

**Question for oral answer O-000144/2013
to the Council**

Rule 115

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

Subject: EU citizenship for sale

On 12 November 2013 the Parliament of Malta approved a bill allowing third-country nationals to buy Maltese citizenship, and therefore to enjoy freedom of movement within the EU and access to the Schengen area, for EUR 650 000.

While decisions on issues of nationality and citizenship fall within the exclusive competence of individual Member States, the Maltese decision is problematic as it entitles new citizens to travel within the EU and to access the rest of the Schengen area without other member countries being consulted. It could therefore be interpreted as an abuse of the rights acquired by the country through its membership, and as a lack of respect for the other EU Member States and member countries of the Schengen area.

This decision also raises important concerns as regards possible discrimination, since only the richest third-country nationals will be able to buy citizenship.

Moreover, it is not clear whether Maltese citizens will benefit from this policy, for example through collection of taxes. Citizenship involves not only rights, but also responsibilities, which foreign investors may not be held to.

Finally, this decision raises questions on as to whether acquiring Maltese citizenship in this way undermines the very concept of European citizenship.

Can the Council clarify whether the Maltese Parliament's decision respects the letter of the Treaties and the Schengen Borders Code, as well as the non-discrimination principle as laid down therein?

At least five other Member States (Spain, Cyprus, Portugal, Latvia and Greece) have also offered to sell residency rights in exchange for business investment, real estate or government bonds. Can the Council comment on this situation?

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Deadline for reply: 30.12.2013