

**Question for written answer E-000019/2017
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Beatrix von Storch (EFDD)

Subject: NGOs and collusion with smugglers

On the 15 December 2016, *The Financial Times* published an article entitled 'EU border force flags concerns over charities' interaction with migrant smugglers'. It was based on confidential reports issued by Frontex which were shared among EU officials and diplomats. Independent reports which made similar claims were also released in December.

The reports seen by FT raise several alarming points:

- '...criminal networks were smuggling migrants directly on an NGO vessel.'
- '...clear indications before departure on the precise direction to be followed in order to reach the NGOs' boats.'
- 'Frontex said people rescued by NGO vessels were often "not willing to co-operate with debriefing experts at all" and "that they were warned not to co-operate with Italian law enforcement or Frontex".'

1. Is the Commission aware that smugglers and search-and-rescue agencies are colluding or at least cooperating?
2. Does the Commission believe that this constitutes an evolution from search-and-rescue operations to smuggling migrants?
3. When will the Commission release an official and public report on this issue?