

Outsourced responsibility

In the ground level of the new and futuristic glass tower you get an impression what it's all about: A there is a large 3D-map of Europe which is about 3 meters broad. The borders between the single states are shapenend so profoundly, that the countries become splitted - the continent rather seems rather like a puzzle than one area of land in this art work.

At the head quarter of Frontex everything is about those invisible lines between states and especially that one external border from the EU. Concerning that it might be appropriate that the so called „agency of European border control“ is situated at Europe Place in Warsaw. At this square its tower of 49 levels looks so modern and sterile that you feel uncomfortable passing the security check not as well dressed as all the people running here. On the other hand it appears bizarre that this is the headquarter of an organization who coordinates action on borders that could rarely be farer away. The borders of Italy, Greece and Spain. The borders thousands of people want to pass every day at the moment.

The mission of Frontex is to control and protect those borders. The agency has no own guards. It rather coordinates guards who are sent by the EU member states. From Warsaw the 300 Frontex employees plan where and how the guards should act. They develop training standards for border guards, do research of migration and organize deportations. In their so called operation centre they monitor the movement of people at the borders. The same borders where over 6,000 people died in the last two years - more than at any other border on the world.

When Izabella Cooper talks about this organization she represents, she prefers to focus on the sea rescue actions. The spokeswoman of Frontex is shows proudly the social media channels, where they upload pictures of guards helping people. „The Mediterranean is extremely large. You will never manage to rescue all people“, she says. 20,000 people were helped by Frontex so far in the Mediterranean in 2015. But also over 3,500 drowned - and that is only the number of the dead people we know. And the situation is getting worse.

In this year more than 850.000 people travelled over the Mediterranean. Over 3500 died at their try. Frontex has the obligatory to help people in need. „If a boat sends an appeal for help of course Frontex tries to rescue. But due to our mandate the primary Frontex primarily controls movements at the external borders“, Cooper says.

This is the main difference to „Mare Nostrum“, a sea rescue project by Italian Marine. After the programme ended Frontex started its Triton-Operation in the Mediterraine. But comparing to Mare Nostrum, Frontex' Deputy Executive Director Gil Arias-Fernández said: „Triton is not a search and rescue operation, but a border control operation.“ However they rescued over 20000 people so far. But compared to the rescue program of Mare Nostrum the different focus is getting clear. Within two years Mare Nostrum saved over 150.000 people. The project endend as it hadn't enough money.

Frontex indeed has increased its budget from 19 millions Euro in 2006 to 98 millions in 2014. „The more people are crossing the border, the more challenging time becomes for Frontex“, spokeswoman Cooper resumes. Due to the actual situation Frontex' president Leggeri just asked the member states for 775 additional border guards to set in Greece in the balkan region. However the states sent not even the half of it. Spokeswoman Cooper doesn't want to tell which country doesn't follow the request. „As you can see we only coordinate and plan the operations. But the end it is most important that all member states cooperate“, she says.

In this Frontex-system of delegation there are always things for which which nobody feels responsible. For example the so-called push-back-actions, when border guards hinder people of getting over the boarder. Even though these actions are not acceptable they happen sometimes like former Frontex director Ilkka Laitinen said. However evaluating and preventing those actions also don't belong to the tasks of Frontex. Spokeswoman Cooper emphasizes that no Frontex

people did those pushbacks since the border guards are only coordinated and sent by Frontex instead of being employed by the agency. The speaker underlines that that as if the label would make a difference for the dead people.

After Paris Attacks there was a proposal in EU Council to give Frontex more competences. The new idea: Frontex should should also support in fighting against terror. According to that Frontex should work closely with Europol on and exchange personal data work. It would be another step for Frontex as being a border police. „When our mandate changes of course our competences should change too“, is the opinion of the Frontex speaker.