

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0942/09

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to the Commission

Subject: Tuberculosis among illegal immigrants

Tuberculosis is a growing problem, including in the EU. Recent research indicates that between 5% and 10% of tuberculosis patients are illegal immigrants. Illegal immigrants do not always have access to medical care and treatment. Treatment is necessary, of course, both for the patient and in order to prevent any further spread of the disease. Treatment takes a long time (six to eight months), and must be completed. Otherwise there is a serious danger that the disease will recur and that resistance to antibiotics will arise. Multiple drug resistant (MDR) tuberculosis requires longer treatment (approx. 2 years), using powerful drugs with unpleasant side-effects, and is many times more expensive.

As the disease is infectious, there is a risk that major health problems will occur. Measures are needed to ensure that everyone who is diagnosed with tuberculosis receives adequate treatment and completes it. In many cases it is not possible to secure the continuation of TB treatment in the country of origin. Despite this, some Western countries, including EU Member States (the UK, Austria), do not defer deportation of illegal immigrants who are suffering from tuberculosis until the treatment has been completed.

1. Will the Commission call upon Member States to ensure access to TB diagnosis and, if necessary, health care for everybody who is suspected of having TB, irrespective of their legal status?
2. Does the Commission have any statistics on deportation of illegal immigrants who are suffering from TB?
3. Will the Commission call upon Member States not to deport illegal immigrants until the treatment has been completed?