

**Question for oral answer O-000107/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 115

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on behalf of the EFD Group

Subject: Benefits tourism

Freedom of movement is a fundamental principle of the EU and is widely seen to be of great value to its citizens. More than 13.5 million EU citizens reside in another Member State. A significant number of these citizens move to richer Member States with the intention of taking advantage of more generous social welfare, including education, housing and healthcare services.

According to Eurostat statistics, the migrant unemployment rate in Member States with generous unemployment benefits is about twice that of nationals of the same Member State. The amounts paid out as social welfare benefits differ more than 12 times within the EU, resulting in possible abuses of the existing free movement principles. Social welfare systems in Member States vary considerably, allowing migrants from other Member States to draw social assistance fraudulently from host countries.

The existing situation has led to a growing number of Member States experiencing a large inflow of migrants. It has also brought about a lack of confidence in the benefits of the free movement of labour, fuelling calls to reclaim national sovereignty.

1. Does the Commission accept that benefits tourism exists as a phenomenon in the EU? If not, how can the Commission back this up?
2. Does the Commission intend to reassess its current position and introduce a balanced policy between promoting the benefits of the free movement of labour and addressing the unintended financial burdens borne by EU host countries?
3. Does the Commission intend to develop a consistent and collaborative approach across the EU to ensure that the abuse of free movement is kept to a minimum and that it is not exploited by migrants with criminal intentions?

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Deadline for reply: 17.10.2013