

# SECURING EUROPE'S EXTERNAL BORDERS

## A EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD

JUNE 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

**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, 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. Eight months later, intensive work is ongoing to ensure the full roll-out of the Agency, which is currently assisting Member States with over 1,600 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 important progress has been made towards the full roll-out of the Agency, important gaps still remain in terms of human resources and equipment. Member States are encouraged to deliver on their commitments and ensure full operational capability of the rapid reaction pools and to close deployment gaps for ongoing Joint Operations.

### ROADMAP TO A FULLY OPERATIONAL EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD:

#### ➤ IMPORTANT STEPS COMPLETED:

- Confirmed full availability of 1500 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).
- **First vulnerability assessments** carried out for almost all Member States (except for Denmark and Germany) and recommendations sent to a number of Member States.
- Authorisation to open negotiations with **Serbia** and the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** on the status agreements for operational cooperation in the field of border management.
- Signing of the **headquarters agreement** by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the Polish authorities on 8 March.
- Setting up of a **complaint mechanism** in order to monitor and ensure the respect for fundamental rights in all the activities of the Agency.

#### ➤➤ 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 rapidly fill the gaps in assets for the **Rapid Reaction Equipment Pool**.
- The Agency to verify rapidly the full availability of 1,500 border guards of the **Rapid Reaction Pool** and carry out **mock deployment** of human and technical resources by the end of October 2017.
- Member States to fill in the remaining gaps in the **Return Pools** as a matter of urgency.
- The Agency to carry out **simulation exercises** on future challenges from now till October 2017, conduct **Emerging Threat Assessments** and to review a **methodology** for vulnerability assessments by November 2017.
- The Agency to revise and further develop a **fundamental rights strategy** by November 2017 with special focus on child protection
- The Agency to deploy **Liaison Officers to Member States** by the end of 2017.

## 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. As of 2017, the Agency has an additional €10 million per year at its disposal to acquire its own equipment in particular small and medium size assets.



## 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 almost all Member States and recommended concrete measures on the most urgent vulnerabilities for 20 of them. The Agency will monitor the implementation of the recommendations and notify the Commission in case of non-implementation of the recommended measures. At the same time, the Commission will follow up the recommendations at political level and stands ready to work with the Member States, the Council and the European Parliament in view of remedying any current or future vulnerabilities.



## 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 improvements are necessary with regards to the nomination of border guards and the harmonisation of profiles for the requested experts. Despite additional calls, no new pledges for equipment have been made, leaving considerable gaps in the **Rapid Reaction Equipment Pool**. Only 14 Member States have so far contributed to the equipment pool.



## 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. 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 EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD DEPLOYMENTS:



- 944 officers in Greece
- 166 officers in Bulgaria
- 402 officers in Italy
- 65 officers in Spain
- 127 officers in the Western Balkans

## 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 6,799 returns in 2017. Member States have so far provided 549 of the 690 experts that are needed for the **return pools**. While the Agency needs to finalise the practical modalities and rules concerning the deployment of pool members, further contributions are required as a matter of urgency to fill the remaining gaps. The Agency will also launch a pilot project for an agreement with commercial carriers to facilitate return operations to third countries.



## 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. Following the adoption by the Council on 8 March of the Decisions authorising the Commission to open negotiations with **Serbia** and the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** on status agreements for the deployment of European Border and Coast Guards teams on their territories, a second round of negotiations with Serbia took place on 11-12 May. The Commission intends to propose the opening of negotiations with other neighbouring countries, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The Agency will deploy Liaison Officers to Niger and Serbia in July and August 2017 respectively.