



Strasbourg, 19th May 2008

Open Letter

Subsidiarity *is* a word.

We are writing to draw your attention to the word “subsidiarity”, which we regretfully note is not listed in your dictionary.

The principle of subsidiarity has been a pillar of social, theological and political thought for centuries, and is these days referred to in legal statutes, national constitutions and international treaties. The European Union’s proposed Treaty of Lisbon, for example, mentions the word “subsidiarity” no less than 30 times.

We are therefore puzzled that the word, despite its frequent use in European politics and law in particular, has been excluded from numerous dictionaries in languages across Europe and the world.

We are especially concerned by the fact that the European Union, its member states and other nations are expected to respect a principle based upon a word so many dictionaries – and therefore citizens – do not even recognise.

Although the definition of “subsidiarity” differs slightly between various dictionaries and languages, the word in its political context can be defined generically as “the principle that decisions should be taken as closely as possible to the citizen”.

With that in mind, we kindly request your answers to the following:

- Are you planning to include the word “subsidiarity” in the future?
- If not, could you or the authors explain to us why the word continues to be excluded from your dictionary?

We greatly appreciate your attention to this matter and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

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*The “**Subsidiarity is a word**” movement is brought to you by the **Assembly of European Regions (AER)**, the largest independent network of regions in wider Europe. Bringing together over 260 regions from 33 countries and 13 interregional organisations, AER is the political voice of its members and a forum for interregional co-operation.*

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