

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0081/09

pursuant to Rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure

by Rui Tavares, Cornelia Ernst, Cornelis de Jong, Marie-Christine Vergiat, Willy Meyer and Kyriacos Triantaphyllides, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group  
to the Council

Subject: Lithuanian law for the protection of minors against the detrimental effect of public information

The Lithuanian Parliament approved last Tuesday amendments to the Law on the protection of minors against the detrimental effects of public information, on the day of the 220th anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille, on which we remember such values of the Enlightenment as freedom of expression and the right to the pursuit of happiness. This law – that in a previous version had been vetoed by the President of Lithuania – was confirmed by the Lithuanian Parliament on 14 July 2009, the same day on which the European Parliament held its constituent sitting after the elections.

This is a law that aims to prevent the display of ‘public information that agitates for homosexual relations’ and that ‘defies family values’, on the grounds that such information could be available to minors. Furthermore, new provisions in the penal and administrative codes are being proposed, to be discussed and approved in September, that would presumably lead to the criminalisation of people ‘propagating homosexuality’, which would then be punishable by means of arrest, sentencing to community labour, or the payment of fines of up to 1500 euros.

Has the Council discussed the abovementioned issues with the Lithuanian authorities? Does the Council not think that such law and amendments are incompatible with human rights and fundamental freedoms, as enshrined in international and European conventions, and notably with freedom of expression – which includes the right to seek, receive and impart information, and that it is incompatible with EU law and policies preventing discrimination? Does the Council not think that such law is in contradiction with the European Convention on Human Rights, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 6 of the EU Treaty and Article 13 of the EU Treaty, i.e. the fundamental values on which the EU is based? Will the Council request the Fundamental Rights Agency to assess the law and the amendments? What will the Council do to ensure that Lithuania respects its obligations under the EU Treaties, European and international law? Is it ready if necessary to activate the procedure provided for in article 7 of the EU Treaty?

Tabled: 23.07.2009

Forwarded: 24.07.2009

Deadline for reply: 14.08.2009