

SECURING EUROPE'S EXTERNAL BORDERS

A EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD

MAY 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. Seven months later, intensive work is ongoing to ensure the full roll-out of the Agency, which is currently supporting Member States with about 1,500 border guards at different sections of the EU external border, complementing the existing national capacities of Member States of over 100,000 border guards. Member States have significantly increased their involvement in the Agency's operational activities, but there are still important gaps, both in terms of human resources and technical equipment. Since the first progress report published on 25 January, the implementation of the priority areas identified by the Member States continues to advance alongside the development of the European Integrated Border Management.

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).
- **First vulnerability assessments** carried out for all Member States (except for Denmark and Germany) based on a common methodology.
- Establishment of a **complaint mechanism** to ensure respect of fundamental rights in all activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard.
- Authorisation to open negotiations with Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the status agreements for cooperation with third countries.

➤➤ NEXT STEPS:

- Member States to **fully respond to calls for deployment** and to ensure that the agreed resources are made available for the ongoing operations, both in terms of human resources and technical equipment
- Member States to fill the gaps in technical assets for the **Rapid Reaction Equipment Pool** by the end of May 2017.
- The Agency should ensure that by the end of May the requested profiles for the **Rapid Reaction Pool** are provided and by June that all 1,500 border guards are available. A mock deployment of human and technical resources is to be made by October 2017.
- Member States to contribute immediately to the **Return Pools** so that they are ready for full deployment by the end of May 2017
- The Agency to carry out **simulation exercises** on future challenges by October 2017 and to review a methodology for vulnerability assessments by November 2017.
- The Agency should develop a **comprehensive strategy** to be endorsed by November 2017 on how the Agency's own capabilities should be used from 2017-2020
- 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 additional €10 million at its disposal per year to acquire its own equipment and the number of staff is set to double by the end of the year.



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. While the vulnerability assessment process is well on track, the operationalisation of the **European Integrated Border Management** needs to be delivered at the political, technical and national level. The Commission, working closely with the European Parliament, the Council and the Agency, will establish the main elements of the political framework for the European Integrated Border Management strategy by October 2017.



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 matching of profiles for the requested experts. Although Member States have fully met the Agency's request for patrol cars and made additional pledges for technical assets such as coastal patrol boats, offshore vessels and thermo-vision vehicles, considerable gaps continue to exist for most types of equipment in the **Rapid Reaction 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:



	866 officers in Greece
	149 officers in Bulgaria
	345 officers in Italy
	50 officers in Spain
	135 officers in the Western Balkans

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 3,879 returns in 2017. Member States have so far provided 536 of the 690 experts that are needed for the **return pools**. Further contributions however are required to fill in the gaps, in particular for the pool of forced return escorts. The Agency should also start offering support to Member States for commercial flight operations.



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 first round of negotiations with Serbia took place on 7 April with the next round scheduled for 11-12 May. The Agency also intends to re-open negotiations for a working arrangement for cooperation with Libya and will deploy Liaison Officers to Niger and Serbia by June and August 2017 respectively.