

**Question for oral answer O-000129/2013
to the Council**

Rule 115

Manfred Weber, Véronique Mathieu Houillon, Andrey Kovatchev, Georgios Papanikolaou
on behalf of the PPE Group

Subject: Influx of asylum seekers in Bulgaria

So far nearly 8 000 asylum seekers have entered Bulgarian territory in 2013, of which the largest group are Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria. This situation has put considerable strain on Bulgaria, in particular owing to its long border with Turkey, a lack of preparedness and proper infrastructure for such an influx of asylum seekers, and social and economic conditions. The Bulgarian authorities have decided to erect a 30 km wire fence between the towns of Lesovo and Kraynovo with intention of preventing irregular migrants from entering Bulgaria via that section of the border.

Asylum seekers come via transit from Turkey with the help of smugglers who benefit financially from their plight. Although Turkey has done a lot to assist Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war, it could have done more to combat smuggling and human trafficking to Bulgaria and Greece. Turkey is also refusing to sign the readmission agreement with the EU, making it difficult to return not only those asylum seekers who are not recognised as refugees but also those known to have been involved in suspicious activity or who have a criminal record.

1. Are those who have legitimate reasons for seeing asylum in Bulgaria, such as Syrian refugees, experiencing any considerable hardship at the moment owing to a lack of preparedness and proper infrastructure?
2. Are there any joint efforts with Turkey to tackle smuggling and human trafficking to Bulgaria and Greece?
3. What attempts have been made to address the issue of Turkey's refusal to sign the readmission agreement with the EU?

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