

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2319/06
by Klaus Hänsch (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Investigation into alleged cases of the State-sanctioned killing of persons trying to flee Bulgaria during the period from 1975 to 1989

It is now becoming clear that in the final years of Communist rule in Eastern Europe the Bulgarian State ordered or at least tolerated the killing of persons trying to flee the country, some of whom came from the former GDR. At a Question Time held on this issue in the Bulgarian Parliament in the early 1990s, the Bulgarian Government admitted that some 350 people, including 36 foreigners, almost all of them Germans, had been killed trying to flee the country. Historians researching the period suspect that the real figure is much higher, however. To this day, the Bulgarian authorities have carried out no legal investigation into the killings. Thus far, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers has not granted permission to inspect the relevant files, denying that they even exist, although there is proof that they are being kept in the archives of the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior. The Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Defence are maintaining silence on this matter.

1. Is the Commission aware of these facts?
2. What view does the Commission take of the attitude of the Bulgarian Government in the light of the requirement that any applicant country must, in keeping with the Copenhagen criteria, respect and safeguard human rights, prosecute crimes and guarantee transparency in public affairs?
3. What scope does the Commission see for persuading the Bulgarian Council of Ministers and the competent Bulgarian authorities (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Defence) to open up the relevant files to scrutiny?