

**Question for oral answer O-000008/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 115

Eric Andrieu, Ivo Vajgl, László Tőkés, Alain Cadec, Jean-Jacob Bicep, Hannu Takkula, Nils Torvalds, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, Catherine Grèze, Jill Evans, François Alfonsi, Tatjana Ždanoka, Alojz Peterle, Edit Bauer, Alajos Mészáros, Kinga Göncz, Herbert Dorfmann, Maria Badia i Cutchet, Iñaki Irazabalbeitia Fernández, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Raül Romeva i Rueda, Edit Herczog, Milan Zver, Valdemar Tomaševski, Janusz Wojciechowski, Bernd Posselt, Iuliu Winkler, Anna Hedh, Kinga Gál, László Surján, György Schöpflin, Giommaria Uggias, Csaba Sándor Tabajdi, Ryszard Czarnecki, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Mirosław Piotrowski, Jarosław Kalinowski, Czesław Adam Siekierski, Arkadiusz Tomasz Bratkowski, Zbigniew Ziobro, Marek Henryk Migalski, Paweł Robert Kowal

Subject: Protecting traditional national and linguistic minorities in Europe and their languages

Traditional national minorities make up 8 % of the EU population while regional or minority languages are spoken by nearly 50 million people; 10 % of the EU population. At present, there are no comprehensive standards for minority rights in the EU, even though respect for minority rights is one of the EU's founding values enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. Moreover, guaranteeing minority rights is an essential requirement for candidate countries as laid down in the Copenhagen criteria.

Protecting traditional ethnic and linguistic minorities and their languages is crucially important for the EU in terms of its stability, security, prosperity, internal and external legitimacy, cultural and linguistic diversity, and credibility.

- Why does the EU take such a strict approach towards candidate countries when it comes to compliance with the Copenhagen criteria on the respect of minority rights but lacks effective tools to monitor this once they have joined the EU?
- When does the Commission plan to develop a European framework of national strategies for the protection of traditional national minorities (based on the existing EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies) which includes a monitoring mechanism similar to the Copenhagen criteria, the EU's existing antidiscrimination directives and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU?
- How does the Commission intend to ensure the protection of regional and minority languages in accordance with the multilingualism policy?
- Does the Commission share the view that greater monitoring of discrimination towards national minorities in Member States and candidate countries should be carried out by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights as outlined in its Multiannual Framework for 2013-2017?

Tabled: 9.1.2014

Forwarded: 13.1.2014

Deadline for reply: 20.1.2014