

(1999/C 135/153)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2837/98**by Niall Andrews (UPE) to the Commission***(28 September 1998)**Subject: Asylum seekers*

Can the Commission say how many asylum seekers there are in each Member State? How many are considered to be 'economic refugees' and how many political refugees?

Answer given by Mrs Gradin on behalf of the Commission*(10 November 1998)*

The Commission is sending direct to the Honourable Member and to Parliament's Secretariat two tables. Table A shows the number of asylum applications lodged in each Member State each year from 1987 until 1997. Table B shows the number of decisions taken by each Member State over the same period to recognise a person as a refugee within the meaning of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees.

It is important to note that asylum decisions frequently relate to applications lodged in previous years. There is not therefore a straightforward correlation between the two tables. It is not possible to draw conclusions about the number of unfounded asylum applications submitted in each Member State on the basis of the information available.

The Commission also notes that many people who are not recognised as refugees within the meaning of the 1951 Convention are nevertheless in need of international protection. In some cases, Member States will have obligations under other human rights instruments such as the 1950 European Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms or the 1984 United Nations Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In other cases, there may be humanitarian reasons for not returning the person concerned to the country of origin. A number of Member States grant what is often referred to as a *de facto* or 'B status' to such people. Common minimum standards for forms of protection complementary to refugee status have not yet been adopted at the level of the Union, but Article 73k(2)(a) of the Treaty of Amsterdam will require the Council to adopt measures in this area within five years of the new treaty's entry into force.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-2842/98**by Hedy d'Ancona (PSE) to the Council***(28 September 1998)**Subject: Trial against representatives of the Greek Rainbow Party*

On 14 October, Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliades and Pavlos Voskopoulos will go on trial in Florina (Greece). These leading members of the Greek-Macedonian Rainbow Party (Venezito) are charged under article 192 of the Greek penal code. They are charged with having incited 'mutual hatred between citizens' in September 1995 by displaying a sign in two languages (Greek and Macedonian) indicating the name of the party and the local section. After the sign had been removed by the local police, the local party office was attacked by a mob led by the mayor of Florina.

The official charge is that the combination of words used and 'the fact that they were in a foreign language, and more specifically in a Slavic language, provoked and incited discord between various sections of the population in the region' and harked back to a 'former terrorist organization of Slavic-speakers'.

Venezito is an officially recognized political party which has twice participated in elections in Greece including in the 1994 European elections.