FRONTEX ⬚
EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY

Ms Luisa Izuzquiza

Email: ask+request-4825-35ef20be@asktheeu.org
Our ref: CGO/LPU/2733/2018
Please quote when replying.

Warsaw, 11 January 2018

Request for access to Frontex documents

Dear Ms Izuzquiza,

With reference to your application received on 28 Novemver 201, requesting:

- Frontex's communication plans or communication strategies for 2016 and 2017.
- all guidelines, handbooks, policies, rules, or instructions specifically related to the management of Frontex social media accounts for 2016; and
- all guidelines, handbooks, policies, rules, or instructions specifically related to the management of Frontex social media accounts for 2017.

I am pleased to inform you that Frontex agrees to provide you - in addition to the links to the communication strategies for 2016 and 2017 that are available in the public domain and which were sent to you earlier- with the twitter strategy. Please find the document in the attachment. I hope you will find it useful.

I would like to remind you that the copyright of the document rests with Frontex and that the existing rules on copyrights may limit your right to reproduce or exploit the released document.

Yours sincerely,

signed

Hervé Caniard
Head of Transparency Office

Attachment: Twitter strategy (8 pages)

Frontex Twitter Account
Assessment Paper

*** Preliminary note ***

It is clear that a significant part of discussions about Frontex does not take place in mainstream media. There is a large quantity of Tweets, blogs, online fora and discussions dedicated either directly to Frontex or to the wider topic of migration. Politicians and activists communicate regularly about Frontex without us being aware of it or being able to influence it. For a significant share of young people information gained online is the only source of information.

According to Shaefer (2014) over 90% of US and some 75% of European journalists use social media as the primary source of information for breaking stories. As many corporate crises have proved in the past 3 years, Twitter is increasingly proving to be an invaluable tool for PR crisis management as it allows putting our side of the story not only in real time, but also directly to the concerned target audiences.

By ignoring social media we will not make it go away. There is little doubt we should have a better picture of what is said 'out there' about Frontex and that we should start reaching out to those audiences we have virtually no contact with.

1) TWITTER - short introduction

Twitter is an online social media service that enables its users to send and read **text-based posts of up to 140 characters**, known as **"tweets"**. When it was created in rapidly gained worldwide popularity, with around 290 million active users, generating over 500 million tweets per day. It has been described as **"the SMS of the Internet".**

Tweets are publicly visible by default; however, senders can restrict message delivery to just their followers. Users can update their profile - tweet, via the Twitter website or mobile devices.

Users may subscribe to other users' tweets – this is known as **following** and subscribers are known as **followers.**

When you choose to follow another Twitter user that user's tweets appear in reverse chronological order on your main Twitter page. If you follow 20 people, you will see a mix of tweets scrolling down the page.

Users can group posts together by topic or type by use of **hash tags** – words or phrases prefixed with a **"#"** sign. Similarly, the **"@"** sign followed by a **username** is used for mentioning or replying to other users. To repost a message from another

Twitter user, and share it with one's own followers, the **retweet** function is symbolized by "RT" in the message. Users may also follow ad-hoc lists of authors instead of individual authors.

The 140-character limit has also increased the usage of **URL shortening services** (e.g. bitly) such to accommodate multimedia content and text longer than 140 characters.

Public figures' accounts may get verified in order to avoid using fake accounts. Verified accounts can be identified by a white check on a blue background, known as a verification badge, next to the user's full name, on the profile itself or next to the name in search results.

Twitter should not be considered as a social networking platform (as Facebook), but as an important communication channel between individuals and institutions/enterprises. Unlike Facebook, Twitter's "professional" character is widely recognised.

Use of Twitter among international organisations:

From Twiplomacy study 2015:

- The social networking site has become a formidable broadcasting tool and an indispensable communication channel for international organisations to amplify their messages to a global audience. No international organisation can ignore the power of digital communications and especially Twitter

- Over the past eight years, all leading international organisations have set up at least one institutional Twitter account, and more than half of the 90 organisations analysed in this study have created a personal Twitter profile for the head of the organization

Most Effective International Organisations
AVERAGE NUMBER OF RETWEETS PER TWEET

184	141	121	105	97
@UNICEF	@UN	@CERN	@WWF	@WHO
UN Children's Fund	United Nations Organization	European Organization for Nuclear Research	World Wide Fund for Nature	World Health Organization

2) WHY SETTING UP AN OFFICIAL TWITTER ACCOUNT?

- Achieving **more visibility** on the Internet and **strengthening Frontex's online presence.**
- Proactive feed of key messages on Frontex activities and position
- Making use of this **widely popular tool** as an additional channel to **raise awareness, improve understanding and knowledge** of Frontex activities.
- Gaining an **effective crisis communications tool**
- Increasing **traffic to the Frontex website** (through the URL address used at the end of a tweet).
- **Creating space that allows interacting with users.** Registered users automatically receive a notification when a new post is published, they can retweet it (=republish the text on their account, making it visible to their followers), leave comments, and join in on discussions
- **Connecting individuals around a specific interest** (migration issues), taking part in the already ongoing discussions.

3) ADDED VALUE COMPARED TO WEBSITE

* **Active communication tool** - Twitter is an important tool for communication used by journalists, politicians, researchers etc.

* **Wider visibility** - Followers are automatically and immediately (in real time) informed when an update is posted.

* **Quick reaction time** in times of crisis.

* **"Short and simple"** - a simple sentence including a link can constitute a **bridge** between Twitter and the website, where the follower can obtain more information on a specific topic.

* **Networking resource and wider audience** – Frontex Twitter account makes it possible to reach out to audiences interested in migration issues in general and in the activities of the Frontex in particular.

* **Joining the "community"** - Twitter enables to join the community of people sharing a common interest even outside European borders thanks to Twitter's large online audience.

* **Wider possibilities of interaction and feedback** - users retweets, questions, comments and possible "trend topics".

4) TARGET GROUPS

There are several target groups which are considered Frontex' primary audiences. These are classified according to the Frontex communications strategy as follows:

a) Groups which are **indispensable to FX** (Border Guards, Frontex staff, Public);

b) Groups with a **steering role over Frontex** (Commission, European Parliament, Management Board);

c) Groups having influence over a) and b) above - press, Consultative Forum, NGOs, researchers, Think Tanks, activists, national political parties (left & right), industry, Europol, Ombudsman), International Organisations (CoE, RC etc);

d) Frontex critics (Frontexit, Migreurope, No Borders, Greens, Die Linke, Panopticon, migrants' associations);

e) Other: border authorities in third countries, NGOs in third countries, EU delegations.

Many of the above mentioned groups have Twitter accounts and already take part in discussions around migration issues, border control issues etc.

5) S.W.O.T: Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths	Weaknesses
• **Stronger Frontex online presence and visibility** • **Immediate and direct communication to mass audience** (as opposed to indirect communication via traditional media) • **Quick reaction time** in case of crisis • Increased **traffic to the FX website** • Higher direct engagement with various audiences (feedback mechanism) = **increased transparency** • Embracing of a **modern approach to communication** • **Free of charge and easy to use**	• Monitoring is **time consuming** • **Engagement** in responding requires <u>additional competent</u> **human resources** • Dialogue will only involve **English speaking audience = exclusion of other languages**
Opportunities	**Threats**
• To **promote key messages** on particular issues • **To raise awareness** and **improve understanding and knowledge** of Frontex activities • **To promote Frontex** as an agency and to **enhance its visibility** • To **disseminate information** about Frontex activities, events and news on a **wider scale** • To **connect people and stakeholders** around the specific issue of migration (community) • To **improve the perception of the organisation**	• **Insufficient and irregular engagement** due to **lack of dedicated staff** to manage response to criticism could damage Frontex reputation

• An effective tool **to reach the younger generations**: new technologies	

7) FRONTEX TWITTER ACCOUNT

- <u>The account/personalised page would mainly include the following</u>:

- An **account name** referring to the name of the Agency: @FrontexEU

- Visual elements: **Logo + background photo**

- Short text, more information about the account, e.g.: "News from Frontex. This account is managed by Frontex Information & Transparency Team. Disclaimer."

- **Promotion of Frontex presence on Twitter:** using Twitter logo and account on Frontex website and various external communication tools (publications, presentations, emails signatures, business cards, promotional materials etc.)

Frontex Twitter account will also be promoted internally so Frontex staff (via the Informer), who are already on Twitter will be able to follow the official Twitter account. Frontex Twitter account will be also promoted among the border guard community and will be cross-linked with the ED4BG Facebook page. It will increase the knowledge about the agency in the border guard community.

- <u>Communications policy</u>

Frontex Twitter account will be entirely managed by the Press Office team which will be the sole point of contact for it.

The responsibilities of the Press Office include: opening an account, managing tweets and monitoring Frontex related activities on Twitter (with the assistance of FSC).

Frontex tweets will be related to:
- Situation at external borders – ARA, FRAN, WB ARA, statistics from monthly analytical updates;
- Key messages and explanations in reaction to what is published by the media – ex. Triton does not replace Mare Nostrum'; 'One third of migrants saved in Italy saved by assets deployed by Frontex', 'Frontex not involved in Mos Maiorum'
- Statements and clarifications;
- Updates on a particular phenomenon (from RAU monthly analytical reports);
- Operations (photos from Operations – deployments, weather, SAR cases etc,);
- Events in Brussels relevant to Frontex (JHA, LIBE, COSI etc);
- Meetings – ED's meetings and visits, for example to operations, trainings, R&D conferences etc;
- Interesting articles regarding Frontex and migration (tweets, retweets) - those can be drawn from Frontex daily newsletter/individual media monitoring activities;
- Selected events and debates, including those livestreamed
- Photos/Videos,

- New publications,
- Links to the website
- Services such as BUFFER will allow scheduling publication of several tweets ahead of time to keep a regular stream of tweets.

Tweets should be informal, the language used must be easy to understand and catchy. Tweets should include shortened links to the website for more information, which would help to increase the traffic to the website. Tweets should be short (max 140 characters).

Frontex topics of interest include: #Migration, #EUmigration, #EUborders, #Borders, #Trafficking, #Smuggling, #Triton, #Lampedusa, #Poseidon, #Refugees, #BorderGuards etc. and these will be consistently used in the tweets (the list of topics may be expanded as appropriate).
Frontex will follow some Twitter users, especially those relevant to border security, asylum policy as well as wider migration issues. Additionally Frontex will follow EU institutions, EU Representations, EU Commissioners, major NGOs, politicians, opinion makers and media. Frontex will make clear in its cover statement that being followed by Frontex does not imply the Agency's endorsement.

While it remains open to new followers, Frontex will not necessarily follow them back. Frontex will respond to 'retweets' or followers' comments on a case-by-case basis.

The Press Office will prepare a **weekly/daily Twitter sheet,** with major pre-planned events included, like the publication of a new report.

Twitter will be also regularly monitored as regards tweets related to Frontex and other interesting topics such e.g. migration. Where possible, Frontex will react by **replying or re-tweeting posts.** This would create close links between our followers/users and Frontex as well as influence its visibility. The monitoring would also help to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities.

Twitter may occasionally be unavailable and Frontex will accept no responsibility for lack of service due to Twitter downtime.

8) RECOMMENDATIONS

Social media have opened a whole new window of communication opportunities and have already profoundly changed the way public authorities communicate. They have influenced media and the way journalists work and collect information.

After having weighted the pros and cons, it is planned that Frontex will start using Twitter on 26 August 2015. Use of social media technology as new channel of a communication policy has many advantages, gives many opportunities in terms of the speed of interaction with users, enhanced visibility for the agency, better awareness raising, wider dissemination of information, improving understanding and knowledge of Frontex activities, renewed approach to communication, community building, etc. It

will also help position Frontex as a valuable source of data on the situation on external borders. Last but not least it is an invaluable crisis communications tool.

Presence on Twitter is also **unavoidable** taking into account that Frontex already appears regularly on Twitter (#Frontex). In the course of June 2015 Frontex (with and without hashtag) was mentioned by various users of Twitter more than 4000 times.

In terms of **image**, communicating through a social media may also increase its image of an open communicator who fosters dialogue on migration at EU level and who actively engages with the public.

Twitter launch needs to be properly planned and announced internally – to Frontex staff - and externally to our stakeholders via website, email to the press and to the NFPoCs, Twitter Links added to e-mail signatures

SETTING UP A Q&A SECTION ON FRONTEX'S WEBSITE

A Q&A section will be set up on the Frontex web page, addressing the most common criticism and other questions that are regularly addressed to the FX Press Office.