

**Question for written answer E-000031/2023
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Damian Boeselager (Verts/ALE), **Tineke Strik** (Verts/ALE), **Erik Marquardt** (Verts/ALE), **Saskia Bricmont** (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Use of clandestine detention centres, cages and torture along the EU's external borders

On 8 December 2022, in cooperation with a series of news and media organisations – namely *Der Spiegel*, *Le Monde*, *Domani*, ARD (specifically its *Monitor* programme), Sky News, SRF and RFE/RL's Bulgarian Service – Lighthouse Reports released an investigation revealing the systematic use of torture and clandestine detention centres along the EU borders. Security forces in Bulgaria, Hungary and Croatia are using these secret facilities to detain people before illegally deporting them. Since the facilities are operated outside formal detention or reception systems, they are excluded from independent scrutiny, monitoring and public access.

The investigation demonstrated that these are not isolated sites, but rather part of a wider system, and that some of them are funded by EU money and operated by staff from Frontex.

1. Can the Commission provide statistics on the people detained at these clandestine centres?
2. Will it start an investigation into the practices at these centres, which are clearly in violation of EU and international law, in particular Articles 8 to 11 of the Reception Conditions Directive¹ and Articles 15 and 16 of the Return Directive²?
3. What steps will it take to monitor the implementation of the EU asylum *acquis*, particularly the provisions laid out in the Reception Conditions Directive, Asylum Procedures Directive³ and Return Directive?

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¹ Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, OJ L 180, 29.6.2013, p. 96.

² Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals, OJ L 348, 24.12.2008, p. 98.

³ Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection, OJ L 180, 29.6.2013, p. 60.