**Gil Arias, Frontex Interim Executive Director, statement at the European Parliament’s committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) hearing, 4 September 2014.**

NON-OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

Note: this is a non-official transcript of the audio-video recording of the LIBE hearing provided by researcher Julien Jeandesboz, with additional transcription by Sabine Llewellyn. Only the intervention of Gil Arias, Frontex Interim Executive Director, and the responses to it, is transcribed here.

Full audio-video recording available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/video?event=20140904-0930-COMMITTEE-LIBE> (last accessed January 18, 2016).

**Gil Arias, Frontex Interim Executive Director**

“Since I have been watching yesterday the debate with the occasion of the presentation made by Commissioner Malmström, and some questions remained unanswered, I would like to start by briefly explaining what is Frontex and how it works so some of those questions might be answered already now, and also for people who is not familiar with Frontex it might be worth to have this brief explanation.

So with the creation of the Schengen area the external borders of the Member States became EU common borders and therefore tackling with either high migratory pressure or fighting cross-border crime at sectors, sectors of these borders is a task for all the Member States, not anymore for a single country. And the role of Frontex is primarily to support the Member States in such a task by coordinating operational cooperation at the external borders, mainly but not exclusively through joint operations, which are based on the principles of solidarity and voluntary cooperation.

You may know that Frontex does not possess its own technical equipment, planes, vessels, etc. Nor does it have border guards to carry out the actual border controls. Therefore, during joint operations, Frontex coordinates the resources, human and technical, made available by the Member States. In addition, those resources remain during the operation under the command and control of the Member State they belong to. This is done through an international coordination center, which is set up for each joint operation and is led by the authorities of the country hosting the operation. However, when in the course of a maritime operation a search and rescue case is declared, the command and control over the assets taking part in that search and rescue operation is transferred to the competent national rescue centres. Therefore, it is not border control anymore, but it becomes search and rescue operation.

All joint operations are carried out according to an operation plan, which is agreed with the country hosting the operation, and it is based on risk analyses prepared beforehand. Frontex joint operations are financed from the Frontex budget, via reimbursement of, to the Member States, for the costs they bore for their participation.

I’m aware that this might be too short and basic an explanation, but we need to go to the point on our agenda for today. However, I would also like to take this opportunity to extend an invitation to the members of this Committee to come to Warsaw and to have a proper briefing on Frontex and also to visit one of our operations if you so wish.

Concerning my presentation, I would like to start by giving you an overview of the situation in the Mediterranean, and then brief information on the activities that the agency is planning for the coming weeks and months.

At EU level, the first half of 2014 saw a dramatic in the detection of irregular border crossings compared to the same period of last year. At the end of July, the detections were two and a half time larger than last year. In just seven months, the Member States reported more than 121,000 detections compared to approximately 107,000 for the whole year 2013. In fact, comparing the situation, compared to the situation in previous years, at the end of July we were already well above the annual total for the entire year 2009 and 2010. If the trends continue, as it is likely, the detections of irregular border crossings in 2014 will be higher than in 2011, the year of the Arab Spring when more than 141,000 detections were recorded. This forecast is based in the fact that traditionally, since 2009, the detections were relatively low in the first half of the year, with an increase in number in the second half when the weather conditions are better for sea crossing.

Looking at the main routes for irregular border crossings. What stands out as of the end of July is the sharp increases in the three main routes. Mostly in the Central Mediterranean with more than 87 000 arrivals, considering both: the main routes and the smaller ones to Asapulia and Clavia, compared to about 50 000 or (15000) over the same period last year, but there were also increases in the Eastern Mediterranean, with migrants transiting to Turkey and in the Western Mediterranean between Morocco and Spain. In the Eastern Mediterranean area, most migrants were entering across the Aegean Sea. This is now the most common modus operandi, following the strengthening of border surveillance along the Greek land border as of August 2012, and the Bulgarian land border as of December 2013. In this route, most migrants are Syrians and Afghans. Their destination is not Greece, they rather tend to continue their journey to other member states, where they apply for asylum. In the Western Mediterranean, the detections have increased significantly as well compared to same period of last year, mainly at the land border between Morocco and Spain in Mellilla and also in Ceuta. The main increase however has been reported from the central Mediterranean which is the focus of the next slide.

As of 26th of August, detections of irregular crossings in the central Mediterranean including Apullia and Clavia were at their highest level since Frontex collects data, with more than 106 000 detections. This increase is all the more worrying, because in previous years, the pick in detections was generally during the period between July and October when the weather conditions are better for sea crossings. The vast majority of departures took place from Libya. Concerning the nationality of migrants, comparing to the same period of last year, from January to July, the number Syrians has increased from less than 600 to about 30000. They are mostly departing from Libya and Turkey. Once in Italy or Greece, very few of them apply for asylum; instead, most of them try to reach other member states, mostly Germany, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian Countries where they apply for asylum. The Eritrean are also detected in large numbers and is the main nationality departing from Libya. They are mostly single young men and intend to apply for asylum in Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. They try to avoid finger printing in Italy, since they are aware of the Dublin procedure which would allow sending them back to the member state where they initially entered. Regarding Malians, the detections of irregular border crossings, roughly corresponds to the number of asylum applications registered in Italy, so it seems that Italy would be their final destination.

The next slides are to give you a better picture on the situation in the Mediterranean. So this one shows the Search and Rescue area of Italy, in the next one you have 2 SAR areas the one of Italy and the one of Malta on the bottom. Here you can see the operational area of Mare Nostrum which is over the two SAR areas but mainly in the SAR area of Malta, and the next one shows with these green dots where the majority of incidents took place. As you can see, it has been near to the Libyan coasts, and within operational area of Mare Nostrum. It might be clearer in the next slide where we also try to show you where they both are coming from. So this map showing the detections of boats by country of departure clearly indicates that most of them departed from Libya, these are the green dots, and were either rescued or intercepted in the surveillance area of the operation Mare Nostrum which is shown with a purple line on the map, and also near to the Libyan coast. Some boats also departed from Egypt, these are represented with dots in pink colour, and in this case, they travelled a long distance and aimed at the Sicilian coast. In Puglia, the boats detected were in fact departing from Greece, these are the dots in purple, but sometimes they departed from Turkey, and these are represented with the dots in orange colour. As already explained there were increases in departures from all traditional countries of departure neighbouring the Mediterranean, being Libya the main country of departure, in terms of numbers, as well as the one recording the bigger increase from 73% last year to 86 % in 2014. Migrants departing from Libya are mainly Eritreans, 27% and Syrians, 14%. When it comes to Egypt, migrants departing from there are mostly from Syria, almost the half of them, and Egyptians 24%, and migrants transiting through Turkey are mostly Syrians and Afghans.

To sum up, Libya is by far, the main country of departures of migrants detected in the Central Mediterranean area mostly Eritrean nationals but also Syrians as well as other African nationalities while Egypt ranks second for departure mostly of Syrians and Egyptians nationals, and departure from Tunisia and Algeria remain limited.

But besides the numbers, it is also important to bear in mind the following. First that the journey of migrants departing from Libya is now considerably shorter than it was before the operation *Mare Nostrum*, as many boats are rescued in this, in its operational area. Consequently, facilitators provide migrants with less fuel and water on board. The consequence is that if not rescued on time, this increases the risk for migrants. The boats are in poor condition and sometimes the accidents happen not far from the Libyan coast, and frequently migrants depart in waves, trying to take advantage of short windows of calm sea. The Italian authorities sometimes report up to 50 boasts per day, and this also increases the difficult to rescue all of them.

This is the last slide of my presentation and it is to indicate that the majority of skippers arrested arriving from Libya were of Tunisian nationality. The modus operandi is that Tunisian fishing boats, that depart from Tunisia and once in the Libyan territorial waters, wait in the high seas from migrants who are transported by rubber boat from Libya, and then transferred from the rubber boat to the Tunisian fishing boat [….] The photos in this slide, the first one shows a fifteen-meters wooden fishing boat, with 362 people on board. The images on the bottom of this slide is a sequence of pictures of a Tunisian fishing boat recovering a migrants’ boat left adrift after people were rescued. According to some sources the fisher men sell these wooden boats left adrift to the facilitation networks operating in Libya, for a price between 15000 to 20000 US $.

Now allow me to tell you briefly about the current activities in the central Mediterranean and the plans for the coming weeks and months. Frontex is currently coordinating two joint operations in Italy, Hermes in the south of Sicily and Aeneas along the coast of Puglia and Calabria. A total of 22 Member States are taking part in these 2 joint operations. Both operations are planned to end in September. Taking into account that the migratory flow remains high, we have decided to extend the Hermes joint operation for two more months until the end of November, with a slight increase in resources. This will be possible by cutting other operational activities to reallocate the necessary budget, approximately 2.3 million euros, for the Hermes extension. After this reallocation, the Frontex budget is totally exhausted, so we don’t have more room for manoeuvre. We do not yet have any confirmation from the Italian authorities on the future of Mare Nostrum, so whether it will be terminated, and if so when would it happen. However, in view of such a possible scenario, we are planning a new joint operation, whose name would be Triton, and tomorrow there will be in a meeting in Rome to discuss the details of this possible joint operation. Once the details are agreed, we will launch a call for participation to the Member States, and we will also check with the Commission the possibility of transfer some budget to finance this new joint operation. What is already clear and I want to stress it, is that first joint operation Triton will not replace *Mare Nostrum*. Neither the mandate, nor the available resources, allow for that replacement. The operational area of this new joint operation will cover the current operational areas of Hermes and Aeneas So you can have an idea by looking at the slides…] Therefore, this operation will be closer to EU shores than *Mare Nostrum*. We plan to deploy more resources than the ones currently deployed to the 2 ongoing operations, and the estimate cost would be approximately 3 million euros per month.

So to finalize my presentation Madam Chair, launching Triton Joint Operation will depend on two factors. First of all, the availability of emergency funds in the Commission to transfer to Frontex. We have some indications that there might be some possibilities for getting these funds. And secondly the readiness of the Member States to participate and deploy assets and human resources to the joint operation. Thank you very much.

**Q&A**

MEP B. Sippel

“I do have a question. The Parliament has called for Frontex to apply fundamental rights. Now how does all of this work with the Member States? How can Frontex staff get their concept across when Member States want to do things differently? You also mentioned the rising number of refugees, the rising number of illegal border crossings, well with these so-called illegal border crossings is there, what are the countries of origin and what about the intelligence, how can you draw a distinction between refugees and illegal immigrants? I’m also interested in whether there is an increased readiness on the part of the Member States to provide more staff and therefore more money for dealing with these additional tasks. I haven’t heard anything about that so far and that of course is something very important. And another point. Yesterday I was studying this so-called Frontex Plus, and we looked at it in the Committee. It’s not clear to me how a distinction can be drawn between the initiatives of the Italian government on the one hand, and Frontex and the other Member States on the other hand. So how would this clear division of responsibilities look and how would Frontex’s contribution be at the end of the day?”

MEP Monika Hohlmeier (EPP)

“Now I have three questions. The first question is about the readiness for cooperation on the part of countries that are particularly affected, countries like Greece or Italy. Are they ready to cooperate with Frontex? Is there full openness? Are you sharing information properly? Or are there certain reservations about providing information, is there anything withheld from you?

I’m also interested about the financial resources that are being allocated to Frontex, particularly from the Member States that are most affected. Or have no requests been made? If that’s the case, could you tell us the reasons why and the context for that?

Another question that would interest me is whether you have a full overview of the records made of refugees. How are these refugees registered, how does the first interview work for example? Do you have full insights into these procedures? Or is there a lack of appreciation of the role that Frontex could play here?

Final question, we’ve got units for directive on the Mediterranean, and are they ready to work together with Frontex, to engage in continuous training on how to deal with refugees for example? Or is there no interest in that kind of training?

MEP Wikström

As we all know Frontex is an ongoing discussion in this house, and we have seen many many times that we have changed the regulation, and Frontex has been on our mind for years and years.

I now would like to know when the operational plans for Frontex Plus will be available for us Members of the European Parliament, in order for us to study for example the safeguards that must be put in place for example in terms of fundamental rights. That is a key issue.

And also now you are telling us about the new operation Triton. What is the added value of the names-changing, has there been some kind of substantial change in the operational plan, or what will the difference be between the new operation Triton and for instance the two operations that we had before, the Aeneas and Hermes, and the Frontex Plus if you compare it to the Triton operation?

And we also know that the success, or the possible success of these operations all depend on willingness on Member States to give their contribution. Could you specify what support you already have from Member States and what promises you have, and possibly also give us an overview of their willingness or unwillingness to contribute to the Frontex operations?

MEP Keller

I’m also very interested in the Triton project that you just mentioned, especially whether the focus of the operation is supposed to be one of rescue, i.e. humanitarian, or one of border guarding. If it’s supposed to be an operation of rescue, how are you as a border agency going to provide that service, because you are a border guarding agency which is not exactly a humanitarian mission, so how does this go together?

On the 3 million euros per month, what budget line do you expect this to come from, and what promises do you already have from member states for contributions and also what sort of contribution do you expect from them? Is it more personal, are you looking for ships, are you looking for planes, helicopters, what is it exactly?

And of course this is not at all going to solve the problem of people risking their lives while trying to cross the Mediterranean, I think it’s very clear that this needs a political answer as well and this can only work I think if we finally open legal possibilities for refugees to come to the European Union, because if we are having an asylum system here which does not provide for access to the same system, it’s simply not going to work, so I think it really is not a matter of sending more border guard boats or whatever, it is a matter of providing legal possibilities who currently have no other choice but risking their lives and taking irregular ways.

One final question was related but also a bit separated. The Frontex guidelines or the maritime surveillance regulation that we have recently adopted as Parliament, can you explain how much it is implemented yet, what is the state of play there, because it’s very much linked to this task too.

MEP Guillaume (S&D)

“Once again, and this is not something new in our committee, I think it shows the somewhat ambiguous role of this agency which is controlling the borders, I suppose to search and rescue operations, and thank you for picking up some of the perverse effects of S&R. When you have a lot of people picked up, then the people traffickers get more active […] Now if Frontex Plus is not going to replace Mare Nostrum; Now are you going to return to Frontex’s more core role of controlling the borders.

MEP Lopez Aguilar

My specific questions relate to the level of confusion and even misunderstanding that we’ve experienced when it comes to the knowledge as continuity of the *Mare Nostrum* operation and the potential of Frontex Plus. It is a fact, we saw it yesterday with the presentation of Commissioner Malmström, many of us have been misled by declarations of representatives of the Italian government claiming that Frontex Plus would substitute, not only continue but replace *Mare Nostrum*, and we had the feeling that we had misunderstood what it would be like, but the point you have made is that the human trafficking organisations, the Mafia-like organisations who exploit people for the purpose of setting foot on shore, on the European external borders do have knowledge of those operations. They have decreased the quantity of fuel and they have raised their expectations of the operations of rescue at sea. How did you get to know, what is your assessment of their means of information about the scope, the nature, of the range of Frontex operations in the Mediterranean Sea. How did they get to know even better than us, Members of Parliament?

MEP Kyrkos

I’d be grateful if you could say a little bit more about what happens with Frontex’s appropriations. I could share Greece’s experience with you. Without Frontex, we would have disastrous results in Greece, but even with Frontex, we are facing a very difficult situation. It would be our desire to have Frontex be given more resources for its work in Greece, and perhaps you could give us some ideas about what Member States are prepared to do in terms of contributions. You would be aware that countries facing this initial wave of migration cannot bare the burden of the search and rescue operations on their own. Could you please tell us whether or not Frontex Plus is going to be separate from *Mare Nostrum*?

MEP Renault d’Allonnes Bonnefoy

Thanks to *Mare Nostrum*, thousands of lives have been saved, thousands of people have been picked up trying to make their crossing. Given what the number of deaths has been, Italy cannot continue to act on their own, other Member States should make contributions to prevent human dramas from occurring. The Commission recently declared that coordinated European action under the auspices of Frontex Plus would come on-stream soon to back up *Mare Nostrum*. France is going to prepare for this but the resources to be applied until now have been somewhat vague. When it comes to search operations for asylum seekers and migrants, what’s going to happen once they have been intercepted? Many speakers made the point this morning that key to the success of this operation lies in getting as large as possible a number of Member States to take part in the operation. Could you tell us please how the Member States have received these proposals?

MEP Vergeat

Now there’s human rights concerns here and we have international obligations, we’ve voted in favor of a text to that effect at the beginning of our term. The *Mare Nostrum* program we all know started following the drama in Lampedusa when 300 people were drowned last October. Now you are talking about lives being saved, I’m not going to contest the figures, but there are trends that people have heard about, could you comment on the numbers? What happens to the people once they have been apprehended? We know very well that most of the people are Syrians or Eritreans who may very well apply for asylum, but we don’t know what becomes of them. What are the real figures? If you read the French press, you’ll find that Frontex Agency might be subject to lapidation, they talk about 40.. I think we should be very cautious, we should only compare things that are really comparable. From one month to an other (..), there are lots of trends depending in the international situation and what is happening across the Mediterranean and in the Middle East. The Agency, therefore must be extremely cautious when putting anything in writing. Looking at the figures, we seem to be talking about roughly 100 000 people, the Italian government, tried up Mare Nostrum,.. I echo the questions of numbers of speakers. We are all aware that European texts are being held up by certain member states. We saw with Dublin 3, the same countries but we cannot be grading money when it comes to protect human lives and human rights.

MEP XX

Is it the case or do you feel that the search and rescue activities in the Mediterranean have actually encouraged more and more people to attempt the crossing and has therefore also increased the number of tragedies on the sea? And like many others, I would like to know whether the Frontex activities have to do with border control, that is preventing illegal migration, or is it purely a maritime rescue operation?

MEP Kyenge

Up until now, I’ve heard a lot being said about the technical details but I can’t see any wide ranging political message on migration and asylum policy as such. Up until now *Mare Nostrum* made a difference in terms of the change in the approach to bringing people back and search and rescue operations. It is a cultural shift required here, looking at the goals of migration. So here’s my question then: Frontex, Frontex Plus or Triton, whatever you call it, is it going to change its goals from simply patrolling the borders to an approach where the human element lies at the heart of your work? And then why should Italy alone be deciding on the fate of millions of people rather than the European Union?

One last question. How will organisations working to protect human rights be involved?

MEP Gomes

I also believe that indeed this must be a European endeavor, not only the countries that are on the frontline. So I would like to ask about the means, financial, material, human, even in terms of mandate that you think you need for Frontex Plus to indeed achieve what is necessary including the humanitarian, the human rights perspective, because it’s about saving lives. And then in Libya, I think we had, I think it’s probably still not operational there, a EU border mission. What kind of articulation, if any, did you and Frontex have with this EU border mission? Because there’s no doubts that the flood from Libya is going to continue with the collapse of the state and you are going to see indeed Libyans themselves now coming, not just the others who cross, the Eritreans, the Syrians, the Nigerians, and everybody else, because of the collapse of the state of Libya, Libyans themselves are going to come to our shores.

MEP Spinelli

In recent days, once again today, I had this from M. Arias Fernandez, Frontex, or rather *Mare Nostrum*, is being regarded as a great success because it’s managed to do what Frontex has not, in other words saving thousands of migrants. Now we know that *Mare Nostrum* is not going to be replaced by Frontex or Frontex Plus, nor by Triton or Hermes, so there not actually going to be any search and rescue operation. I can draw two conclusions here. Basically Italy is being left on its own, and secondly there going to be no more *Mare Nostrum* program and people are going to be dying in the Mediterranean again. Mr Arias Fernandez, are you aware of those two conclusions? And then there are two articles in the Treaty and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights which have been violated here. Article 80 calls for solidarity and the distribution of responsibilities amongst the member states, including financial responsibility where the need arises, and then under the Charter of Fundamental Rights there’s the article which bans the turning back of migrants at sea.

MEP Pogliese

What will be the appearance of Frontex Plus, and how will the Triton operation be deployed? […] What’s going to happen if the *Mare Nostrum* program is not extended – LOST IT

MEP Corrao (Cinque Stelle)

I also wanted to ask what relationship there would be around these various programs – Frontex Plus and Frontex, *Mare Nostrum* and Triton. Unfortunately, what you all too often hear from local people is that they think that the authorities are abandoning them. I’m from Sicily and we experience the situation day in day out. All these various sets of initials are being thrown around but no one can understand whether anything’s actually going to happen in practice. Second question: might Frontex Plus act in international waters, beyond territorial waters. Now as far as I’m concerned the 83 000000 euros in the budget of Frontex which are lot spent in administration, […] Don’t you think you would be better advised to switch some money from the administration to the actual operation relationships, and again, is Warsaw really the best place for Frontex, wouldn’t it be better for it to move to Sicily given that we are talking about migrant flows in the Mediterranean.

MEP Voigt

If Triton is now changing is borders for activities closer to the EU, how is it going to be notified to the refugees, are there going to be told to get more fuel and food on board or are the number of refugees going t be reduced? What happens to the boats, once the people have been saved, are they allowed to be sailed back or are they confiscated? Are there any plans about what to do in the future about this? My final question is as followed: you’ve just mentioned that a lot of people decide in their home countries whether or not to make request for asylum, but what’s the legal situation for those who don’t apply for asylum and remain on Italian soil?

**Response**

**Arias**

I am going to start with the, probably the anecdotic one, but it might also help to release some confusion on the operation. Frontex has never given its name to any operation, so Frontex Plus is totally misleading for the public and also for you as I have witnessed during the presentation today and also yesterday during the presentation of Commissioner Malmström. In any case, the difference between *Mare Nostrum* and Triton is fundamentally the nature of the two operations. While *Mare Nostrum* is clearly a search and rescue operation, Triton will be with a main focus on border control, border management, although as it is obvious saving lives is an absolute priority, and in fact very frequently the control operations, the border control operations coordinated by the agency turn into search and rescue operations, and this is how it works in practice. As I said it will also be closer to the EU shores, covering the current operational areas of Hermes and Aeneas, and also because of the nature of, sorry, of the type of assets that are available to the border guards. **Normally the vessels that the border guards in the EU countries have available are not capable to transport, to drive so many migrants as normally travelling on these migrant boats, so one normal patrol boat cannot host 300 persons on board. This can be done by a military ship, but not by a border guard or a patrolling vessel of border guards**.

When it comes to the fundamental rights obligations and the compliance with the new regulation and the maritime operations coordinated by Frontex, this is made, it is ensured in the operational plan and in the scrutiny of this compliance with both fundamental rights and obligations set up by the new regulation, is a task for the fundamental rights officer in Frontex, who as you know is an independent function, she is not accountable to me nor to the executive director, she is accountable only to the management board of Frontex, and she is in charge of ensuring that fundamental rights are fully respected, also when preparing the operational plans for our operational activities. As many of you were not able to visualize the slides, they will be printed out, and some of your questions about figures and nationalities will be answered.

How to differentiate refugees from irregular migrants, the only way to do it and it is not 100% guarantee is the systematic and immediate and complete screening immediately after the arrival of migrants to the EU territory. So this is the way that is applied to try and identify those who are in need of international protection and those who are in principle not with the right to such protection. In any case this is something for the national authorities, Frontex does not have a role on that. What Frontex does through the briefing experts is to help the national authorities to identify those migrants, but once they apply for asylum, once they are identified, then it belongs to the national competent authorities to make the follow-up and to proceed with the asylum application. Therefore we don’t have either knowledge on the number of asylum applications and those who are granted with the refugee status after the submission of the asylum application.

Concerning the financial resources or the financial contribution of the Member States facing or in the first line of the flows of irregular migration, the contribution of the budget of Frontex is via the EU budget, so it is through the constitution of the EU budget that all Member States contribute, through the rules established by the EU, therefore there are not differences in the size or caliber of contributions depending on whether one Member State is facing more migratory pressure or less migratory pressure. We don’t know yet how many Member States will be willing to participate in Triton Joint Operation. As I said, after the details are agreed with the Italian authorities, we will launch most likely next week a call to the member states for their contributions and then we will know how many and to which extent they are ready to participate. However taking into account the active and the how active and the high participations in the two ongoing operations, I’m taking for granted that we will receive positive answers, enough to launch to the operation that we are planning. As I said earlier, , in Joint Operation Hermes there are 16 member states taking part, in Joint Operation Aenas 18 member states taking part, in Joint Operation Aenas 18.

The member states mentioned by some of you, Greece, Spain, Italy, are taking part in all this operations. So in the operations in Italy, both Greece and Spain are taking part, and Italy is also taking part of course, since it is hosting the operation. Italy also participate in operations carried out in Greece, or in Spain.

It might be worth to repeat once again: while saving lives is an absolute priority, the operations coordinated by Frontex have as main focus border management, and contribution to search and rescue activities which are under the responsibility of the national competent authorities.

How the smugglers get information about the operations and why is it possible that they abuse the proximity of *Mare Nostrum* to the Libyan shores? The smugglers are criminals, they belong or they are part of criminal networks and they have of course means to get the information. On the other hand, *Mare Nostrum* and the place where it goes or it is carried out was very much in the media, it has had a high media coverage, so it was not, I guess, it was not so difficult for the smugglers to get knowledge on this. And linking this with another question, I said it already earlier, that of course the number of trips, the number of migrants, has drastically increased with the launching of *Mare Nostrum*. I’m not unafraid of saying that it has been a pull factor but obviously the smugglers have abused of the proximity of the operation to the Libyan coast to, on the one hand to put more people on the sea, with the assumption that they will be rescued very soon, and this also made it cheaper for them, as I said, because they put and they are putting less fuel, less food, less water on the vessel, which at the same time also increases the risk for the migrants.

Border sharing: I’m afraid that I cannot give answers to this. Whether the migrants, once they arrive to the, to Italy or to other Member States, should be somehow distributed or transferred to other Member States, this is a political decision and I am not entitled to make any comment on that. We support the Member States in the reception of migrants when they arrive to the EU shores, but what happens after this, we cannot, we don’t have any role and therefore we cannot comment on that.

Libya. Yes, as you know very well, Libya is, the situation there is going from bad to worse, so there is no border control at all, and the EUBAM mission to Libya, which is led by the European External Action Service, has actually come back to Italy and Malta, so due to the security situation, the insecure situation, in Tripoli they have to come back to EU. Therefore so far unfortunately, the EUBAM mission is not given to much help on managing the migratory flows.

The high amount of money out of the 83000000 that is given to administration, this a way to see it, but we can not forget that with this administrative money, we pay the salaries, the computers, the offices, of people who prepare the operations. So without the administrative money, we would not be able to launch operations, we would not be able to prepare trainings, we would not be able to prepare risk analysis, so we should somehow forget a little bit the negative c. connotation of administration, because this money also helps to carry out operational activities. As I said earlier that I can not know and give you answers about the follow up of asylum applications, the same applies regarding the situations of those who are not grated with the refugee status. The Member states have different policies, different laws, regulations to grant them with some kind of temporary or humanitarian resident permit, but these differs from one country to an other.