



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear Chair,

The Commission would like to thank the Assembleia da República for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on a Model status agreement as referred to in Article 54(5) of Regulation EU 2016/1624 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2016 on the European Border and Coast Guard {COM(2016) 747 final}.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Assembleia da República to the work of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in assisting Member States with implementing the operational aspects of external border management. The Commission appreciates Portugal's active commitment to the European Border and Coast Guard teams and to the Technical Equipment Pool.

Border management is one of the four pillars under the European Agenda for Migration {COM(2015) 240 final} to manage migration better. The need to strengthen the external Union's borders has been reiterated by the recently adopted Communication on the delivery of the European Agenda for Migration {COM(2017) 558 final}. The migratory crisis has highlighted in particular the need for a reinforced cooperation with third countries neighbouring the European Union in the management of their borders. To this end, Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 provides that a status agreement shall be concluded by the Union with the third country concerned in cases where it is envisaged that European Border and Coast Guard teams with executive powers will be deployed to a third country.

The Commission is negotiating such status agreements with Serbia, with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania. It hopes to open similar negotiations very soon with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro once authorised by the Council of Ministers. The status agreements would allow for joint operations, rapid border interventions and support by the Agency to return operations from the European Union to these third countries. These

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agreements will be an important part of the European Union response to manage better irregular migration along the Western Balkans Route.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Assembleia da República and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Dimitris Avramopoulos
Member of the Commission*