Question for written answer E-000665/2025
to the Commission
Rule 144
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Subject: The death of three minors at the Bulgarian border

According to a recent report[1], Bulgarian border police failed to assist three unaccompanied Egyptian minors in distress, despite repeated alerts from human rights defenders. Attempts to rescue them were blocked by the Bulgarian authorities, resulting in the minors' deaths.

For years, human rights monitors, journalists and Frontex officers have documented systematic violations by the Bulgarian border authorities. Attacks on defenders of migrants' rights have escalated, with Bulgarian authorities shifting responsibility for these deaths onto them. These abuses coincide with Bulgaria's full accession to the Schengen area and significant EU funding for migration management.

This raises serious concerns under Article 2 (right to life) and Article 3 (prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment) of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as under the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

1. What steps will the Commission take to investigate Bulgaria's responsibility for these deaths, ensure accountability (under Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union), and prevent further abuses in the context of its Schengen accession?

2. How will the Commission ensure that EU funds for Bulgarian border management are not used to support pushbacks, obstruct humanitarian aid or contribute to human rights violations?

3. What measures will the Commission implement to protect human rights defenders from criminalisation under the EU Facilitation Directive and ensure they can operate without interference?

Submitted: 12.2.2025

[1] https://bloodyborders.org/reports/frozen-lives-an-investigation-into-how-bulgarian-authorities-put-the-lives-of-people-on-the-move-at-risk-of-death/.