

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0291/03
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to the Commission

Subject: Illegal immigration

A few days ago yet another illegal-immigration tragedy occurred off the Apulian coast, with a heavy loss of life.

The geography and the pattern of this new form of slavery are now all too well known: the practice is as lucrative as smuggling and it feeds an appalling trade in human beings who leave North Africa and the Middle East in order to cross the coasts of the northern Mediterranean (in particular those of Apulia, Sicily and Calabria) in search of illusory freedom and well-being in Europe.

An awareness of, and the relative predictability of, such illegal transport operations and the routes they follow have not so far prompted the EU institutions to take appropriate preventive action. Hence the burden of dealing with the matter and with the social, economic and legal implications thereof falls entirely on the regions on whose coasts illegal immigrants come ashore.

It should once again be pointed out that the matter is to be regarded as one of relevance to the EU as a whole and not just to the areas targeted by illegal immigrants as their point of entry into the EU.

In the light of the above facts, what action is the Commission planning to take in order to deal with the issue? Is the Commissioner responsible not intending to arrange continuous coordination within the Commission amongst the relevant authorities of the countries most affected by the arrival of illegal immigrants, with a view to devising a more effective containment strategy?