

1056/2016

Petition No 1056/2016 Mark Wheatley (British) on behalf of European Union of the Deaf, requesting the European Parliament allow for the tabling of petitions in national sign languages used in the EU

The petitioner states that currently petitions can be tabled in all EU official languages. In the petitioner's view, deaf sign language users should also be given the possibility of tabling petitions in sign languages.

The petitioner highlights that EU citizens have the right to use their preferred language to communicate with EU institutions and it should follow that deaf sign language users should also have the right to communicate in their own sign language, on an equal basis with other petitioners. The petitioner suggests modifying the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure to allow for the submission of petitions in all national sign languages used in the EU. In case a change of the Rules of Procedure along these lines is not possible in the near future, the petitioner asks the European Parliament to create a temporary provision, allowing for such a change in procedure. The petitioner makes reference to the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and concludes that the EU institutions do not only have the capacity, but also the obligation to be front-runners with regards to accessibility in Europe.

Information

- Article 227 TFEU does not mention in what form/language the petition may be tabled.
- Rule 215 (5) of the Rules of Procedure specifies that "*Petitions must be written in an official language of the European Union. Petitions written in any other language will be considered only if the petitioner has attached a translation in an official language. Parliament's correspondence with the petitioner shall employ the official language in which the translation is drawn up. The Bureau may decide that petitions and correspondence with petitioners may be drafted in other languages used in a Member State.*"
- The study *The Protection Role of the Committee on Petitions in the Context of the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Update 2016* was presented during the 9 November 2016 Workshop and included an analysis with regards to the topic of the petition. It suggested accepting petitions in sign languages, along petitions in written form.
- On 20 November 2012, a plan for a pilot project aimed at easing the lives of deaf and hard-of-hearing sign language users in Europe was presented by MEPs *Ádám Kósa* and *Werner Kuhn* and Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, *Viviane Reding*. The proposed project aims to launch the basis of a platform, an independent and free IT application to help these people communicate with the EU Institutions (by, for example, installing audio and video technologies in EU institutions so that officials can communicate more easily with sign language users).
- The European Parliament adopted a resolution on sign languages for the deaf in 1988 (A2-302/87) and 1998 (B4-0985/98). In paragraph 105 of its resolution of 25 October 2011 regarding mobility, the integration of people with disabilities and the European strategy regarding disability 2010-2020 [2010/2272(INI)], it calls on the Member States and the Commission to recognise sign languages as official languages in the Member

States, which should accordingly work towards the possibility of such recognition in accordance with the Brussels declaration of 19 November 2010.

More recently, on 16 November 2016, European Parliament resolution on sign languages and professional sign language interpreters (2016/2952(RSP)) was adopted.

- The Brussels' declaration on sign languages in the European Community seeks to uphold the rights of deaf people across Europe. It was signed by the representatives of all national associations of the deaf in the EU and Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.
- The question for a written answer addressed to the Commission E-008960/2012 addresses the question of Use of sign language in broadcasts of EU institution speeches and press interviews.

Recommendations

- declare admissible;
- request the opinion of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs with regards to the possibility of changing the Rules of Procedure in view of accommodating the petitioner's demands;
- request the opinion of the European Parliament's Directorate for Interpretation with regards to practical steps in view of accommodating the petitioner's demands.

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