

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0748/09
by Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Referendum in Switzerland on 8 February 2009 on free movement of persons

On 8 February 2009 Switzerland will hold a referendum on approval of the renewal for an unlimited period of the basic agreement between Switzerland and the European Community and its Member States on free movement of persons, an agreement which was concluded for a trial period that will end in May 2009, and on approval and implementation of the protocol concerning the extension of the agreement on free movement of persons to Romania and Bulgaria.

As the European Parliament's rapporteur on the Protocol concerning the extension of the agreement on the free movement of persons to Romania and Bulgaria, I have followed events in Switzerland in this context closely, before and after the approval given by the European Parliament in the form of its resolution under the assent procedure of 9 October 2008 (P6_TA(2008)0464). I appreciate the fact that the referendum is being held shortly after the approval by the European Parliament, thus allowing the Protocol to come into force as quickly as possible. I have followed the events leading up to the referendum in Switzerland and have noted with concern that there has been a negative side to the campaign, directed against the Romanians and Bulgarians. I believe that such a campaign can only succeed if citizens do not have all the necessary information or are misinformed.

This is why it is imperative that the Swiss people be informed of the positive effects that free movement of workers within the Union has had on Member States' economies and told that these positive effects will have the same impact on the Swiss economy. Citizens must also understand the political effects of a possible Swiss 'no', which would trigger the guillotine clause and, automatically, the cancelling of six other agreements with the European Union.

What has the Commission done to ensure that the Swiss people have this information?