

SECURING EUROPE'S EXTERNAL BORDERS

A EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD



«We will defend our borders with the new European Border and Coast Guard, which is now being put in place, just nine months after the Commission proposed it. Frontex already has over 600 agents on the ground at the borders with Turkey in Greece and over 100 in Bulgaria. Now, the EU institutions and the Member States should work very closely together to quickly help set up the new Agency. I want to see at least 200 extra border guards and 50 extra vehicles deployed at the Bulgarian external borders as of October.»

European Commission **President Jean-Claude Juncker**, State of the Union Address, 14 September 2016

EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD



The Schengen area without internal borders is only sustainable if the external borders are effectively secured and protected. To address the new challenges and political realities faced by the EU, both as regards migration and internal security, the Commission in December 2015 proposed to establish a European Border and Coast Guard. The European Border and Coast Guard was agreed in record time and launched on 6 October 2016. Over the past three months, important progress has been made in making the new Agency fully operational, including the setting up of mandatory rapid reaction pools for border guards and equipment and the launch of new pools for return intervention teams. These can be deployed in support of Member States who have the primary role and competence in reinforcing controls at the external borders. Currently the European Border and Coast Guard has more than 1,550 officers deployed to support Member States at the external borders, complementing the existing national capacities of Member States of over 100,000 border guards. It is crucial that Member States ensure that the agreed resources are always made available at the request of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency for on-going and future joint operations as well as for the mandatory pools.

ROADMAP TO A FULLY OPERATIONAL EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD:

➤ IMPORTANT STEPS COMPLETED:

- Setting up of **mandatory rapid reaction pools** for border guards and equipment
- Launch of three new **return pools** to support Member States in organising and coordinating return operations (690 return monitors, return escorts and return specialists)
- Adoption of a common **methodology for vulnerability assessments** to evaluate the ability of Member States to face challenges at external borders
- Establishment of a **complaint mechanism** to ensure respect of fundamental rights in all activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard
- Adoption by the Commission of a **model status agreement for cooperation with third countries**, including on operations on the territory of third countries

➤➤ NEXT STEPS:

- Member States to **fully reply to calls for deployment** and to **ensure there are no gaps** for running operations and for mandatory pools
- European Border and Coast Guard Agency, together with Member States to swiftly carry out **vulnerability assessments** on Member States' capability to face **current challenges** (by April 2017) and **simulation exercises** as regards **future challenges** for all pertinent Member States (by October 2017)
- Member States to provide the European Border and Coast Guard Agency with all necessary data to carry out vulnerability assessments by 17 February and to follow up on the results of vulnerability assessments and fix identified weaknesses swiftly
- European Border and Coast Guard to make full use of its new mandate and return pools to **step up return activities**

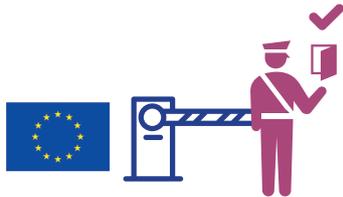
A NEW MANDATE

The limitations of the EU border agency, Frontex, had hindered its ability to effectively address and remedy the situation created by the refugee crisis: it did not have its own operational staff and relied on Member State contributions and was unable to carry out its own return or border management operations without the prior request of a Member State. Building on the foundations of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency's role and activities have been strengthened and significantly expanded to address all these issues.



UNION STANDARDS FOR BORDER MANAGEMENT

The new Agency will ensure Union standards for border management are implemented at all external borders. Following the adoption of a common vulnerability assessment methodology, the European Border and Coast Guard started the collection of data on Member State capacities to serve as a basis and key reference for performing **vulnerability tests** in 2017. In the months to come, Member States will need to fix as a matter of priority the most urgent vulnerabilities identified, in order to be able to successfully respond to migration challenges.



A RESERVE OF EUROPEAN BORDER GUARDS AND TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

A **Rapid Reaction Pool** of 1,500 border guards and other officers has been placed at the immediate disposal of the Agency since 7 December alongside a **Rapid Reaction Equipment Pool** consisting of equipment such as vessels and helicopters to carry out rapid border interventions. In addition, new recruitments of Agency staff are foreseen for 2017 as well as a gradual increase of the EU funding, which will reach 320 million euro in 2020. This means that there will no longer be shortages of staff of equipment for Agency operations.



PREVENTION OF CROSS-BORDER CRIME



Prevention of cross-border crime is a priority for the agency. It will be able to process personal data of persons suspected of involvement in criminal activities, such as migrant smuggling, terrorism or trafficking in human beings, as well as personal data of irregular migrants collected by officers deployed by the agency. It will be also able to collect information such as license plate numbers, vehicle identification numbers, telephone numbers or ship identification numbers necessary for analysis of migrant routes and methods used in different types of cross border crime. This information will be shared with the authorities of the EU Member States and Europol, enabling them to launch relevant investigations where necessary.

CURRENT FRONTEX DEPLOYMENTS:



-  **760 officers in Greece**
-  **130 officers in Bulgaria**
-  **600 officers in Italy**
-  **70 officers in the Western Balkans**

A STRONGER ROLE IN RETURNS

The support to Member States in the return of irregular migrants has been added as one of the priority areas of the Agency's work. To this end, three new pools consisting of 690 return monitors, return escorts and return specialists have been operational since 7 January 2017. Since the entry into force of the new regulation in October 2016, the Agency has organised 78 return operations to return 3,421 irregular migrants – more than in the whole year of 2015 (total 2016: 232 operations).



WORKING WITH AND IN THIRD COUNTRIES

Under its new mandate, the European Border and Coast Guard is allowed to carry out operations on the territory of neighbouring third countries, subject to prior agreement. A model status agreement was adopted by the Commission in November 2016. The Commission has selected Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as priority third countries and, on 25 January 2017, has asked the Council to authorise the opening of negotiations with both countries.