

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,  
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AT THE 1001st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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**Regarding voting rights in the European Union**

Mr. Chairperson,

The right to vote is one of the main prerequisites for the development of democracy. While the OSCE has amassed a significant set of commitments in this area, it is nevertheless a cause for concern that in a number of European Union (EU) States a significant proportion of permanent residents still have limited voting rights or no voting rights at all.

In Latvia, for example, the issue of the participation of so-called non-citizens in municipal elections has not yet been resolved, although the majority of these non-citizens were born in Latvia, have spent their whole lives there and duly pay taxes, which, incidentally, are used to maintain the municipal authorities. Yet citizens of other EU States who have lived in Latvia for more than six months are allowed to vote in local elections.

Estonia has made positive progress in this regard. The so-called non-citizens there may elect municipal authorities. Admittedly, they do not have the right to stand for office, unlike citizens of other EU States who reside in Estonia.

In both of these Baltic States, non-citizens are not even entitled to vote in referendums on matters directly affecting their lives. In Latvia, for example, non-citizens did not have the right to participate in the referendum on the status of the Russian language.

The European Parliamentary elections are imminent. We are surprised that the system for determining the quotas for seats for Latvia and Estonia in the European Parliament has been retained, whereby the number of non-citizens and even citizens of third countries who are permanent residents was counted as part of the total population. Yet for some reason non-citizens are not permitted to elect members of the European Parliament.

Thus, eight seats in the European Parliament were allocated to Latvia on the basis of a population of 2 million. This figure includes more than 300,000 non-citizens who do not have the right to vote and are not represented in any way. This is a strange approach.

The quota of six seats in the European Parliament for Estonia is based on a calculation of a population of 1.3 million. However, there too, around 200,000 persons (non-citizens of Estonia and Russian citizens with permanent residence) do not have the right to elect members of the European Parliament. This means that there is one seat in the European Parliament for residents without voting rights.

In our view, the European Commission should investigate this unjust juggling of “dead souls”. It would be important for the number of seats in the European Parliament to correspond with the number of those residents of Latvia and Estonia who actually have the right to vote for their occupants.