

SECURING EUROPE'S EXTERNAL BORDERS

A EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY

NOVEMBER 2017



«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. Now, the EU institutions and the Member States should work very closely together to quickly help set up the new Agency.»

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

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, with regards to both migration and internal security, the Commission proposed in December 2015 to establish a European Border and Coast Guard. The Agency was agreed in record time and launched on 6 October 2016. Over a year later, intensive work is ongoing to ensure the full roll-out of the Agency, which is currently assisting Member States with around 1,500 border guards providing support at different sections of the EU external border, complementing the existing national capacities of Member States of over 100,000 border guards. Whereas continued progress has been made towards the full roll-out of the Agency, significant gaps remain in terms of human resources and equipment. The Agency needs to further step up its efforts in becoming a focal point of return operations with Member States making full use of its capabilities in the field.

EUROPEAN
BORDER AND
COAST GUARD



ROADMAP TO A FULLY OPERATIONAL EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD:

➤ IMPORTANT STEPS COMPLETED:

- Confirmed full availability of 1,500 border guards under the mandatory **Rapid Reaction Pool**.
- Launch of three new **return pools** to support Member States in organising and coordinating return operations (return monitors, return escorts and return specialists).
- Negotiations on the status agreements for operational cooperation in the field of border management are ongoing with **Serbia** and **the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**. Authorisation was granted to open similar negotiations with **Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina**.
- The **headquarters agreement** between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and Poland entered into force on 1 November 2017.

➤➤ NEXT STEPS:

- Member States to **fully respond to calls for deployment** and to ensure that the agreed resources are made available for ongoing operations, both in terms of human resources and technical equipment
- Member States to complete the nomination of border guards to the **Rapid Reaction Pool** and to rapidly fill the gaps in assets for the **Rapid Reaction Equipment Pool**.
- First cycle of **vulnerability assessments** to be completed by December 2017.
- The Agency and Member States to better align **return activities** and make full use of the Agency's strengthened instruments and tools. The Agency to present **operational steps** on return by the end of November with concrete **operational plans** to be developed by the end of the first quarter of 2018.
- Member States to implement the recommendations of the **vulnerability assessments** in a timely fashion.
- The roll-out of **liaison officers** is underway and the process should be completed by the Agency by February 2018.

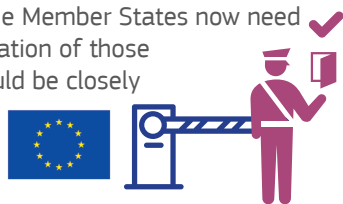
A NEW MANDATE

The limitations of the former 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. The Agency is currently increasing its own capabilities to provide support to frontline Member States by leasing or purchasing equipment. Until 2020, the Agency has an additional €40 million at its disposal to acquire its own equipment, in particular small and medium size assets. The Agency has adopted a strategy to acquire and manage its own resources until 2020 and is now developing a long-term strategy until 2027.



UNION STANDARDS FOR BORDER MANAGEMENT

The new Agency will ensure Union standards for border management are guaranteed at all external borders as a shared responsibility between the Agency and the national authorities. The reinforcement of preventive assessments guaranteeing the effective functioning of the Schengen area is a top political priority for the EU. To that end, the Agency has completed baseline assessments for all Member States and recommended concrete measures on the most urgent vulnerabilities for 21 of them. The Member States now need to ensure a timely implementation of those recommendations, which should be closely monitored by the Agency.



A RESERVE OF EUROPEAN BORDER GUARDS AND TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

The full availability of more than 1,500 border guards and other officers to the **Rapid Reaction Pool** has been confirmed by Member States. Further progress has been made with regards to the nomination of border guards with three quarters having now been provided by Member States. Despite additional calls, no progress has been made in terms of the required equipment leaving considerable gaps in the **Rapid Reaction Equipment Pool**. The 14 Member States which had previously contributed to the equipment pool continue to be the only ones to have done so. Member States should ensure, in the spirit of solidarity, more readiness to contribute to the pool to support a possible rapid border intervention. In the future, the gaps in the technical equipment will be alleviated with €200 million made available to Member States by the Commission under Internal Security Fund (ISF) for purchasing the relevant equipment.

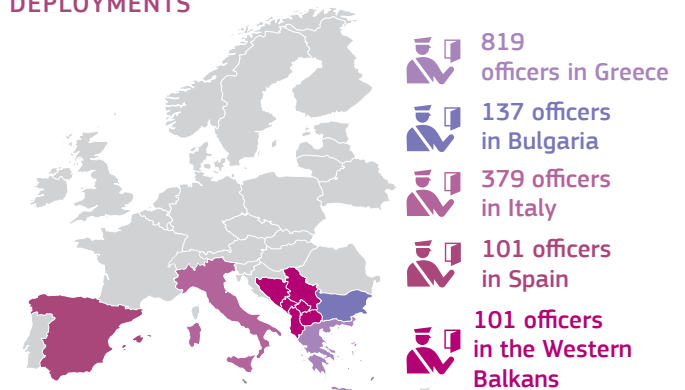


PREVENTION OF CROSS-BORDER CRIME

Prevention of cross-border crime is a priority for the Agency. It is now able to process personal data of persons suspected of involvement in criminal activities, such as migrant smuggling, terrorism or trafficking in human beings. It is 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 EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD DEPLOYMENTS



A STRONGER ROLE IN RETURNS

Support to Member States in the return of irregular migrants has been added as one of the priority areas of the Agency's work. The Agency's efforts in this field have brought positive results but further work is needed to fully operationalise and exploit the potential of some of the new return tools. The pace of return operations organised by the Agency has continued to grow, reaching a total number of 11,698 persons returned in 2017. The three **return pools** are now fully operational but are still under-utilised by Member States. To encourage and facilitate the use of the pools, the Agency will put forward concrete operational steps by the end of the month. At the same time, Member States should commit to making full use of the Agency's new tools and work together with the Agency to better align return activities.

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. Negotiations towards the completion of the status agreements are currently ongoing with Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. On 16 October 2017, the Council gave the green light to the Commission to negotiate similar agreements with Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.