

## FRONTEX EVALUATION REPORT 2017

# Focal Points Concept

## Joint Operation Focal Points Air 2017 - Regular Officers

Operations Division  
Joint Operations Unit  
Air Border Sector

Approved at Warsaw



*[signed]*  
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## **INDEX**

### **Contents**

<b>1. Background information</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1. Brief risk assessment	3
1.2. Operational aim	3
1.3. Period of implementation and operational areas	3
1.4. Participants	3
1.5. Financial information	4
<b>2. Achievement of objectives</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Link to other Frontex activities and best practices</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Assessment of the joint operational activities</b>	<b>4</b>
4.1. Operational Concept	4
4.2. Operational Results	4
4.3. Situational Awareness	5
4.4. Supporting Response	5
4.5. Resources deployed	6
<b>5. The main benefits of the operational activity</b>	<b>6</b>

## 1. Background information

The Joint Operation Focal Points Air 2017 - Regular Officers deployments had to respond to two specific aims within the framework of the Frontex air borders operational model. The first aim of the Joint Operation was to provide operational support to airports from Member States which have expressed their specific needs or a desire to increase the operational knowledge of their officers. The second aim of the Joint Operation was to deepen understanding with regard to new and emerging irregular migration trends for the benefit of both Frontex and Member States.

In order to achieve these two aims, Frontex Risk Analysis Unit undertook an analysis of risks and emerging threats at the EU's external air borders and selected the permanent Focal Points. Specific risks and possible emerging threats were assessed at these airports and, finally, a recommendation to deploy Team Members to those permanent Focal Points Airports was issued.

### 1.1. Brief risk assessment

The Joint Operation Focal Points Air 2017 - Regular Officers deployments responded to two specific aims within the framework of Frontex air borders operational model. The first was to provide operational support to airports from Member States and Schengen Association countries where those countries have expressed specific needs or a desire to increase the operational knowledge of their officers. The second was to provide as permanent as possible reporting on irregular migration from those airports, which were deemed to be most exposed to high levels of irregular migration, in order that the phenomena could be better understood. In order to achieve these two objectives, the Frontex Risk Analysis Unit undertook an analysis of risks and emerging threats at the EU's external air borders and provided a list of ten airports identified as being most at risk of irregular migration, and to be deemed -permanent Focal Points. Frontex Risk Analysis Unit identified specific risks and possible emerging threats at these airports and recommended that Seconded Team Members should be deployed at these airports.

### 1.2. Operational aim

Joint Operation Focal Points Air 2017 - Regular Officers was a permanent platform for providing a sustained operational presence and information exchange/gathering system at air borders by deploying Regular Officers (Team Members, seconded Team Members, European advisers and Third Country observers) to activated Focal and Coordination Point airports.

The aim of this joint operational activity was to exchange border guards among different airports within and outside the European Union in order to contribute to the Integrated Border Management enhancement and increase the operational coordination at the external borders of the European Union by establishing a permanent Focal Points system.

The operational aims were implemented in full compliance with the relevant EU law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the relevant international law, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees from 1951, the respect for fundamental rights - in particular the access to international protection and the compliance with the principle of non-refoulement - and taking into account the recommendations of the Frontex Consultative Forum.

### 1.3. Period of implementation and operational areas

The Joint Operation Focal Points Air 2017 - Regular Officers was implemented from 1 February 2017 to 31 December 2017.

During the planning phase there were proposed 51 Focal/Coordination Point Airports; 41 airports were activated by hosting deployed officers.

9 Coordination Point airports were activated by hosting of Team Members as EU Advisers/Observers.

### 1.4. Participants

A total of 26 Member States a total of 10 Third Countries participated in the Joint Operation.

In total 165 officers were deployed in different locations, encompassing 5,483 deployment days of Team Members, seconded Team Members, Third Country Observers and EU Advisers/Observers.

## 1.5. Financial information

The cost of Joint Operation Focal points Air 2017 - Regular Officers totals to 1,014,271 EUR.

## 2. Achievement of objectives

The objectives of the activity were, as follow:

- **To enhance operational cooperation (Frontex and Member States)**  
The objective has been achieved based on the development of Focal Points network and deployments.
- **To support establishment of permanent structures**  
The objective has been achieved as all the Permanent Focal Point European Airports were activated.
- **To identify possible risks and threats**  
The objective has been achieved due to the incident reports provided to Frontex which has allowed identifying some risks and threats.
- **Enhance border security**  
The objective has been achieved due to the high number of activation of Focal Point Airports and Coordination Point Airports with officers deployed with different profiles, which provided reports on cases of interest to gain better understanding of modi operandi affecting the external air borders.

## 3. Link to other Frontex activities and best practices

All activities within Joint Operation Focal Points Air 2017 - Regular Officers were designed to allow parallel or complementary operational actions and to take advantage of other Frontex projects, especially the ones implemented by Air Border Sector.

## 4. Assessment of the joint operational activities

### 4.1. Operational Concept

The operational concept of Joint Operation Focal Points Air 2017 - Regular Officers was to deploy and host border guards at different airports within and outside Europe. They enhanced Integrated Border Management and increased the operational cooperation at the external border of Member States by working together as teams and exchanges information, expertise and smart practices between themselves. Furthermore, it was the intention to better align border control at the external air borders of Member States with the Schengen Border Code and to implement a more effective border management strategy.

### 4.2. Operational Results

The “Cases or incidents of interest” on which Team members were requested to report were defined as the following:

- Facilitation and trafficking in humans beings
- Visa fraud and visa miss-issued
- Transit without visa abuse
- Document abuse
- Cases that reflect the general traffic of an airport

#### Statistical operational results for the full operation

Total number of incidents:	2632
Total number of persons:	3295
Number of asylum seekers:	525
Number of refusals:	1241
Number of irregular migrants:	1421
Number of irregular migrants facilitated (included in the 1.421 above):	34

## FRONTEX EVALUATION REPORT 2017

Number of overstayers:	54
Number of facilitators:	27
Number of smugglers of goods:	7
Number of Foreign Terrorist Fighters/militant Islam profiles identified:	6

Total number of reported abused documents: 978 (see further details in table and chart below)

	SUPPORTIVE DOCUMENTS	TRAVEL DOCUMENTS	VISAS	TOTAL
Counterfeit	41	160	44	245
Forgery - altered	18	169	21	208
AUTHENTIC - No fraud reported	30	319	19	368
AUTHENTIC - Impostor	13	83	1	97
AUTHENTIC - Visa fraud at diplomatic post	-	-	2	2
Forgery - Unlawfully issued	13	14	3	30
AUTHENTIC - Other	2	10		12
Stamp / Entry - Exit	6	5		11
AUTHENTIC -Photo substitution	-	-	-	-
AUTHENTIC - Stolen blank	3	2	-	5

### 4.3. Situational Awareness

#### 4.3.1. Threats and Risks, modus operandi and trends identified

The operational concept of the JO Focal Points 2017 Air was not designed to provide general situational awareness at the external air borders. Such an undertaking remains far outside the available resources of the operation. The aim of the operation was to support key airports identified as experiencing specific risks and threats from irregular migration and to support these airport with targeted support. The Joint Operation highlighted some aspects of irregular migration at the EU's external air borders, some of them being already observed in the framework of other Frontex Joint Operations.

#### 4.3.2. Identification of facilitators

In total 27 facilitators were identified. The level is low compared with the overall large number of persons who were undoubtedly facilitated. This is in line with the general situation at air borders where the requirement to actually accompany and escort migrants at air borders is not usually necessary.

### 4.4. Supporting Response

The Joint Operation Focal Points Air 2017 - Regular Officers was implemented as an annual activity with considerable involvement of Member States, Third Countries and other internal and external stakeholders. As reflected by the growing number of deployments, Member States appreciated the joint operation which envisages a similar trend in the upcoming years.

Different types of officers covering a large range of profiles and skills were individually chosen and deployed to 42 different locations. It created a commensurate workload in terms of financial and logistics management, engaging staff and budget resources in Frontex Air Border Sector.

According to the Operational Plan, deployed officers were requested to provide Frontex with data and information/intelligence related to incidents of interest detected at the respective Focal Point in agreement with the

FRONTEX EVALUATION REPORT 2017

hosting authorities. The main emphasis was on gathering qualitative information rather than on receiving a high number of incident reports.

**4.5. Resources deployed**

Deployed officers constantly exchanged information based on their own experiences and will remain in contact after the implementation of the activity, therefore extending the benefit of their deployments. Following up the outcomes of previous years, the joint operation strengthened solidarity and trust among border guards at European airports, leading directly to an improved European reaction capacity against several irregular migration phenomena and modi operandi.

**5. The main benefits of the operational activity**

Joint Operation Focal Points Air 2017 - Regular Officers delivered the following main benefits:

- Positive impact on the operational cooperation among EU and Non-EU airports based on the exchanged experiences and established contacts.
- Increased knowledge about different operational practices in Member States and Third Countries.
- Increased knowledge in Member States and Third Countries about Frontex operational activities and its values.
- Increased response capacity of Frontex having permanent Focal Point structure established.