

# SECURING EUROPE'S EXTERNAL BORDERS

## A EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD

MARCH 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, both with regards to 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. Five months later, intensive work is ongoing to ensure the full roll-out of the Agency, which is currently supporting Member States with around 1,350 border guards at different sections of the EU external border, complementing the existing national capacities of Member States of over 100,000 border guards. Since the first progress report published on 25 January, implementation continues in the five priority areas identified by the Member States.

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

#### ➤ IMPORTANT STEPS COMPLETED:

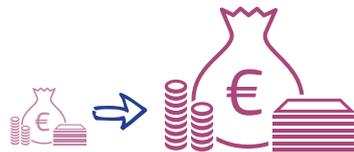
- Confirmed full availability of 1500 border guards **under the mandatory Rapid Reaction Pool**
- Launch of three new **return pools** to support Member States in organising and coordinating return operations (690 return monitors, return escorts and return specialists)
- Adoption of a common **methodology 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 and deployment of European Border and Coast Guard teams on the territory of third countries

#### ➤➤ NEXT STEPS:

- Member States to **fully respond to calls for deployment** and **ensure there are no gaps** in running operations both in terms of human resources and technical equipment
- Member States to fill in the gaps in the **Rapid Reaction Equipment Pool** and contribute with experts to the **Return Pools** by the end of March at the latest
- The European Border and Coast Guard Agency, with the support of Member States to swiftly carry out **vulnerability assessments** on Member States' capacities to face current challenges (by April 2017) and the Executive Director of the Agency to provide recommendations to the relevant Member States by May 2017
- Member States to provide the European Border and Coast Guard Agency with all necessary data to carry out vulnerability assessments at the latest by **10 March 2017**
- Member States to fully exploit the European Border and Coast Guard Agency's potential in the area of **return operations**
- Conclusion of the **headquarters agreement** by 7 April
- A new **Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems** service for maritime surveillance set to launch by June 2017

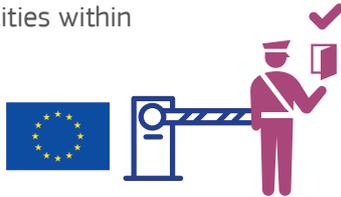
## A NEW MANDATE

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.



## UNION STANDARDS FOR BORDER MANAGEMENT

The new Agency will ensure Union standards for border management are guaranteed at all external borders. The Agency is now undertaking intensive efforts to implement the **vulnerability assessment** with the majority of Member States having provided the required data for the assessment. This data will serve as a basis for identifying the most urgent vulnerabilities at external EU borders affecting the smooth functioning of the Schengen area. Upon recommendation of the Agency's Executive Director Member States should then eliminate identified vulnerabilities within a defined timeframe.



## 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. Unfortunately, considerable gaps still exist regarding material contributions to the **Rapid Reaction Equipment Pool**, especially as regards maritime assets and helicopters. In addition, the technical discussions between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and Poland on the headquarters agreement were completed and the conclusions should be finalised by 7 April.



## 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 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

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. The pace of return operations organised by the Agency continued to grow reaching a total number of 2,116 returns in 2017. Member States have so far provided 518 of the 690 experts that are needed for the **return pools**, which have been operational since 7 January 2017. Further contributions however are required to fill in the gaps, in particular for the pool of forced return escorts.



## 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 an adoption of a model status agreement in November 2016 the Commission selected Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as priority third countries. The Council is progressing quickly on the decisions to authorise the opening of negotiations with both countries.