

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0044/08

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Magor Imre Csibi and Ramona Nicole Mănescu, on behalf of the ALDE Group, Jean Lambert, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
to the Commission

Subject: Illegal migration, external action of the EU and Frontex

In 2007, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders, Frontex, detected over 160 000 illegal border crossings at the EU external borders, of which over 135 000 crossed the borders of Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus and France. Malta is also facing the influx of many illegal border crossings to its territory. With the arrival of spring and better weather conditions, illegal migration flows are likely to rise. This phenomenon leads the EU to witness each year human tragedies and the loss of lives as well as an increase of victims of human smuggling, in particular for entrants who arrive by boat from the northern coasts of Africa, many of whom die during the journey.

As Frontex is a coordinating agency created in 2005, we cannot expect it to stop the influx of irregular migrants by itself. EU border security is the ultimate responsibility of all Member States, and border controls must be operated in a spirit of sharing responsibilities, solidarity between Member States and respect for asylum law.

The European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of proposals to create mobile border guards from all Member States, with the burden distributed evenly, on 26 April 2007¹. The measures include a 'mandatory solidarity' principle, obliging Member States to assist each other on border issues. However, it is up to each Member State to decide whether it wants its officers to participate in the RABITs (Rapid Border Intervention Teams) or not, while Frontex does not yet have the budget, the staff, or the equipment, to make a significant impact. As the director of Frontex has stated: 'The Centralised Record of Available Technical Equipment (CRATE) is just a virtual record that will help Frontex in planning its operations better. The assets on this list belong to the Member States and they are subject to their will to deploy them'.

- Is the Commission satisfied that Member States are sufficiently supporting Frontex in its task to coordinate their actions on the protection of the EU's external borders?
- Is the Commission willing to extend the principle of 'compulsory solidarity' obliging Member States to assist each other on border-related issues, notably with regard to CRATE?
- Is the Commission prepared this year for the influx of migrants who often arrive in large numbers during the spring? Until now, how many joint operations has Frontex carried out at the EU's maritime borders, and are future deployments by the Rapid Border Intervention Teams (RABITs) planned in 2008?
- Can the Commission ensure the provision of data and statistics to the European Parliament by Frontex on the exact number of illegal crossings into the EU with the detailed breakdown of crossings noted within each Member State?
- Have the questions concerning pre-arranged points of disembarkation and subsequent responsibility, including for protection needs for those landed there, been resolved? More generally, have the human rights obligations of Frontex been fully and sufficiently included in their governing Regulations and Practice?

Tabled: 16.04.2008

Forwarded: 18.04.2008

¹ P6_TA(2007)0162.

Deadline for reply: 25.04.2008