

Question for written answer E-001755/2022
to the Commission
Rule 138
Özlem Demirel (The Left)

Subject: Detection and notification of maritime emergencies

There is a set procedure for determining whether there is an emergency for search and rescue operations for vessels in distress at sea. This includes not only the assessment of the vessel's seaworthiness, but also the identification of any health problems encountered by the occupants of the vessel. In the central Mediterranean, it has happened that the Maltese forces responsible for coast guard duties have not wanted to recognise a distress situation and have allowed people to continue their journey to the Italian sea rescue zone. Frontex also sometimes observes these vessels from the air without launching rescue operations. Instead, the Libyan Coast Guard is informed so that it then hauls these people on board and takes them back to Libya against their will.

1. Under its FASS flight service, what routines and procedures does Frontex use to determine the existence of a maritime emergency on the high seas requiring notification of a competent rescue coordination centre, and are these evaluated?
2. In 2021, how often did Frontex detect maritime emergencies involving people presumed to be fleeing Libya on vessels, for which it did not launch rescue operations?
3. Is Frontex aware of the fact that the Maltese Armed Forces apparently allow fully loaded and obviously unseaworthy vessels to sail through their maritime rescue zone without taking the necessary measures, and which cases of this nature have been observed by Frontex itself?