

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001665/24
to the Commission**

Sandro Ruotolo (S&D), Cecilia Strada (S&D), Alessandro Zan (S&D), Marco Tarquinio (S&D), Pina Picierno (S&D)
(10 September 2024)

Subject: Breach of the rule of law and the fundamental rights of inmates in Italy's prisons

The state of affairs in Italy's prisons has become a genuine emergency. Inmates continue to live and work in inhuman and degrading conditions.

According to a report by the national prisoners' ombudsman dated 18 August 2024, there are 61 465 prisoners in Italy although there are only 46 898 lawfully available places in its prisons. The overcrowding index stands at 131%, with almost 80% of the total number of prisons having more prisoners than permitted. These figures unfortunately also include establishments for juveniles.

In some institutions, prisoners are forced to live in less than 3 square metres, in serious violation of the standards set by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The increase in suicides among prisoners and prison officers is just one of the tragic consequences. Since the beginning of the year alone there have been 70 suicides among inmates and seven among prison officers, one every three days.

Given the gravity and urgency of this state of affairs, can the Commission say what action it intends to take to help enforce the rule of law and uphold the fundamental rights of inmates and officers in Italian prisons?

Submitted: 10.9.2024

Answer given by Mr Reynders on behalf of the European Commission
(18 November 2024)

Detention conditions are primarily a responsibility of Member States. All Member States have, however, committed themselves to respect the standards on this matter drafted by the Council of Europe, such as the 2006 European Prison Rules ⁽¹⁾.

Moreover, on 8 December 2022, the Commission adopted a recommendation on the procedural rights of suspects and accused in pre-trial detention and on material detention conditions ⁽²⁾.

It should be noted that the minimum standards, as laid down in the recommendation, are not legally binding on Member States. Member States had the deadline of 1 October 2024 to inform the Commission on their follow-up to this recommendation.

Based on this information, the Commission will monitor and assess the measures taken by Member States and submit a report.

⁽¹⁾ <https://rm.coe.int/european-prison-rules-978-92-871-5982-3/16806ab9ae>

⁽²⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_7570