

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2163/09

by Margaritis Schinas (PPE-DE) and Georgios Papastamkos (PPE-DE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Measures to strengthen controls at the Union's external borders with Turkey - illegal immigrants' camp at Patras

We recently visited the town of Patras where 5000 immigrants have congregated over the last twelve years. They come mainly from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kurdistan and, lately, Somalia and have established an illegal camp in the Exo Agia area for the sole purpose of moving on – by illegal channels – to other Member States of the EU.

The camp is situated in a purely residential area in the immediate vicinity of apartment blocks, where the immigrants have arbitrarily occupied communal areas and plots belonging to private individuals and have connected themselves illegally to the public utility networks (water and electricity supplies) without any provision being made in respect of public health and safety. These conditions are an affront to European civilisation and have created intolerable social pressure. It is a 'dumping ground for hopes and emotions' which affects the immigrants, the town and European immigration policy.

Being at the external borders of the EU, Greece is a country of reception for illegal immigrants, the majority of whom enter the country from - and possibly have their passage facilitated by - Turkey. It is, moreover, the Member State which, proportionally, comes under the greatest external pressure from immigrants.

1. Is the Commission aware of the existence of the abovementioned illegal camp at Patras, the living conditions of the immigrants, and the dangers posed to the public health of both citizens and immigrants?
2. What measures has it taken and what measures will it take to further strengthen protection of the external borders of the Union and, particularly, the borders with Turkey, in order to control illegal immigration more effectively?
3. Will the Commission support – and in what way – any initiative by the Greek Government to set up an organised immigrant reception centre in the broader region in order to put an end to the present unacceptable situation?