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Subject: Written question number E-001267/2021 to the Commission - Rule 138, Manned real-time monitoring on behalf of Frontex

Dear Mr Oel,

With reference to your letter of 24 March 2021, please kindly find our reply below.

QUESTION 1

How many FASS flights were operated by charter companies on behalf of Frontex in 2020, and in which countries?

Please be advised that FASS is the acronym for Frontex Aerial Surveillance Services for Border & Coast Guard Functions Framework Contract. The framework contracts (FWC) under this name provide aerial surveillance services to support surveillance operations. As an inter-agency FWC, it can also be used by EFCA. The current FWC, also known as FASS II, is registered as Frontex/OP/932/2018/JL/MS. In 2020, as EUROSUR Fusion Service, Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance (MAS) was delivered upon service request from the Member States or Frontex own initiative to: Malta, Poland, Hungary, Croatia, and Italy. MAS was also deployed in Cyprus to support EFCA during the Mediterranean Joint Deployment Plan (JDP) campaign, and in Romania to support Multipurpose Maritime Operation (MMO) Black Sea 2020. In 2020 FASS contracted aircraft supported Joint Operation (JO) Themis, JO Poseidon, JO Montenegro and Rapid Border Intervention (RBI) Aegean.

In this context, Frontex Surveillance Aircraft performed more than 1000 operational missions, flying more than 4700 flight hours in 2020.

QUESTION 2

What was the purpose of the flights in each of these countries (for example border monitoring, search missions, identifying maritime pollution)?

The purpose of the flights performed as EUROSUR fusion services (MAS) is to provide the national coordination centres with information on the external borders of the Member State to which it belongs and on the pre-frontier area.

The purpose of the MAS flights is to contribute to:

- monitoring of designated pre-frontier areas,
- implementing of EU Coast Guard functions, including inter-agency and the Member States cooperation,

- situational awareness acting as an early warning-mechanism,
- ensuring the safety of lives at sea and support Search and Rescue (SAR) operations;

In the context of support to JOs, the flights are performed to fulfil the specific JO remit as described in each JO Operational Plan.

QUESTION 3

How many FASS flights are planned for 2021, and for what purposes?

From 1 January 2021 to 24 March 2021, Frontex performed 118 missions, flying for more than 730 flight hours under FASS II FWC. This FWC has almost completely exhausted its budget capacity. The new FWC (Frontex/OP/694/2020/JL/MS), known as FSA 1, is not awarded yet. With these premises, it is not possible to establish in detail how many flights will be planned for 2021. Frontex intentions are to have at least the same intensity of flight activity as in 2020 (more than 4700 flight hours), with the same purposes.

I remain at your disposal for any additional request of information or clarification needed, and I am sending you my kindest regards.

Yours sincerely,



Fabrice Leggeri
Executive Director