

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000554/25
to the Commission**

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(6 February 2025)

Subject: Immigration and crime: arrests for facilitating illegal immigration in Italy

On 3 February 2025, the Italian authorities conducted a major operation in the provinces of Salerno, Naples and Caserta, uncovering more than 2 000 fraudulent applications for residence permits and arresting 36 people on charges of facilitating illegal immigration, corruption and forging public documents. The investigation exposed a criminal organisation that has been issuing false documents to illegally regularise the status of third-country nationals, fuelling an illegal scheme worth millions of euros and undermining security and the law. The facilitation of illegal immigration poses a threat to the stability of the Member States and calls for coordinated action at EU level to thwart the criminal networks involved.

In view of the above:

1. What additional tools could be made available to the Member States to combat this facilitation of illegal immigration, and to identify and dismantle these transnational criminal networks?
2. What joint cooperation and control measures will the Commission put in place to help the Member States put a stop to these false or unlawful documents and ensure greater security, while respecting national competences?
3. What cooperation tools will it promote with countries of origin to prevent migrants becoming embroiled with organised crime gangs?

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Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission
(2 May 2025)

With the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling ⁽¹⁾, the Commission facilitates the cooperation between Member States on operational, policy and legislative aspects of the fight against migrant smuggling.

The Operational Action Plan ⁽²⁾ of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats on migrant smuggling covers actions to identify and dismantle criminal networks.

Member States and the EU support information campaigns addressing risks of irregular migration and common operational partnership projects to enhance law enforcement and judicial cooperation with partner countries. In 2023, the Commission proposed a directive ⁽³⁾ and a regulation ⁽⁴⁾ to update the EU anti-smuggling legal framework.

The Commission adopted a transport operators toolbox ⁽⁵⁾, to address the facilitation of irregular migration, and proposed a regulation in this domain ⁽⁶⁾.

The EU has adopted legal acts establishing high security standards for travel documents ⁽⁷⁾. As technological capabilities advance, the EU must remain vigilant and proactive in adopting state-of-the-art security features to protect documents and underlying issuance processes.

⁽¹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_23_6081/IP_23_6081_EN.pdf

⁽²⁾ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7101-2023-INIT/en/pdf>

⁽³⁾ COM(2023) 755 final.

⁽⁴⁾ COM(2023) 754 final.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-06/Toolbox%20addressing%20the%20use%20of%20commercial%20means%20of%20transport%20to%20facilitate%20irregular%20migration%20to%20the%20EU.pdf>

⁽⁶⁾ COM(2021) 753 final.

⁽⁷⁾ Notably Council Regulation (EC) No 2252/2004 of 13 December 2004 on standards for security features and biometrics in passports and travel documents issued by Member States, OJ L 385, 29.12.2004, p. 1; Council Regulation (EC) No 1683/95 of 29 May 1995 laying down a uniform format for visas, OJ L 164, 14.7.1995, p. 1; Council Regulation (EC) No 1030/2002 of 13 June 2002 laying down a uniform format for residence permits for third-country nationals, OJ L 157, 15.6.2002, p. 1; Regulation (EU) 2019/1157 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on strengthening the security of identity cards of Union citizens and of residence documents issued to Union citizens and their family members exercising their right of free movement, OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 67.