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Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

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Drones for maritime rescue only, not to prevent migration

“31 million euros is the cost of new research into the use of drones in the Mediterranean to ward off unwanted migration. The EU Commission is contributing around two-thirds of this. Instead of making risky crossings even more difficult for refugees, the money could be used to simplify entry procedures. This would also render unnecessary the profitable ‘smuggling’ of people, which is categorised as a criminal act”, said Member of the Bundestag Andrej Hunko, in reaction to the European Commission’s two replies to a question on this subject.

Together with Members of the European Parliament Cornelia Ernst and Sabine Lösing, Hunko had enquired about EU projects SUNNY, CLOSEYE and AEROCEPTOR. These involve drone tests in three regions of the Mediterranean Sea deemed hot spots for refugee crossings, with AEROCEPTOR using aerial police weaponry for the first time.

“Investigations are being made into the extent to which drones can be integrated into the new EUROSUR border surveillance system”, adds Cornelia Ernst. *“There is nothing preventing these new technologies being used for maritime rescue. EUROSUR, however, aims to prevent migration. Where possible, refugees are to be detected upon departure, so that they never reach European waters. As in the case of Libya, cooperation is taking place with North African countries known to carry out torture and human rights violations”.*

“According to the Commission, the EU border agency will be involved in tests alongside the military authorities”, explains Sabine Lösing. *“This adds an inadmissible militarised aspect to migration control. Economic measures such as these come at the price of human rights. We will oppose any use of drones which were originally developed for military purposes in domestic security matters”.*

Download the answer to the question put to the Commission regarding the use of large drones in project “SUNNY”: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2014-007958&language=EN>

Download the answer to the question put to the Commission regarding drone tests in projects “Closeye”, “DeSIRE” and “Aeroceptor”: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2014-007959&language=EN>

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