

**Question for written answer E-002706/2016
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: Propaganda by public authorities urging citizens to abstain from voting in a referendum

On 17 April 2016 a referendum will be held in Italy on offshore oil and gas drilling platforms. The President of the Council of Ministers and the Democratic Party, of which the former is secretary, have publically launched a campaign for abstention, urging voters to boycott the referendum. Such propaganda constitutes, de facto, an action organised voluntarily by public authorities and political parties to influence the free convictions of voters.

Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU stipulates that the right to freedom of expression also includes the freedom to receive information and ideas without interference from public authorities. Article 10 of the TEU lays down the right of every citizen to participate in the democratic life of the Union and the right/duty of political parties to contribute to forming European political awareness and express the will of citizens of the Union.

Given all of the above, does the Commission believe that this propaganda urging abstention complies with the aforementioned fundamental rights of the EU, and what measures does it intend to adopt to guarantee that these rights are respected in the case at hand?