



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, 6 June 2013

## **European Commission paves way for sign language project**

The European Commission has today paved the way for a new pilot project to improve communication between the European institutions and the deaf and hard of hearing. Today's financing decision means the pilot project, for which the European Parliament has allocated a budget of EUR 750,000, can be implemented.

*"Every EU citizen has an equal right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. But some of our citizens face barriers in doing so, and this is something we must address,"* said Vice-President Viviane Reding, the EU's Justice Commissioner. *"Language is a powerful means of communication and getting ideas and feelings across. And sign languages are the first language, the "mother tongue", of many deaf people, as well as the second or third language for their families and friends. Institutions and politicians must therefore do our best to promote the use of sign languages and offer easy solutions for hearing impaired people. This pilot project does just that. I would like to thank the European Parliament and particularly Ádám Kósa and Werner Kuhn for their unwavering support in helping to bring this important pilot project to life."*

Involving a sign language interpreter can be often time-consuming, expensive and difficult to arrange. These highly-trained professionals must be booked in advance and remunerated for their services, their travel and accommodation. It is therefore easy to see how this puts people who have to rely on such services at a disadvantage. They cannot talk to national or European officials as easily and as spontaneously as their fellow citizens who use spoken languages.

The pilot project, which aims to improve communication between the European institutions and the deaf and hard of hearing, will seek to address this by, for example, installing audio and video technologies in EU institutions so that officials can communicate more easily with sign language users. The pilot project covers both the technology solution and sign language interpretation components of this endeavour.

In the longer term, the pilot project aims to help develop solutions for the **nearly one million deaf or hard of hearing citizens of all Member States** using different sign languages to access all the EU institutions through direct communication.

The European Commission has worked closely with the European Parliament to get the pilot project off the ground.

## **For more information**

European Commission – People with disabilities:

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/disabilities/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/disabilities/index_en.htm)

Homepage of Vice-President Viviane Reding, EU Justice Commissioner:

<http://ec.europa.eu/reding>

Follow the Vice-President on Twitter: [@VivianeRedingEU](https://twitter.com/VivianeRedingEU)

Contacts :

[Mina Andreeva](#) (+32 2 299 13 82)

[Natasha Bertaud](#) (+32 2 296 74 56)