

The Delegation of Estonia

Right of reply

Working session 9

25.09.2015

Thank you, Madam Moderator.

I would like to respond to the remarks presented at our working session on Democratic Institutions regarding the voting rights of non-citizens in Estonia. Since the presented remarks were not accurate, allow me to clarify the issue.

Estonia is among the few countries where all long-term residents regardless of their citizenship have the right to vote at local government elections. According to the Local Government Council Election Act of May 1996, citizens of other states and residents who have not yet chosen their citizenship have the right to vote in local administration elections. They must be over 18 years of age and have been permanent residents for at least 5 years in the territory of the respective local government.

As to the false remarks of Estonia having a massive number of people with undetermined citizenship, I would like to state the following:

The Estonian Government actively promotes acquiring of Estonian citizenship through naturalisation and has constantly made the acquisition of Estonian citizenship easier. The latest amendments to the Citizenship Act, for example, were approved by the Parliament on January 21st, 2015. The amendments guarantee a right to acquire Estonian citizenship by naturalisation to all children born in Estonia that have parents with undetermined citizenship. The amendments will enter force from 1st of January 2016.

As a conclusion, let me give our distinguished audience recent numbers that illustrate the distribution of the Estonian population by citizenship. As of 1 February 2015, 84,3 % of Estonian population held Estonian citizenship, 9,4% were citizens of other countries, and only 6,3% were of undetermined citizenship.

Thank you, Madam Moderator.