

**Question for written answer E-012088/2011
to the Commission
Rule 117
Frédérique Ries (ALDE)**

Subject: Violation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights by the Commune of Grimbergen, Belgium

I would bring to your attention a recent initiative by the Commune of Grimbergen (Belgium), which has just reminded the public about the existence of a 'complaints desk' (*point de signalement/meldpunt*), one of whose responsibilities it describes as being to receive 'complaints about linguistic issues' in order to 'safeguard the Flemish character of the commune'. In the December issue of the commune's bulletin, it also calls on any inhabitants 'who have seen French used in writing in the public arena or have heard another language spoken' to inform the complaints desk.

Following numerous outraged reactions, the commune published its 'apologies for an incorrect formulation', which in my view merely serve to aggravate the original offence. Grimbergen does not hesitate to state that 'if businesses or service-providers systematically use languages other than Dutch in contacts with their customers, they compromise the Dutch-speaking character of our commune. When this is reported, we write to the business concerned to ask it to respect the fact that Grimbergen lies within the Dutch-speaking area. The business is also formally requested not to issue any multilingual publicity material in the form of printed matter, advertisements, signs, etc.'. This approach has been further confirmed by the mayor, Marleen Mertens, who has said for example that 'in a restaurant, the menu can no longer be bilingual. If it is, you may lodge a complaint...' (*Le Soir*, 7 December 2011).

In my opinion, these practices amount to denunciation and violate fundamental freedoms and human dignity. They cannot be accepted in the European Union, whose universal values of tolerance, respect and openness are supposed to apply throughout the territory of the Union.

1. What view does the Commission take of this?
2. Does not this practice infringe Article 22 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which is now binding and is among the primary sources of European law?
3. If so, does the Commission intend to bring infringement proceedings in relation to this practice?