to 78%[1].

The evaluation of SYSTRAN as it translated from English to French revealed some other interesting features:

- it was better at texts originating within the Commission than those from outside (Eurospeak?);

- it was better at British-English texts than American-English texts;

- it did better with texts written in short (under 25 word) sentences.

In its conclusions following the evaluation, the Commission noted that the first target for future developments would have to be a reduction in the amount of post-editing required. However, it also noted that - despite the increase in standard of the pre-edited machine translation between the first and second evaluations, - the post-editing requirements had actually risen. 'Une amelioration du taux de post-édition ... semble difficile a concevoir dans la perspective actuelle du system.'[2]

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[1] Though intelligibility is not quite the same thing as accuracy. It is possible to have a translation which is perfectly intelligible, but which conveys the opposite meaning to that of the original!

[2] 'Deuxième évaluation du systèm de traduction automatique systran anglais-français de la Commission des Communautés europeenes' (1978 EUR 6227)

EUROTRA

Experience with SYSTRAN, nevertheless, has encouraged the Commission to proceed with a much more ambitious research project in the field of machine translation: EUROTRA. This is, indeed, the only major project of its kind in the world.

EUROTRA is intended to handle, initially, all six existing official languages, in any combination. It will also allow for expansion to new languages.

The system's adaptibility is intended to go even further: its basic software support system should outlive:

(a) current linguistic theories; and

(b) present hardware designs

Development of the system is conceived in modular terms: that is, different linguistic and software problems are to be solved by a number of different research teams, working in collaboration.

Since the EUROTRA project is at the frontier of current human knowledge, certain elements are more advanced than others. The basic strategy is to move from an input text to an equivalent 'deep structure', from which the target language can be generated. Unfortunately, linguistic research has not yet identified a 'deep structure' common to all languages. Consequently, under the currently envisaged system, 'translation' would take the form of a transfer from source 'deep structure' to target 'deep structure'. (i.e. three stages).

Possibilities and Limitations

Technological advances, both in hardware and software, are proceeding at such a rate that the possibilities for machine translation can seem unlimited. For example, recent developments in speech-generation by computer bring even <u>machine interpretation</u> within reach.

On the other hand, one should not become too dazzled by technology. Even if successfully developed, EUROTRA will only produce <u>finished</u> translations for certain limited purposes. Post-editing will still be necessary in many cases.

<u>Moreover, since the production of texts has both political and legal implications, it is important that the development of machine translation is not entirely left to the technologists. The European Parliament has an important interest in the matter.</u>

One of these interests must be concern for language as an aspect of civilisation.

For example, the search for European unity is <u>not</u> a search for European uniformity. Indeed Europe's greatest contribution to the world has perhaps been the remarkable diversity of ideas to which it has given birth.

Nor has this diversity merely been the result of different national traditions. As important has been variety <u>within</u> the nation states; and the existence of traditions which cross national frontiers.

This important feature of our civilisation is reflected in language. Indeed, variety in language has usually been the main vehicle of cultural variety. Hence the tenacity with which minority cultures defend their linguistic independence: language is at the same time the symbol and the means of that independence.

Similarly there are those features which cross frontiers. Historically, Europe has always been united by certain great cultural traditions, religious and secular: and at one time the vehicle for both was Latin. The most powerful argument for Esperanto is that it could provide such a vehicle without the stumbling-block of 'linguistic imperialism'.

The European Community can have an important influence on the way in which this pattern of European civilisation develops. Decisions taken on the <u>languages</u> of the Community will have an effect well beyond the practical ones of improving the interpretation and translation services.

For these reasons, a number of wider linguistic problems need careful attention. For example:

'Minority' languages

The languages currently spoken within the borders of the European Community are not limited to those which the Council has declared 'official'. In addition, there are two further linguistic groups:

(a) The historical minority languages: Basque, Breton, Welsh, Catalan, Frisian, the Allemanic languages, etc. These are often associated with a centuries-old determination to preserve cultural - and, on occasion, social and political - autonomy.

(b) The new minority languages, introduced into the Community by migrant workers and refugees: Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, Hindi, Creole, etc. Again, these languages have in some cases become symbols of independence; and they have raised important questions for the educational systems of Europe.

How far should the Community set out to preserve this linguistic variety? Or, alternatively, to suppress it?

The Community is already acting to prevent the children of migrant workers from losing touch with their mother tongue - and with their parents. But does this imply that the Community should work for a permanent Turkish or Urdu speaking minority?

Should the Community intervene, over the heads of the nation states, to help the historical regional languages in their struggle with the 'official' languages? How far, in doing so, would the Community be encouraging regionalism or separatism? Would that matter?

Esperanto

One linguistic avenue open to Europe lies in the direction of the 'artificial' or, more accurately, intellectually constructed languages. Two possible advantages have already been mentioned: that their use puts everyone, initially, on an equal footing; and that they are free of the charge of 'linguistic Imperialism'.

A number of such languages exist (Volapük, Interlingua, etc). The only serious candidate, however, is probably Esperanto.

One estimate has put the number of Europeans who have at least some knowledge of Esperanto at over ten million.[1] To this must be added the sometimes large groups of Esperantists in such countries as Japan, Bulgaria and even Iran. Since its original creation by the Polish-speaker Zamenhof, Esperanto has developed linguistically as a 'live' language and has also acquired a literature of its own.

Clearly, the chances of Esperanto achieving very wide acceptance are small. It is a matter which nevertheless deserves more examination.

Language teaching

Except in certain isolated areas, or in the case of very recent immigrants, the speakers of minority languages often have an 'official' second language; or speak the minority language itself as a second language only. This facility is certainly one which the Community should encourage in the interests both of cultural variety and the elimination of discrimination.

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[1] 'Die Linguistische Struktur Europas' by Gyula Decsy (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz)

Again, certain Member States have more than one domestically official language, for which their education systems already cater.

The Community, perhaps, has an interest in promoting a more general linguistic ability: one of the more regrettable recent failures of the Council has been its inability to set in progress the second phase of the Community's education programme, an important part of which is the improvement of language teaching.

The development of greater linguistic ability is not just needed by Community officials and Members of the European Parliament. It would open the way for every Community citizen to whole new areas of European civilization. It would enable him to appreciate the value of Europe's cultural diversity. And it would, in consequence, promote the 'ever closer union among the peoples of Europe' proclaimed in the first sentence of the EEC Treaty.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

There can be no doubt, then, that the multilingual nature of the European Community creates problems. Moreover, these problems have sufficient political, social and legal aspects to attract the urgent attention of the European Parliament. This would be the case even if the Parliament itself were not profoundly interested for reasons of internal efficiency.

Should Parliament therefore set up a special committee to study the question?

In the introduction to this opinion, the point has already been made that different aspects of the matter fall within the responsibility of different parliamentary committees. The alternatives would therefore seem to be:

(a) to charge one committee with overall responsibility for the study, with a number of other committees submitting opinions;

(b) creating a special committee or working party.

The difficulty with the first solution is that it is not entirely obvious which committee should have the overall responsibility. Political Affairs, Youth, Rules and even Energy and Research have claims.

In this case, the correct solution is a special group - possibly a working party rather than a committee.

<u>The Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport</u>
<u>therefore</u>:

- draws attention to the fundamental democratic principle that no
  individual or group should be put at a disadvantage because of
  discrimination against a particular language;

- supports the establishment of a special working party to study
  the problems arising from the multilingualism of the European
  Community;

- suggests that its terms of reference should include:

1. Examination of the legal framework within which the official and
    working languages of the Community's institutions are designated
    and used; and recommendations, if necessary, for changes.

2. A similar examination of the budgetary consequences for the
    Community of particular language 'regimes'.

3. Examination of existing or new proposals for limited or asymmetric
    language systems; and very careful monitoring of any such
    systems if they are applied.

4. Monitoring, also, of progress in the Community's research into
    machine translation.

5. Evolution of a Community policy towards minority languages, in
    particular in relation to 'official' languages.

6. The possible use of Esperanto or other intellectually constructed
    languages.

7. The language teaching aspect of the Community's education programme
    and practical advice to the media on using and promoting the
    languages in question.

8. The linguistic aspect of legal documents, in particular the equal
    legal status of versions in the different 'official' languages.