

## Pilot project on purchase of Aerial Surveillance Service for Frontex Joint Operations

The amended Frontex Regulation (EU) No 1168/2011 of the European Parliament and the Council in its Article 7 (1) extends Frontex' mandate not only to deploy equipment from the MS, but also to acquire on itself or in co-ownership with the MSs or to lease technical equipment for external border control.

On this basis in the spring of 2014 Frontex successfully concluded a tender procedure for acquisition of an aerial surveillance service for joint operations.

The main objective of this Pilot Project was to find out a structured way for Frontex to contract a complete service for aerial surveillance by using of its modified mandate, to identify the necessary procedures for this purpose and thus to trace out the way for further development of the Technical Equipment Pool (TEP) by establishing a new category of equipment.

The Pilot Project has two specific objectives:

- To contract a complete service for aerial border surveillance;
- To assess the preparedness (the reaction time) of the potential Contractor in order to establish future Frontex policy for contracting surveillance services.

Within the scope of the project was also to assess the operational effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the surveillance service, as well as to identify possible challenges related to the specifics of the national regulations at the country of deployment and neighboring third countries.

The aerial surveillance had been implemented along the Bulgarian-Turkish land border between 26 May - 04 July 2014. The overall duration of the deployment was 40 days. During that period in total 35 flights had been implemented covering 115 flight hours.

The preliminary evaluation provides that the project has achieved its goals as regards of the main objective set. There are lots of lessons learned about the development of the terms of reference and technical specifications for future projects of the kind. The implementation of the pilot identified the advantages and disadvantages of applying specific tender procedures for the procurement of assets and purchase of services. The implementation of the pilot project envisaged also a huge amount of data transfer over Internet. It made the access to high speed, wide band Internet an important issue for the project implementation. Subsequently, making the Internet providers important stakeholders in purchase of surveillance services.

The main conclusion from the implementation of the Pilot Project is that among the economic operators exists enough capacity to provide aerial surveillance service for Fronted Joint Operations. This service is accessible, qualitative, effective and cost efficient, which stipulates new approaches in Frontex policy for future acquisition of operational assets and services.

Further detailed information will be provided by the evaluation report, which is expected to be available during the second half of September 2014.