

**Question for written answer E-002764/2023/rev.1
to the Commission**
Rule 138
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Subject: Schengen area: accession of Croatia and consequences for the Western Balkan migration route

The EU's Frontex agency has reported that between January and August 2023, 70 548 migrants entered the EU irregularly via the Western Balkan route.

Following Croatia's accession into the Schengen area, controls at border crossings with Slovenia and Hungary were abandoned from 1 January 2023.

The resulting freedom of movement of people has also meant easier movement for migrants, who often pass through this country of transit to reach the more developed countries of central or northern Europe. This is illustrated by reports that the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region alone has counted some 13 700 irregular entries since the beginning of the year.

Some states such as France or Austria have suspended Schengen de facto by stepping up controls and rejecting migrants at their borders with Italy.

Can the Commission therefore say:

1. how many migrants were present in Croatia prior to its entry into the Schengen area and, when they suddenly found themselves in the Schengen area, what measures were taken to deal with and manage their presence and movements?
2. what have been the consequences of Croatia's accession into the Schengen area for the Western Balkan route?
3. how the Union's external borders, especially with Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, are being controlled while guaranteeing the freedom of movement intended by the Schengen area.

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