

ANDROULLA VASSILIOU

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 17. 12. 2013

Dear Ms McKelvie,

Thank you very much for your letter, forwarded through an e-mail from 23 October, and for submitting your Committee's languages inquiry report to the European Commission.

My services have been following language teaching in Scotland closely and have reported on your progress. The 1+2 languages model is certainly in line with the European multilingualism policy.

I would like to congratulate your Committee for having taken this initiative. I am heartened by the positive resonance from the side of the Scottish Government and the fact that some extra funding for language teaching could be secured in this year's budget.

Scotland was among the early adopters of language learning in primary schools, pointing the way for other Member States. In recent years, there has been a clear trend towards an early start for the first foreign language all over Europe. The percentage of pupils learning at least one foreign language at primary level thus went up from 64.6 % in 2005 to 74.9 % in 2011. The second language however is not introduced before late secondary in most countries, and we are still very far from the objective of enabling all pupils to learn at least two foreign languages from an early age agreed by the Heads of State and Government in Barcelona eleven years ago.

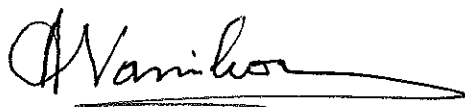
The press release mentioned in your mail announced a conference organised by the European Commission in London on 18 October of this year in connection with the London Language Show. The purpose of the conference was to promote language teaching and learning in Britain and to introduce Erasmus+, the European Commission's new funding programme for education, training, youth and sport.

As you probably know, I have proposed a European benchmark for language competences in order to stimulate progress in the teaching and learning of two foreign languages across Europe, which I hope will be adopted by the Council in 2014.

Your report, as well as recent reforms concerning language education in England, shows that there is ample awareness of the need for action in this field. I am hopeful that the negative trend of the past decade in the United Kingdom can now be reversed and that we shall see considerable change in the coming years.

I wish you success with the continued implementation of the 1+2 model in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,



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