



A year in review

First 12 months of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency



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One year ago, the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation entered into force, bringing to life the European Border and Coast Guard Agency on the foundation of Frontex. The new and extended mandate of the Agency and its increased resources are a clear and strong political response not only to the migration but also the security crisis faced by the EU at its external borders in 2015 and 2016.

Our first anniversary provides an opportunity to take stock of the work already achieved and consider our way forward.

The new Frontex is more operational than ever. Right now the Agency has more than 1700 officers from Member States deployed in its operations. In case of an emergency at Europe's external borders, Frontex has now at its disposal a rapid reaction pool of 1500 officers, along with additional vessels, aircraft, vehicles and other technical equipment. Frontex is more involved than ever in different stages of migration management in the EU.

The Agency is a cornerstone of the EU's area of freedom, security and justice. To help Europe better prepare for future challenges at its external borders, Frontex is conducting vulnerability tests in all Member States and has already shared its first findings with national authorities. It has also taken on new tasks to help combat cross-border crime.

Over the last year, Frontex has taken large leaps in the area of returns to move towards becoming an essential actor in law enforcement on the European level.

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency is building on the legacy of Frontex, which for more than a decade helped coordinate cooperation of Member States at the EU's external borders. The Agency has reorganised to reflect its new responsibilities and its expansion. Just over the last year, Frontex has

grown by a third, to a staff of 488, and it will more than double again, with a goal of 1 000 staff by 2020.

We all are aware that the significantly expanded mandate and resources bring even more scrutiny of the Agency, along with greater accountability. We know that expectations are high among EU citizens, institutions and Member States and we are committed to fully implement the mandate and our new responsibilities.

For the first time, the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation clearly states that "the management of the external borders is a shared responsibility of the Union and the Member States". As a result, over the last 12 months, the Agency has acted as the operational arm of the EU, and a partner for the Member States. The Agency will go further in that direction in the coming months. We thank the national authorities of the Member States, the Commission, the Council and the Parliament for their support.

While we are proud of our many achievements, we are also well aware of new challenges ahead of us. We want to move faster and further towards an integrated European Return System together with the Member States and the Commission. The Agency is implementing the new organisational model adopted by the Management Board in June 2017, while developing a common Agency culture and identity that will bring our staff together and make us even more effective and efficient. We need to fill many new positions. We need to ensure that we recruit the right people who can fulfil the Agency's mandate and its responsibilities while maintaining geographical balance.

We will only succeed with the support of the Europe's citizens, Member States, the European institutions, and our many institutional partners.

Fabrice Leggeri
Frontex Executive Director

The Agency is more present in the field and more operational than ever



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Deployment and New Pools

Frontex currently has more than 1 700 officers deployed at the EU's land, sea and air borders assisting Member States in surveillance, registration, document checks, fingerprinting and security checks and numerous other border control functions. Many of the officers also play an important role in helping Member States in search and rescue operations at sea.

Under its new mandate, the Agency has established a Rapid Reaction Pool of 1 500 officers committed by EU Member States and Schengen associated countries. The pool includes border surveillance officers, registration experts, advanced-level document officers and nationality screening experts. In a crisis situation, they are put at the immediate disposal of Frontex, which can deploy them within five working days. In addition to the officers already deployed by the agency in the field, the rapid reaction pool gives Frontex the flexibility to react much more decisively to massive shifts in migratory flows and other emergencies at EU's external borders, at the request of Member States.

The pool of officers is enforced by the Rapid Reaction Equipment Pool, which includes smaller and larger vessels, aircraft, helicopters, patrol cars and other vehicles. These can be deployed by Frontex at EU external borders within two weeks.

In addition, Frontex has a pool of more than 550 experts drawn from Member States who support the return of migrants across the EU. These return specialists help in identification of irregular migrants and acquisition of travel documents, as well as in cooperation with consular authorities of countries of origin of returnees. Return escorts support national escort officers during return operations coordinated by Frontex, while return monitors carry out independent monitoring of return operations to ensure compliance with fundamental rights. The profiles of return experts have been developed by Frontex in cooperation with the national authorities and the European Commission.

Actions outside the EU

Moving forward with the implementation of the EU Integrated Border Management strategy beyond European borders, this year Frontex has deployed two additional liaison officers to non-EU countries – Niger and Serbia. Frontex also has a liaison officer in Turkey since spring 2016. The liaison officers work with national authorities to strengthen cooperation in the fields related to border management and monitor the flows on key migratory routes outside the EU, through Western Africa and Western Balkans. The European Commission is also conducting negotiations on status agreements with Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia that would allow for possible Frontex operations in those countries. Under its new mandate the Agency has the ability to carry out operations on the territory of non-EU countries neighbouring at least one Member State if it requires assistance due to high migratory pressure.

To strengthen cooperation in the area of border control with countries outside the EU, Frontex plays a key role in several capacity building projects focusing on specific regions neighbouring the EU – the Africa Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC), Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey (IPA II) and Eastern Partnership Integrated Border Management Capacity Building Project.

In addition to working closely with numerous EU agencies and international bodies, Frontex cooperates with European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation Sophia (EUNAVFOR Med Sophia), EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya and EUCAP Sahel Niger.

Frontex also remains in close contact with EU External Action Service (EEAS), with whom we have working arrangement.

Returns

Over the last year, Frontex has taken large leaps in the area of returns to move towards becoming an essential actor in migration enforcement on the European level. So far this year Frontex has assisted in the return of more than 10 000 foreign nationals, nearly double the number from all of 2016. This compares with 3 500 people returned by the Agency in 2015.

Frontex is responsible for the coordination of return operations at a technical and operational level, as well as voluntary departures. In practice, this means that Frontex offers support in the organisation and implementation, including financing or co-financing, of return operations organised from individual Member States. After significantly expanding its return activities, Frontex has a 60-strong Return Support Unit that continues to grow. Its size was tripled since January 2016 and operational budget amounts to EUR 50 million.

Under its new mandate, in addition to coordinating joint return operations that involve at least two Member States, Frontex has begun to assist individual Member States in national return operations. These now account for nearly half of all Frontex return operations.

Frontex has also established a pool of experts who support the return of migrants across the EU. These include monitors for return operations who have been trained this year and participate in more than half of all operations. As the number of returns continues to grow, Frontex is working on expanding the pool of monitors.

Frontex currently relies on aircraft chartered directly by Member States, but the Agency will begin to charter its own planes for return operations, giving more flexibility to the Agency and Member States. Before the end of the year Frontex will sign a framework contract that will allow the Agency to charter its own aircraft. In October, Frontex will organise its first return flight on commercial flights.

Frontex is involved at many stages of the return process. The Agency assists Member States in iden-

tifying migrants' nationalities and in other activities that need to take place before a person can be returned, including help obtaining necessary travel documents. Frontex supports Member States in developing their own return case management systems and streamlines cooperation with countries of origin of migrants working together with the EU Return Liaison Officers Network.

The Agency is also platform for the exchange of information and best practices in the area of returns at the EU level. Frontex is responsible for the establishment of common training standards and over the years has trained return experts from Member States, as well as non-EU countries.

Although Frontex is responsible for the coordination of return operations, the decision about who should be returned can only be taken by the judicial or administrative authorities of the Member States. Frontex does not enter into the merits of return decisions issued by the Member States.

It is important to note that while Frontex has greatly increased its return capabilities, Member States, which still organise more than 90% of all returns from the EU, have not seen a significant boost of their combined returned capacity. Frontex, as well as individual Member States have also experienced challenges in cooperation with some non-EU countries of origin of many would-be returnees.

To make it easier for Member States to request assistance in return activities, the Agency has been enhancing its Frontex Application for Return, which also allows for a real time overview of all Frontex-supported return operations organised by charter flights. Frontex also aims to connect EU-funded networks in the field of returns within the framework of the Integrated Return Management Systems, in close cooperation with the European Commission and European Migration Network (EMN).





The Agency is a new cornerstone of the European area of freedom, security and justice

Vulnerability Assessment

One of the key new tasks of the Agency is to carry out annual vulnerability assessments of EU Member States' and Schengen Associated Countries' preparedness to face threats and challenges at their external borders. The Agency has completed the first set of assessments, which have been shared with individual Member States and will provide a consolidated report to the European Commission, Council and Parliament.

The vulnerability assessment is an important part of the Agency's mission to manage migration more effectively to improve the internal security of the European Union and safeguard the principle of free movement of persons within the Schengen Area.

In practice, these annual assessments allow the Agency to create an EU-wide overview of available border control means and capacities, and identify potential weaknesses in countries' abilities to handle increased migratory pressure at their borders.

Frontex analyses various data on border control capacities provided by Member States to determine the individual countries' readiness to face challenges at their external borders and delivers an individual assessment for each Member State.

Based on the outcome, Frontex Executive Director may issue recommendations to Member States on how to improve their border control capacities. These recommendations are first consulted with the individual Member State, and include a timeline for their adoption.

After analysing the baseline assessments, the Executive Director of Frontex may select some Member States for a simulation exercise, in order to test the country's preparedness related to specific threats

and challenges at EU's external borders. Such exercise may lead to additional recommendations for Member States.

This year Frontex has begun recruiting liaison officers who will be deployed to Member States. They will help gather information and provide situation monitoring to assist Frontex in maintaining a comprehensive picture of border control at EU level. The Agency will also assess the deployment of officers and equipment to Frontex operations, against the initial pledges and requests submitted to the Agency.

Law Enforcement

Thanks to its new mandate, Frontex is now a fully-fledged internal security actor with new responsibilities and extended scope of activities.

The monitoring of the external borders and security checks help ensure internal security within the Schengen Area and the European Union. The Agency also closely cooperates with national authorities and Europol and shares with them the intelligence Frontex collects in all its field activities for the purpose of criminal investigations. In the future, it will also share this information with Eurojust, in line with the Agency's new mandate.

Under the new mandate, members of the European Border and Coast Guard teams deployed at border crossing points and hotspots have full access to various EU databases, including the Schengen Information System (SIS), which allows them perform more informed border checks.

Frontex also contributes to the fight against terrorism by assisting Member States in tightening controls

at the external borders and support in the detection of potential foreign terrorist fighters. Officers deployed by Frontex are trained to detect persons who might be linked to terrorism. The suspects are then handed over to the national authorities for investigation. As the external borders should be seen one as the first lines of prevention, Frontex assists in the detection of smuggled firearms in cooperation with Europol and the EU Member States, and customs agencies.

Combatting document fraud, and targeting the organised crime groups involved in producing and providing fraudulent and false documents, is one of the Agency's priorities as document fraud can ultimately undermine Europe's internal security. Recognising the importance of combatting document fraud, Frontex had more than 380 advanced document experts deployed at EU's borders so far this year.

Frontex has increased its contributions to EU-led operational actions in the fight against organised crime through European multidisciplinary platform against criminal threats (EMPACT) that are focused on combatting smuggling, human trafficking, excise fraud and document fraud.

Last year the European Commission has proposed Frontex to host the Central Unit of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). Together with eu_LISA and Europol Frontex is already preparing for the implementation of ETIAS, which will provide an additional layer of control over travellers by determining the eligibility of all visa-exempt non-EU nationals to travel to the

Schengen Area. ETIAS will help improve internal security, limit public health risks and reduce delays at the borders by identifying persons who may pose a risk before they arrive at the EU's external borders.

Fundamental Rights and Personal Data Protection

Respect of fundamental rights and privacy protection is at the core of all Frontex activities.

In view of the new mandate that allows the agency to collect, process and share personal data for the purposes of criminal investigations and migration management, the Agency now has a full-fledged Data Protection Officer.

Over the last year, Frontex has introduced a complaint mechanism that allows any person who has been directly affected by the actions of staff involved in an activity of the Agency to be able to submit a written complaint regarding possible violations of his/her fundamental rights. Frontex is working on ensuring that the newly created mechanism is more widely known, easier to access and more visible on the Agency's web page.

Frontex is also moving forward with expanding the office of the Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer to assist in fulfilling the tasks allocated to her in the regulation, including return support, operational guidance, evaluation of operations, training, monitoring and reporting, as well as general promotion within the Agency and among officers it deploys.



The Agency is building upon Frontex legacy



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Reorganisation

Frontex has undergone a significant reorganisation to better reflect its new role and responsibilities, as well as the Agency's rapid expansion. The new structure will allow Frontex to function more efficiently. The former operations division, which brought together more than two third of the Agency's staff and budget, transformed into the Situational Awareness and Monitoring Division and the Operational Response Division.

The Situational Awareness and Monitoring Division concentrates Frontex's expanded capabilities to monitor the situation at Europe's frontiers and process related data with its new responsibility to assess and help eliminate vulnerabilities at EU's external borders. The newly created Vulnerability Assessment Unit is a key tool to help Member States prepare for future emergencies at their borders.

The Operational Response Division will include some of the Agency's most visible functions – Field Deployment, Return Support and Coast Guard and Law Enforcement. The Coast Guard and Law Enforcement Unit highlights two functions that have been significantly strengthened under the Agency's new mandate.

Frontex, along with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), stands at the centre of Europe's efforts to expand international cooperation on carrying out various coast guard functions. In addition to border control, Frontex contributes to the fol-

lowing coast guard functions: security, search and rescue, law enforcement and customs. These are especially relevant to Frontex since its biggest operations are in the maritime domain and the largest part of the Agency's operational budget is allocated to activities at sea.

Its extensive presence at EU maritime borders makes Frontex an ideal platform to facilitate cooperation between national law enforcement, customs and other authorities operating in the maritime domain and European agencies as part of European Integrated Border Management.

The Agency is also expanding multipurpose operations, which allow experts from other agencies to take part in them. For example, EFCA fisheries control inspectors have been deployed on several vessels and aircraft taking part in Frontex operations. Frontex also shares intelligence with EFCA and EMSA gathered by vessels taking part in border surveillance operations and by aircraft leased by the Agency in multipurpose missions. In order to facilitate the pooling of resources, our Agency has launched an inter-institutional procurement for leasing of aerial surveillance aircraft that provides the opportunity to work even more closely with EFCA and EMSA.

The Agency also closely cooperates with Europol and law enforcement bodies of member states to combat serious cross-border crime, including trafficking of human beings and terrorism.

Recruitment

The rapidly expanding Agency that aims to employ 1 000 people by 2020 requires a steady flow of new hires. In the first nine months of this year, Frontex recruited 162 staff to fill new or vacant posts, compared with 134 new hires in all of 2016 and 47 in 2015. This brought the total number of Frontex staff to 488, meaning that one of every three people currently working at Frontex joined this year alone. This is a challenge for the management, but also a unique opportunity to create a new identity for growing Agency.

Frontex already has a diverse staff, who come from 29 Member States and Schengen Associated Countries. Nearly 170 of our experts are involved in operations, 150 work as analysts, and 80 work on operational logistics. Frontex relies on a strong administrative staff to support all of its activities.

Assuring stability for the Agency and its staff, Frontex and Poland signed a headquarters agreement that defines the legal status for the Agency and its employees in Poland. The agreement, which enters into force in November 2017, will also allow Frontex to build its new headquarters in Warsaw on land provided by the Polish government. In addition, the headquarters agreement provides for an accredited European school for the children of the Frontex staff, which is an important development for the Agency's employees.

At the moment, Frontex has 130 ongoing recruitment procedures and another 40 will be initiated in the coming weeks. We invite all interested candidates to visit the Careers page on our website (<http://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/careers/open-selection-procedures>) and our LinkedIn page, where we regularly post new position.



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