



Leaders' Meeting WESTERN BALKANS ROUTE

THE RAPID BORDER INTERVENTION TEAMS MECHANISM (RABIT)

The Rapid Border Intervention Teams mechanism (RABIT) was established in 2007. It offers rapid operational assistance for a limited period of time to a Member State facing a situation of urgent and exceptional pressure at points of the external borders, with large numbers of third-country nationals trying to enter illegally the territory of the Member State.

Key features are:

- A request is needed from a Member State. A request is sent to Frontex, which has five days to assess the situation and to decide whether to approve a request;
- On approval, an operational plan is drawn up immediately specifying the duration, tasks and composition of the teams;
- Member States are obliged to send border guards if requested, unless they themselves face an exceptional situation;
- The host Member State retains command of the team. The members of the teams can perform border checks and surveillance in accordance with the Schengen Borders Code. They have broadly the same powers as the border guards of the host Member State: the host Member State can approve the use of force and service weapons (if the home Member State also agrees);
- All costs related to training, exercises and deployment are covered by Frontex (basic salaries are not covered). This includes travel, accommodation and subsistence allowance.
- Though the RABIT mechanism has not been triggered since 2010, annual exercises take place to maintain readiness.

A mechanism to address the refugee crisis

Member States can request the deployment of Rapid border intervention teams (RABIT) to provide immediate border guard support in cases of urgent or exceptional migratory pressure.

The Mechanism provides operational assistance for a limited period of time. Frontex funds and deploys national technical and human resources drawn from Member States.

The Mechanism has only been activated once, but successfully: A successful operation at the Greek-Turkish border in 2010 stabilised the situation and brought down the number of arrivals.



The RABIT mechanism in action

In 2010, Greece requested the deployment of RABIT on the Greek-Turkish border. The operation lasted from November 2010 to March 2011. This followed a large increase in arrivals and successfully brought down the numbers, with detected entries falling month-on-month from the October peak of 7607 to 1632 by February.

During the operational period, every week close to 200 well-trained guest officers from 26 Member States assisted their Greek colleagues in controlling the border areas as well as in identifying the apprehended irregular immigrants. The operation has also helped the Greek authorities in gathering information on the migration routes and facilitator networks which exploit the desperate situation of irregular immigrants. Along with the Team 7 Thermo-vision vehicles, 24 patrol cars, 2 Schengen-buses equipped with IT devices, 3 mini-buses, 1 transport bus and a helicopter were deployed in the operational areas. Three mobile office containers were installed also.

Since the RABIT operation was launched at the beginning of November 2010, a gradual decrease in the flow of irregular entries was witnessed at the relevant border sections between Greece and Turkey. In October, prior to the operation, there were a total of 7 607 persons detected at the Greek-Turkish land border. In November, the operation reported a total of 4 616 detected entries and for the month of December, these detections had fallen further to 3 413. Subsequently, they decreased to 2 266 in January 2011 and to 1 632 in February 2011. After the deployment of the RABIT operation, the numbers of irregular crossings dropped by approximately 75 %. To put these figures into perspective, the total number of detected entries for the entire year of 2010, as reported by Greek authorities through the Frontex Risk Analysis Network, amounted to 47 706 detections.