

**Question for written answer E-005047/2025
to the Commission**
Rule 144
Jean-Paul Garraud (PFE)

Subject: ‘Legal pathways’: does the Commission intend to ‘legalise’ irregular migration instead of enforcing borders and returns?

According to Frontex, irregular border crossings detected at the external borders of the European Union totalled just over 166 900 in the first 11 months of 2025¹.

Eurostat reports that in 2024, some 918 925 third-country nationals were found illegally staying in the EU, 453 380 were subject to a return decision and 110 385 were actually returned².

The Council points out, furthermore, that three out of four people who have been issued a return decision continue to stay in the EU³.

This is the context in which the Commission is promoting the opening of ‘safe and legal pathways’ as an alternative way to tackle illegal immigration.

1. On what studies is it basing the claim that expanding legal pathways reduces irregular immigration, and can it publish them?
2. Does it consider that offering more migration channels is an appropriate response, even though it risks sending a signal that illegal migration becomes legal, rather than effectively deterring and preventing irregular crossings?
3. What binding measures will it propose in 2026 to increase the effectiveness of returns (visa conditionality, financial aid, cooperation), with quantified targets and a timetable?

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¹ <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/eu-external-borders-irregular-crossings-fall-by-a-quarter-in-the-first-11-months-of-2025-YehbqE?>

² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Enforcement_of_immigration_legislation_statistics

³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/12/08/council-clinches-deal-on-eu-law-about-returns-of-illegally-staying-third-country-nationals/>