

**Question for written answer E-007488/2012
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Nathalie Griesbeck (ALDE)

Subject: Detention conditions in the European Union

Between 2009 and 2010 the total prison population of the European Union was estimated to be 633 909. There are several observations to be made at EU level: prison overcrowding, an increase in the prison population, an increasing number of foreign nationals being detained (21.7% on average), a significant number of prisoners on remand (24.7% in average), many inmates suffering from physical or mental disorders and, last but not least, a high number of deaths and suicides. These detention conditions in the European Union, the duration of preventive custody and the length of time it takes for justice to be administered, are regularly condemned by the European Court of Human Rights.

In June 2011 the Commission published its Green Paper on detention, which reports on the worrying situation of prisons in the Union. In December 2011 the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the Commission to submit a legislative proposal on the rights of prisoners and to define and implement minimum standards for both prison and detention conditions.

Can the Commission therefore answer the following questions:

1. What will it do, at EU level, to ensure that the human rights of detainees are respected and that prison conditions improve in the Member States? What will it do to combat abuses in respect of preventive custody, overcrowding, high prison occupancy rates and high rates of foreign prisoners?
2. What will it do to follow up the resolution adopted by the European Parliament?
3. Has the time not come for it to propose a binding legislative instrument concerning minimum standards of conditions of imprisonment and detention, in order to respect fundamental freedoms and human dignity within the Union?
4. Can it say what measures and what action it intends to propose shortly, in response to the vote by MEPs? In accordance with what timetable?