

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002585/26
to the Commission**

Fabrice Leggeri (PFE), Mathilde Androuët (PFE), Pierre-Romain Thionnet (PFE), André Rougé (PFE), Séverine Werbrouck (PFE), Marie-Luce Brasier-Clain (PFE), Aleksandar Nikolic (PFE), Angéline Furet (PFE), Julie Rechagneux (PFE), Pierre Pimpie (PFE), Valérie Deloge (PFE), Marie Dauchy (PFE), Mélanie Disdier (PFE)

(23 June 2026)

Subject: The number of illegal immigrants in France, according to the Government and Eurostat: a methodological error or wilful blindness?

On 12 May 2026, a post on the Eurostat website stated that 719 395 people were illegally present in the European Union in 2025, including 159 460 in France ⁽¹⁾. In October 2025, Laurent Nunez, the French Minister for the Interior, estimated that there were 700 000 illegal immigrants in France, a figure very similar to that reported by Eurostat for the European Union as a whole. As early as 2021, Gérald Darmanin, then Minister for the Interior, announced that there were between 600 000 and 700 000 illegal immigrants on French soil.

While discrepancies arising from a different calculation method are understandable, the one observed here appears to be particularly significant. If we assume that the differences are of the same magnitude across the whole of the Union, this would suggest that the number of undocumented foreign nationals in the Union could exceed three million.

The significant discrepancies between these figures contribute to confusion regarding the actual number of people residing in the Union illegally.

For the sake of clarity, could the Commission:

1. explain the 1:4 discrepancy between the figures provided by the French Minister for the Interior and those from Eurostat for France?
2. consider using a different statistical category or method in order to better reflect the estimates produced by the national authorities of the Member States?

Supporters ⁽²⁾

Submitted: 23.6.2026

Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission

(31 August 2026)

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, publishes official and verified statistics based on a common methodology and data provided by the Member States.

Accordingly, when it comes to illegally staying third-country nationals, the Eurostat data is based on reporting by the national statistical authorities, in this case the French authorities.

Furthermore, Eurostat data undergoes quality verifications and validations. The Eurostat indicator in question refers to the number of third-country nationals illegally staying in the country who were detected by France during the whole calendar year of 2025.

It includes persons who were apprehended to be illegally present in the territory of France and who do not fulfil, or no longer fulfil, the conditions for stay or residence in this country ⁽¹⁾.

The figure mentioned by the French Minister for the Interior seems to be an estimation of the total absolute number of third-country nationals illegally staying in the country (not only those detected).

The Commission does not have any information about the source, the methodology or the relevant reference period or reference date that underlie the figure mentioned by the French Minister for the Interior and is referred to by the Honourable Member.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enforcement_of_immigration_legislation_statistics#Third-country_nationals_found_to_be_illegally_present.

² This question is supported by Members other than the authors: Catherine Griset (PFE), Jean-Paul Garraud (PFE).

⁽¹⁾ For more details on the Eurostat data collection methodology, please refer to the Compilers' manual for statistics on Enforcement of Immigration Legislation (EIL statistics) — <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/w/ks-01-26-008-en-n>.

Therefore, it is not possible for the Commission to compare the figures to which the Honourable Member refers.
