

The Agency at a Glance





About Frontex

Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, has been built on the foundations laid by its predecessor, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, which was created more than a decade ago.

While the responsibility for the management of the external borders remains primarily with the Member States, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency supports border control at **land, air and sea borders** by reinforcing, assessing and coordinating actions of member states at the external borders of the European Union.

It coordinates the deployment of technical equipment (vessels, helicopters and boats) and specialised border guards to those EU countries which face an increased migratory pressure.

Main responsibilities

RISK ANALYSIS All Frontex activities are risk-analysis driven. Frontex assesses risks to EU border security. It builds up a picture of patterns and trends in irregular migration and cross-border criminal activities at the external borders, including human trafficking. It shares its findings with EU countries and the European Commission and uses them for planning its future activities.

VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT The agency carries out annual stress tests to evaluate the capacity and readiness of each Member State to face challenges at its external borders, including migratory pressure.

SITUATION MONITORING Frontex enables swift data exchange between border authorities of EU member states, the European Commission and other agencies. It provides situation and crisis monitoring, delivering early alerts and updates about events at external borders.

JOINT OPERATIONS The agency coordinates the deployment of law enforcement officers from the Member States and Schengen Associated Countries and technical equipment (aircraft, vessels, and border surveillance equipment) to external border areas in need of additional assistance.

EUROPEAN COOPERATION ON COAST GUARD FUNCTIONS

The agency supports the cooperation of law enforcement authorities, EU agencies and customs at maritime borders. Vessels and aircraft deployed in its operations also collect and share information relevant to fisheries control, detection of pollution and compliance with maritime regulations.

MULTIPURPOSE OPERATIONS Frontex works closely with other EU agencies to implement multipurpose operations. In these operations, assets deployed for border surveillance are used for other purposes, such as fishing and environmental monitoring.

SHARING OF INTELLIGENCE ON CRIMINAL ACTIVITY The agency shares with national authorities and European agencies the intelligence gathered at the borders on persons suspected of involvement in criminal activities, such as migrant smuggling, terrorism or trafficking in human beings.

RETURN OPERATIONS Frontex is responsible for the coordination of return operations at a technical and operational level, including voluntary departures of migrants who do not have a right to stay in the EU. In practice, this means that the agency can finance or co-finance return operations organised from individual EU Member States. The agency can also provide Member States with return experts who are part of the agency's return pool to assist with the organisation of return operations.

RAPID REACTION If an EU country is facing extreme pressure at an external border, especially the arrival of large numbers of non-EU nationals, Frontex coordinates the deployment of a rapid reaction pool consisting of at least 1500 border guards. Member States must provide members of the rapid reaction pool upon request by the agency.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION Frontex brings border control experts together with research and industry to make sure new technology meets the needs of border control authorities.

TRAINING Frontex develops common training standards for border authorities, to harmonise border guard education in EU and Schengen associated countries. This harmonisation is intended to ensure that wherever travellers cross an external EU border, they will encounter uniform border-control standards. It also enables border guards from different countries to work together efficiently while deployed in joint operations coordinated by Frontex.



Joint Operations

Joint operations are the most visible among the agency's activities. The agency deploys hundreds of border guard officers, along with vessels, vehicles and aircraft to assist Member States facing challenges at the EU's external borders. These operations take place at Europe's sea and land borders, as well as international airports. Frontex had relied on EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries to provide the guest officers and the equipment, which at times had been difficult to secure. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency is now able to count on a pool of at least 1 500 officers who can be quickly deployed to deal with emergencies at Europe's frontiers. It can also lease and buy its own equipment.

While the agency's two best known maritime operations taking place in the Central Mediterranean (Triton) and Eastern Mediterranean (Poseidon Sea) focus on supporting Italy and Greece in dealing with migratory pressure, all of the agency's operations also help tackle various forms of cross-border crime. In addition, the sea operations have coast guard function components, including monitoring of pollution and illegal fishing. These are implemented with the cooperation of other EU agencies, including the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA).



Role of Frontex in Search and Rescue operations

Search and Rescue (SAR) is always a priority for everyone operating at sea. International law obliges all captains of vessels to provide assistance to any persons found in distress at sea. SAR is also a specific objective of the operational plan of every Frontex joint maritime operation. For this reason, vessels deployed by Frontex to an operational area are always ready to provide support to the national authorities in SAR operations.

In 2016, Frontex contributed to the rescue of nearly 90 000 people in operation Triton in Italy and operation Poseidon Sea in Greece.



Plac Europejski 6
00-844 Warsaw, Poland
frontex@frontex.europa.eu
www.frontex.europa.eu



Publications Office

Paper version:
TT-01-17-724-EN-C
978-92-95213-68-5
10.2819/373114

PDF version:
TT-01-17-724-EN-N
978-92-95213-62-3
10.2819/58139