

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3239/09
by Inese Vaidere (UEN)
to the Commission

Subject: New legislation planned by the Russian Federation to penalise persons with different views on World War II events

The Russian Federation plans to adopt legislation legalising the penalisation of anyone, who analyses the events of World War II from a point of view different from the one stated by the Russian Government. It is essential that the European Commission and the EU Council discuss this issue with Russia on the occasion of the opening of consultations on the new partnership agreement between the Russian Federation and the EU.

The EU should make clear that such legislation is not acceptable. Its implementation would not only deny access to Soviet time archives and other historical data to scientists whose opinion the Russian Government does not agree with, but would also endanger the most basic freedom of speech, as all conclusions and reflections made in contrast to the official Russian rhetoric would lead to a criminal liability. Moreover, if this legislation is adopted no scientist in Russia or any other country will be free to mention facts such as the occupation of the Baltic States by the USSR without risking to be penalised.

It appears impossible to discuss a common area of justice with the Russian Federation, when it adopts legislation that clearly contradicts European values. As stated in the resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism (P6_TA(2009)0213) adopted by the European Parliament, 'in order to strengthen European awareness of crimes committed by totalitarian and undemocratic regimes, documentation of, and accounts testifying to, Europe's troubled past must be supported, as there can be no reconciliation without remembrance'.

How has the Commission decided to tackle the issue and respond to this move by Russian at a time when the EU has just agreed to reopen discussions on the new EU-Russia partnership agreement?