

**Question for oral answer O-000138/2011
to the Commission**

Rule 115

Rui Tavares, Alfreds Rubiks, Cornelia Ernst, Eva-Britt Svensson, Willy Meyer, Marie-Christine Vergiat, Marisa Matias, Patrick Le Hyaric, Helmut Scholz

on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

Subject: Voting rights for non-citizens of Latvia in local elections

After the restoration of independence, only citizens of the pre-1940 Latvia and their descendants had their Latvian citizenship restored. Others are entitled to obtain citizenship only through naturalisation and some persons are not entitled to be naturalised. Only around 132 000 persons were naturalised between 1995 and 2009. As of 1.1.2010, there remained around 358 000 non-citizens, representing around 16% of the total population.

The UN Human Rights Committee, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly have recommended making it possible for non-citizens to participate in local elections. In the resolution on the comprehensive monitoring report by the Commission on the state of preparedness for EU membership of 11 March 2004 the European Parliament proposed that the Latvian authorities envisage the possibility of allowing non-citizens who are long-time inhabitants to take part in local government elections. On 22 April 2009 the European Parliament adopted the resolution on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions during the year 2008, in which concern was expressed about the large number of petitions received by the Committee on Petitions seeking voting rights for resident non-citizens of Latvia in local elections.

Does the Commission agree with the abovementioned, and so far unfulfilled, recommendations of the European Parliament? How did the Commission address the issue in order to follow up the recommendations of the European Parliament? Does the Commission monitor closely and encourage the regularisation of the status of 'non'-citizens in Latvia, many of whom were born in Latvia? Does the Commission agree that the democratic deficit in Latvia may represent a clear risk of a serious breach of the principles of democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms?

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Deadline for reply: 7.6.2011