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Switzerland criticised for immigration quotas

Press release from Tatjana Ždanoka

The European Parliament has heard harsh criticism of Switzerland's decision to introduce restrictions on immigration from central and eastern European countries.

The issue centres on Switzerland's use of quotas on the number of residence permits it grants to nationals of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Lithuania.

The EU's Foreign Policy chief Baroness Ashton has already said that introducing such quotas goes against Switzerland's agreement with the EU on the free movement of people.

MEPs today backed a resolution criticising the quotas, and the Swiss decision was sharply criticised.

Speaking in the debate, Latvian MEP and member of the Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee, Tatjana Ždanoka called for the concept of European citizenship to be considered as a solution to such problems.

Tatjana Ždanoka said:

"During this Strasbourg session we are asking for the second time: why are EU Member States facing unequal treatment from third countries?"

"Our European neighbour, Switzerland, has decided to re-establish quantitative limitations on the long term residence permits granted to nationals of eight of EU Member States that joined the EU in 2004 including my own country, Latvia."

"Our group deplores this decision of the Swiss authorities and calls for solidarity with the Member States concerned."

"The European Parliament has to restart discussions on introducing a common European citizenship. The status of EU citizenship could be more than simply derived from a Member State's citizenship. Such a status may be a safeguard against a differential treatment of those holding European citizenship by third countries."

"We know that 2013 will be the Year of EU citizens (or EU citizenship). This will be a proper time to start"

promoting the concept of EU citizenship as a means of ensuring equal treatment of all EU citizens by Switzerland, and any other country in the world."

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