

**Question for oral answer O-000037/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 115

Mara Bizzotto, Matteo Salvini, Claudio Morganti, Rolandas Paksas
on behalf of the EFD Group

Subject: Swiss referendum results: implications for EU immigration policy

In a referendum held on 9 February 2014 the people of Switzerland voted to amend their country's constitution in order to protect themselves against mass immigration. They voted in favour of restrictions on the number of foreign nationals allowed on to the Swiss labour market and an obligation on the part of Swiss firms to give preference to Swiss nationals when recruiting staff. Switzerland will therefore be introducing overall limits and annual quotas for foreign nationals wishing to work in Switzerland, in line with the country's overall economic interests and the principle of 'national preference'.

This means that within the next three years, the Swiss Government will need to renegotiate the bilateral agreements currently in place with the European Union and introduce job quotas for foreign workers. Under the agreement on freedom of movement concluded between the EU and Switzerland in 1999, Switzerland is currently obliged to obey the same rules on the movement of persons as the 28 EU Member States.

Not least as a result of the economic crisis, net immigration into Switzerland, which is a prosperous country, is higher than forecast, at some 77 000 people per year, 70% of whom are from the EU.

Figures published by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office show that, between the third quarter of 2012 and the third quarter of 2013, the number of foreign nationals working in the country increased by 3.2%, to 1.436 million, while the number of Swiss workers fell slightly (by 0.5%), to 3.407 million. During that period the overall unemployment rate rose from 4.3% to 4.7% and the youth unemployment rate stood at around 10.4%. Given that the situation in the EU is much worse, with an average unemployment rate of 10.7% and youth unemployment at 23.6%, can the Commission say:

1. how it intends to respond to the democratic decision taken by the Swiss people?
2. whether it intends to have another look at the rules on freedom of movement for all Member States in which unemployment is a much bigger problem than it is in Switzerland and which, like that country, are having to deal with the economic and social repercussions of uncontrolled immigration?

Tabled 14.2.2014

Forwarded: 18.2.2014

Deadline for reply: 25.2.2014