

**Priority question for written answer P-003169/2023
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Illegal access to Portugal by third-country nationals – forged documents

A report on a major TV channel has uncovered very serious institutional loopholes that have given massive numbers of third-country nationals illegal, uncontrolled access to Portugal and, therefore, the EU.

Foreign nationals are able to acquire a genuine Portuguese passport, as long as they pay for it. Statements describe a structured scheme involving forged documentation, intermediaries and corruption, possible involvement of civil servants and rapid proliferation of illicit businesses, all of which compromises the security and integrity of the EU's borders.

Portugal's Judiciary Police has confirmed that investigations are under way into suspected forgery of identity documents.

To make matters worse, the government has decided to wind down the Immigration and Border Service (SEF), which is run by qualified staff who will now be sent to other bodies. The staff's lack of motivation following the announcement that SEF would close may help explain the chaos. Knowledge will be lost, inefficiency will grow, and weakened capacities for monitoring, detection and prevention will be easily exploited by criminal networks.

The future of the European project relies on controlling the flows of people who want access to the EU.

1. Is the Commission aware of this situation? What immediate steps does the Commission intend to take to investigate?
2. How does the Commission intend to bolster monitoring processes and protect the integrity of the Schengen area?

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