



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 2.3.2015
C(2015) 1358 final

Dear Presidents,

The Commission would like to thank the Houses of the Oireachtas for their Opinion concerning the Communication and the Recommendation on “Addressing the consequences of disenfranchisement of Union citizens exercising their right to free movement” {COM(2014) 33 and 391 final}.

The Commission welcomes this Opinion, which supports the content of the Communication and the Recommendation.

The Commission had highlighted therein the negative consequences of national disenfranchising policies for EU citizens who exercise their right to free movement. The resulting loss of rights of political participation is at odds with the founding premise of EU citizenship, namely that it is additional to national citizenship and is designed to give additional rights to EU citizens. Moreover, to the extent that the citizens concerned lose their right to vote in national elections in their home country without obtaining a corresponding right to vote in national elections in the country of residence, as is the case regarding the right to vote in European and local elections, this situation leads to a gap in their political rights.

Therefore, whilst acknowledging the sovereign right of Member States to determine the conditions for the exercise by their nationals of the right to vote in national elections, the Commission proposed inclusive and proportionate approaches towards the political rights of citizens who exercise their free movement rights, based on the premise that these citizens should be empowered to determine themselves whether they maintain a strong interest in the political life of their home country.

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In this context, the Commission notes that the Opinion recommends the Irish government to accept the principle that voting rights should be extended to Irish citizens abroad. The Commission will continue to monitor the process of constitutional reforms in Ireland with the aim of ensuring the full effect of the fundamental freedoms and rights that EU citizens derive from their status as EU citizens.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the concerns of the Houses of the Oireachtas and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'F' and 'T' followed by a long horizontal line.

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing as a cursive 'V' followed by a long horizontal line.

*Věra Jourová
Member of the Commission*