

Strasbourg, 23.11.2021

Letter to the Commission on the surveillance technology Centaur, Hyperion and RAE used in the MPRIC on the Greek Islands and their funding through the RRF

To: Commission President Ursula von der Leyen,
Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis, Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni,
Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Commissioner Elisa Ferreira

CC: Céline Gauer, Maarten Verwey

Dear Commission President,
Dear Executive Vice-Presidents,
Dear Commissioners,

On the 22nd of October 2021 a team of journalists and researchers published the results of a several months long investigation into the newly built Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centres on Greek Islands: “Prisons in Paradise: How the EU put refugees behind barbed wire” ([Link](#))

According to Algorithm Watch ([Link](#)), the development of a surveillance system named “Centaur” has been a key part of the establishment of these camps and was developed under the National Migration Strategy 2020-2021 to be used in all five new MPRICs. In a presentation of the “National Migration Strategy 2020-2021, Protecting Aegean Islands” it is described as an “integrated digital system of electronic and physical security management placed inside and around the facilities using cameras and a motion analysis algorithm (AI Behavioural Analytics)”. Other surveillance systems to be used are Hyperion and RAE.

The technology in the camps consists of:

- 112 cameras
- 112 loudspeakers
- 19 X-ray scanners
- 55 magnetic gates
- 20 cameras with behaviour analysis
- 94 cameras for entry and exits
- 7 drones

Not only does this surveillance technology monitor the general compound, but also in some cases even the beds of the inhabitants can be seen. The footage is transmitted in real time to a command centre in the Greek Ministry of Migration.

According to the research at hand, those surveillance systems will be in part financed by the funds received by Greece from the Recovery and Resilience Facility (estimated cost EUR 37 million) as well as the Internal Security Fund.

In light of these publications we have the following questions:

1. In line with the Recovery and Resilience Facility Greece will receive €30.5 billion in grants and loans. The goal is to foster Greece's Green and Digital Transition in a meaningful way, according to the general guidelines of the RRF but also according to the communication published by the Commission the Greek plan itself. In particular, the Greek national and recovery plan makes only reference to "*Digitization of immigration processes and asylum archives for an effective management for asylum applications and faster integration of legal immigrants and refugees*". This part of the plan mentions the ID number 16763, which indicates the before mentioned surveillance systems and can be found in the documentation of the Greek authorities. ([Link](#)) How can the Commission justify the use of RRF funds for the effective surveillance of refugees? How does the Commission explain the mismatch between the description and the actual equipment which clearly serves neither the "*effective management for asylum applications*" nor the "*faster integration of legal immigrants and refugees*"?

What are the relevant Milestones and Targets for this expenditure?

2. The aim of the Internal Security Fund is crime and terrorism prevention, victims' protection, ICT purchase, training etc. Under which of these areas falls the expenditure for these surveillance systems and what is the goal?

3. Can you provide us with the relevant documentation that would give a detailed description of Centaur but also Hyperion, RAE as well as other relevant projects for which the Greek government has applied for their total or partial financing by RRF funds? In particular, can you specify how relevant data shared, processed and saved under these projects?

4. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has written an aide-memoire with issues to consider for MPRIC ([Link](#)). The current design opposes most of them from a fundamental rights point of view. How does this comply with the goals set in the RRF?

How can this be justified especially under a plan, which distinctly mentions refugees as a vulnerable group that needs to be supported?

5. The "Report on artificial intelligence in criminal law and its use by the police and judicial authorities in criminal matters" clearly calls for a due assessment of the risks of using AI systems, for example discrimination and breaches of privacy. Considering that, imagery shows that some of the cameras are positioned in such a way that they can look into the rooms and onto the beds of the inhabitants, thus the risk of privacy breaches can be considered as given. The report also "reiterates that biometric recognition software should only be deployed in situations in which it is clearly warranted". How does the given situation in these camps warrant

such a form of surveillance, especially considering that people on those camps have neither committed nor are suspects of committing criminal offences?

6. The Commission's High Level Expert Group on AI calls for a proportionate, considerate and risk-based use of biometric recognition technology. Could you explain how the aforementioned projects are aligned with these recommendations? In particular, how can the use of algorithmic detection analysis, automated voice broadcasting, drones and 24-hours video surveillance, which in some cases even includes the beds of the inhabitants, be argued/assessed to be proportionate and risk-based?

Best regards,

MEPs

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