

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2363/08

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to the Commission

Subject: Voting rights for Italians temporarily resident abroad

In the last few days a spontaneously formed committee comprising approximately 100 stagiaires employed at the Commission from March to July 2008 has sent a letter to the Italian Members of the European Parliament.

The letter reads as follows: 'The reason why we have decided to set up a committee (...) relates to the controversy over voting by Italians abroad. In particular (...), we have learnt that for us and for many others in a similar situation (such as Erasmus students, temporary workers and contract staff) who are resident but not domiciled in Belgium, there are no arrangements enabling us to vote abroad - in other words, to exercise what is a fundamental right (and also a duty) of Italian citizens.

(...). What annoys us in particular is the fact that other European citizens in similar circumstances (French, Germans and Spaniards, to name just a few examples) can take advantage of alternative and specially administered voting arrangements, such as voting at a consulate without having to be registered as a foreign residents, e-mail voting and proxy voting.

This state of affairs' (the letter concludes) 'which affects us directly and sets us apart at the Commission from stagiaires from other Member States has inevitably made us feel like second-class European citizens and has once again prompted us to uphold the idea of a beautiful, democratic Italy which we wish to preserve.'

Furthermore, the right to vote (or the duty to act as a teller) is acknowledged by the Commission in the case of Italian officials but not in the case of Italian stagiaires, for whom days devoted to such activities are regarded as leave for personal reasons.

Is the Commission aware of this state of affairs? Does it not consider that - as a matter of urgency, in view of the imminence of the elections in Italy - it should take administrative and legislative action in order to harmonise the right of Italians (and of citizens from other European countries who are in the same situation) who are temporarily abroad to return to their country in order to exercise their right to vote without losing any of the leave to which they are entitled? Does the Commission not think that it should make representations to the respective consulates in order to ensure that European citizens who are temporarily domiciled in another country are able to exercise their right to vote?