

Question for written answer E-000022/2020
to the Commission
Rule 138
Kris Peeters (PPE)

Subject: Cost efficiency of forced return flights

The number of asylum seekers and people without legal residence who have been returned is considerably lower than the number of return decisions. For example, according to VRT ¹, 33 386 people were ordered to leave Belgian territory in 2018. Only 7 399 of them have been confirmed to have actually left.

Since 2016, Frontex has been able to coordinate and organise forced return operations of its own initiative. These flights have not been cost-effective to date. According to European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 24/2019, Frontex organised 345 charter flights for Member States in 2018. There were 23 672 empty seats on those flights, an unused capacity of 43%. Return via charter flights cost Frontex EUR 2 857 per person returned.

1. How can returns be made more efficient? What has Frontex been doing to improve cost-efficiency?
2. If scheduled flights are almost EUR 1 000 cheaper than charter flights (EUR 1 898 per person returned), what is the justification for using charter flights?
3. Return operations are also hampered by difficult cooperation with third countries, how can Frontex and the Commission improve this situation?

¹ <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2019/12/16/terugkeer/>.