

FORM FOR TABLING A PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

ORAL QUESTIONS	WRITTEN QUESTIONS
To be put to: <b>COUNCIL</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>COMMISSION</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	To be put to: <b>PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>COUNCIL</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>COMMISSION</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>VICE-PRESIDENT / HIGH REPRESENTATIVE</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
Question for oral answer with debate (Rule 115) <input type="checkbox"/>	Question for written answer (Rule 117) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Priority question (Rule 117(4)) <input type="checkbox"/>

**AUTHOR(S):** Barbara Lochbihler

**SUBJECT:** (please specify) Visa-free regime with countries from the Western Balkans: recent developments

**TEXT:**  
 The countries of the Western Balkans, which have been granted liberalization of their visa regime with the EU, have been requested to adopt substantial reforms. Subsequent to the increase of the number of asylum seekers from countries such as Serbia and Macedonia, the EU Commission and EU member states have asked for additional measures. In its Enlargement Strategy, also the Commission invites them "to take all the necessary further measures to allow for the visa free regime to function smoothly". The document makes explicit reference to the "significantly increased numbers of asylum applications ... pointing towards abuse of the visa-free regime." Under the threat of losing the recently granted visa freedom, the countries concerned have announced a series of measures. Several thousand citizens have been prevented from leaving their country on the basis of the allegation that they would attempt to seek asylum abroad. Macedonia has just adopted a law reform which enables the temporary revocation of the passports of returned immigrants and failed asylum seekers. Other countries like Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have announced similar measures.

1. Has there been any formal requirement to the countries concerned to adopt elements of the Schengen Borders Code, in particular the entry criteria, including the necessity for persons wishing to leave these countries and entering the EU to provide details of their travel plans and means of subsistence, or have the countries otherwise been asked to operate exit controls? If yes, please specify.
2. Does the Commission/Council have any information upon the criteria on the basis of which these border checks are operated (see the reference to "profiling" in the report on Macedonia and according statements of the Macedonian Minister of Interior)? If yes, please specify.
3. Does the Commission/Council consider these measures and other measures such as the stamping of and making void of passports and the temporary revocation of passports compatible with the EU's acquis and more generally, international human rights standards, including the ECHR?
4. In the view of its efforts to promote human and minority rights and to combat against racism and discrimination, how does the Commission/Council justify that Roma and ethnic minorities are the main targets of the enhanced border controls and other repressive measures?

**Signature(s):**  **Date:** 15 December 2011