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**Council of the
European Union**

**Brussels, 26 January 2026
(OR. en)**

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Frontex Vulnerability Assessments of European border control 2025

Delegations will find enclosed the Frontex Vulnerability Assessments of European border control 2025.

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Vulnerability Assessments of European border control 2025

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT,
THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,
AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION



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Warsaw, December 2025

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Cover: Frontex sea patrol near Lampedusa, June 2025. © Frontex, 2025

Frontex reference number: Ares(2025)10589614

Print version: TT-01-25-102-EN-C
PDF version: TT-01-25-102-EN-N

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Foreword

Current events outside the European Union remind us of the value of sound capacities at our external borders and the need to maintain readiness to face new challenges. Russia's war on Ukraine and hybrid threats posed by Russian and Belarusian state actions have prompted determined responses along the **Eastern borders**. The instrumentalisation of migration, a proliferation of the use of drones, including for cross-border criminality, and a marked intensification of military threats stemming from the policies of our neighbours not only requires bolstering our preparedness at the borders, but also highlights increasingly interwoven links between civilian border control and military considerations in the region.

Along the **South-Eastern and Southern borders**, European capacities continue to be challenged by rapidly shifting migratory routes. The redirection of the main Western Balkan route, a drop in arrivals on the Central Mediterranean route, and a very significant increase in seaborne migration to the island of Crete prove that the European border-control community needs to stay vigilant and capable of responding to changing circumstances. As Member States maintain and expand their capacities to detect irregular migration and cross-border crime, certain capacities need greater attention at the political level.

The measures that have been recommended under the European Border and Coast Guard Agency's **Vulnerability Assessment (VA)** have resulted in stronger capacities at the borders. After nine completed VA cycles, we have seen in our subsequent assessments of many BCPs and border sections that when implemented with commitment of national authorities, recommended measures contribute to the long-term mitigation of vulnerabilities. Efficient VA timelines enable a swift materialisation of tangible improvements. However, when commitment is lacking, vulnerabilities risk resurfacing.

This annual report looks at the outcomes of Vulnerability Assessments and puts **special focus on vulnerabilities persisting in our assessments** and the value of recommended measures. For the first time, reporting covers **one full Vulnerability Assessment cycle**, describing both the outcomes of assessments and the measures recommended and implemented between October 2024 and September 2025. The shift from biannual to annual reporting is an opportunity to provide broad insight backed by findings from all processes as opposed to the former fragmented presentation of Vulnerability Assessments.

On the verge of the tenth anniversary of this dedicated quality control mecha-



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nism for border control, I invite you to explore this completely redesigned annual report on Vulnerability Assessment. At the same time, I trust you will carefully consider its insights in your decision-making. I am confident that the information provided in this publication illustrates that VA works: with sustained commitment of the European Border and Coast Guard, the Schengen area is preserved, our external borders become more secure and Europe a safer place for her citizens.

Hans Leijtens
Executive Director
December 2025



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Introduction

The **Baseline Assessments (BA)** of 2025, evaluating the capacity and readiness of Member States' border-control systems based on data for 2024, constitute the ninth edition of the primary **Vulnerability Assessment (VA)** process. Together with six **VA Simulation Exercises (SE)** conducted throughout Europe in 2024, and one **Rapid Vulnerability Assessment (RVA)** launched in response to the BA 2025 findings, they form the backbone of this report.

As opposed to past editions of this report, which were transmitted biannually – each guided by partial VA processes and tools available at two distinct publication dates during the year, this issue covers a whole year of VA activities, including findings obtained through all types of VA processes. Using an extended timeframe and scope gives us an opportunity to shift the guiding narrative of the report towards the primary theme of VA – the borders.

Chapter 1 of this report – Vulnerability Assessments of border control: where, what, why – describes the state of play of Member States' capacities, pointing to common challenges at the most affected geographical sections of the external borders. Starting with the **Eastern borders** where border control is increasingly intertwined with wider security considerations and hybrid threats, it progresses to the **South-Eastern borders**, which are predominantly affected by developments along the Western Balkan migratory route. The **Southern borders**, continuously challenged by shifting migratory routes across the seas, follow, and the chapter concludes with an account of passenger traffic through the **European air borders**. Knowledge established in the framework of BA 2025, findings collected during SE and RVA exercises, as well as progress made in the implementation of recommended measures all contribute to establishing a clear picture of capacities of Member States challenged by common risks.

The main part of the report, which constitutes chapter 1, is supplemented by chapters 2 and 3, which focus on wider considerations within specific aspects of VA. The volume of data collected and the breadth of knowledge established throughout nine assessment cycles give insight into the impact that the VA mechanism has made on the ground. Chapter 2 focuses on **persistent vulnerabilities**. The VA mechanism has proven over the years to be an efficient tool for identifying and addressing deficiencies in Member States' border-control systems. Yet, **certain vulnerabilities keep reappearing** in the assessments despite mitigating measures and a recurrent calling out of deficiencies to Member State partners. Chapter 3, on the other hand, concerns **positive developments**: it sheds light on cases of vulnerable borders which underwent substantial improvement. Here, we look at selected BCPs and border sections that suffered from multiple vulnerabilities in the early years of VA and where the implementation of VA recommended measures induced positive changes resulting in strengthened border-control capacities.

The three chapters are supported by a **visual representation of VA findings** made in the reporting period. The mapping of vulnerabilities and recommended measures provides the reader with a quick overview of the key challenges at the borders and their geographical distribution. As in previous reports, **annexes** focusing on the vulnerabilities identified in this year's BA and VA Simulation Exercises and recommended measures implemented by Member States present key VA outputs.

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Chapter 1

Vulnerability Assessments of border control: where, what, why

Since 2016, Vulnerability Assessments have become the premier tool to ensure continuous analysis of European border control. The frequency of Vulnerability Assessments allows insights into national border-control systems and European capacities at the external borders that share common characteristics as well as common risks. This chapter focuses on four geographical areas where these common characteristics and risks enable us to gauge the level of European readiness to counter them.

The main **positive development** of the past year is the decreasing number of vulnerabilities identified in Member States' border-control systems. Just over **one hundred vulnerabilities** were recorded in the last cycle – this is fewer than half the vulnerabilities that were identified in the initial VA cycles.

Positive developments were recorded in border checks all over the Schengen

area. The great majority (93%) of persons subject to border checks were checked in security databases, an improvement compared to the previous two VA cycles. If we add the use of Advance Passenger Information and National Single Window systems, which in principle may compensate for a lack of consultations during border checks, the number of persons checked increases to 95%. However, this missing 5% still translates into 36 million persons. Gaps in database consultations relate mostly to **air border checks** on persons exiting the Schengen area. Beyond issues in database consultations, localised vulnerabilities in border checks relate to gaps in staffing, training, infrastructure and capacity to detect fraudulent documents. Given the legal obligation to perform complete verifications in databases and the importance of correctly executed border checks for the EU's internal secu-

urity, this topic has been flagged as a priority under the current Schengen cycle.

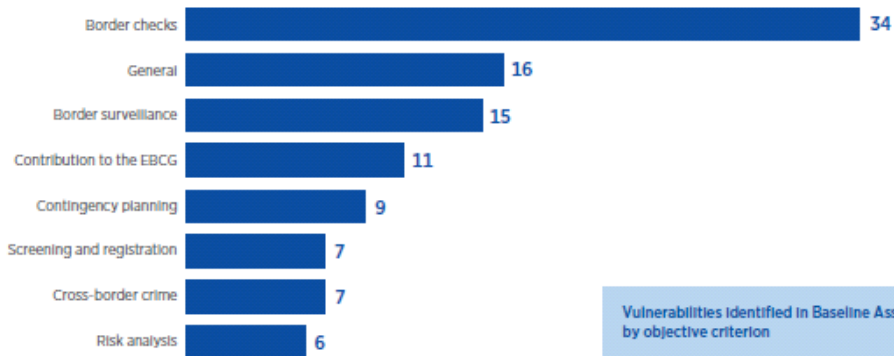
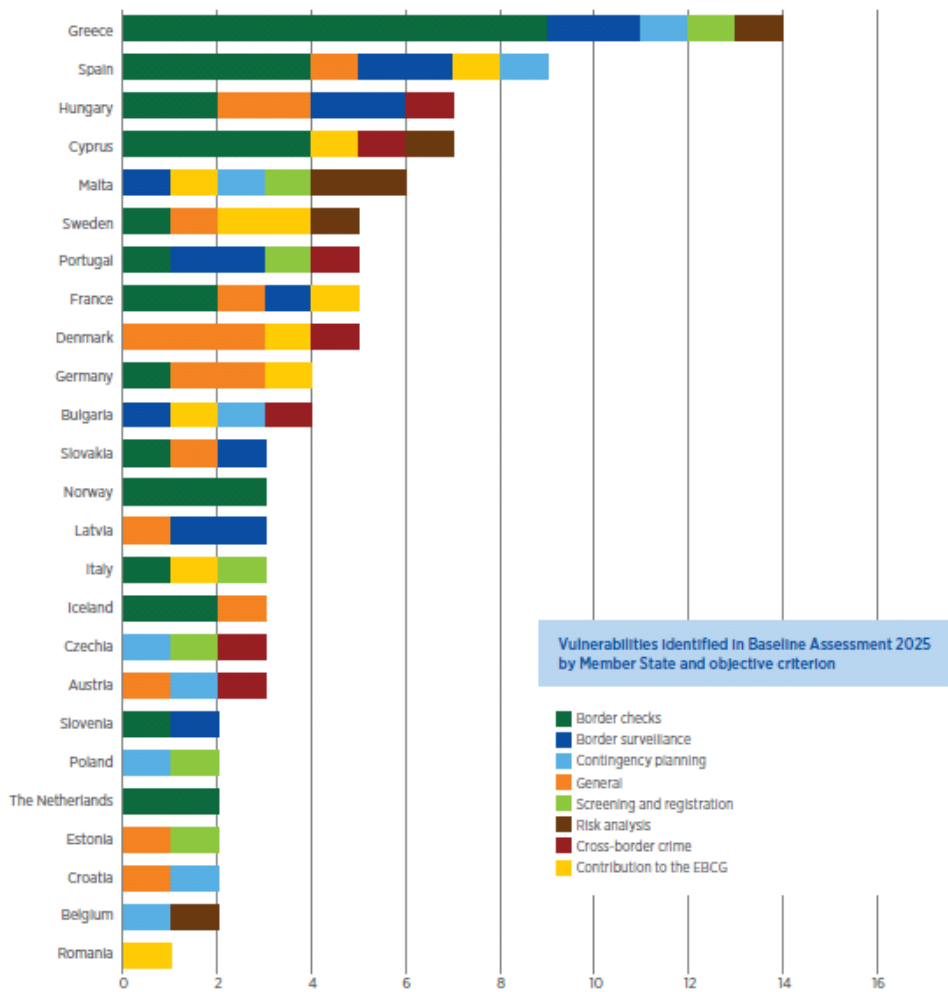
One of the key features of Member States' readiness to face upcoming challenges at their external borders is a **well-functioning contingency plan**. Rapid changes in both the geopolitical situation and the operational environment make such planning and proper testing of the plans increasingly important. 2024 marks yet another year when Member States across the European Union improved their efforts with regard to these plans. More Member States have an approved and tested contingency plan in place, capable of guiding border-control authorities' responses in the event of large-scale irregular migration. A minority of Member States has not yet implemented such plan or elements of it are absent. Six recommended measures addressing these deficiencies continue to be implemented. It is expected that contingency planning

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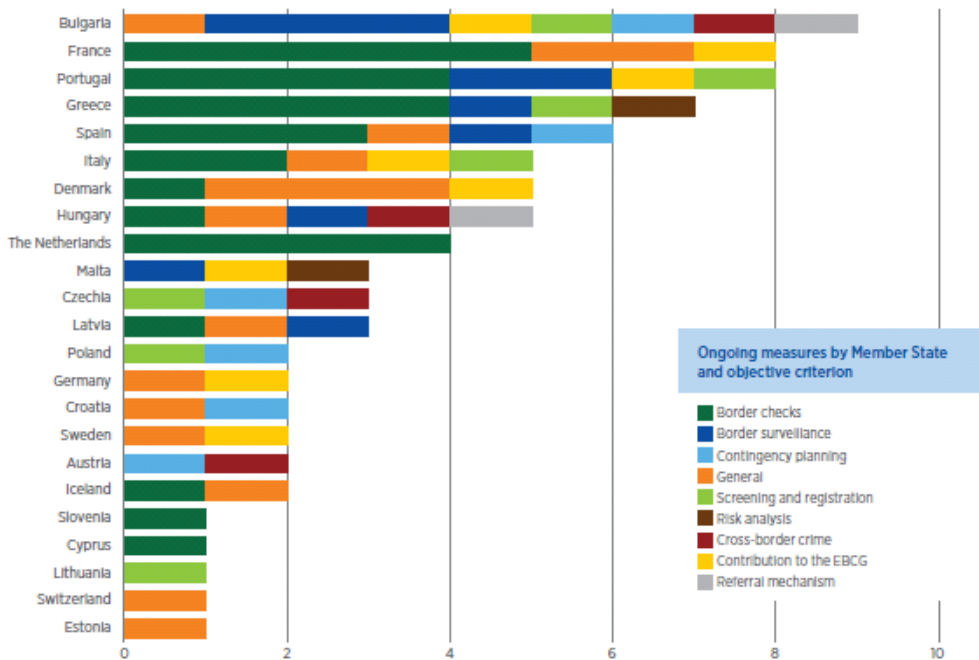
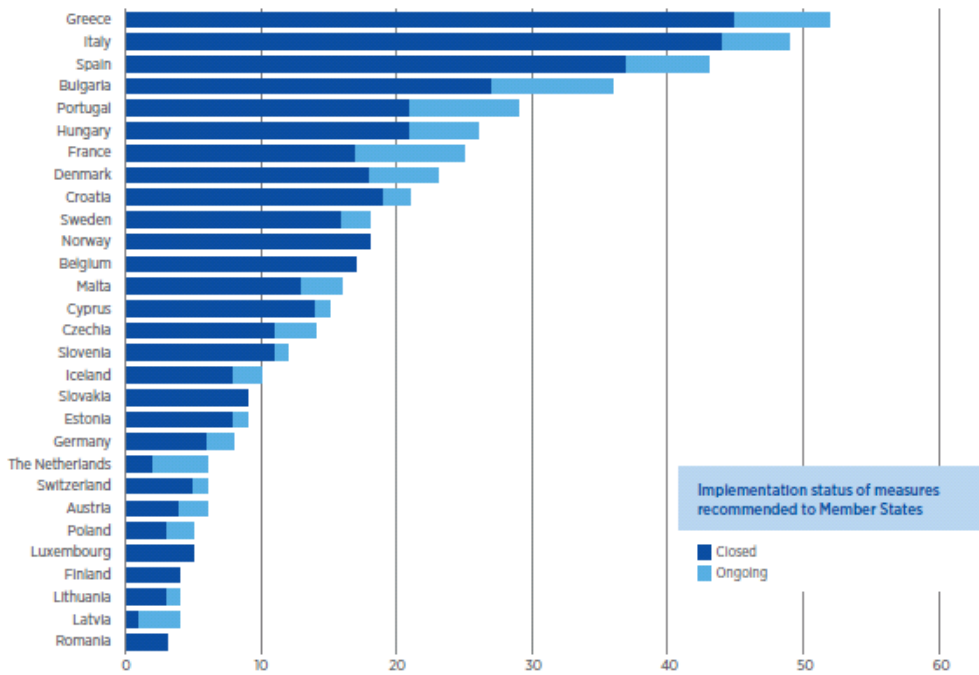
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will also assume a critical role in the implementation of the New Pact on Asylum and Migration.

Sound referral mechanisms at the borders are of paramount importance, notably in events triggering the activation of contingency plans. In 2024, no vulnerabilities were identified in the functioning of Member States' referral mechanisms. However, while Member States do report having referral mechanisms in place, in practice national policies in several Member States severely restrict the functioning of the mechanisms, preventing their sound assessment under VA. This is a cause for concern, especially considering the upcoming implementation of the Migration Pact in 2026.

Across Member States, **effective staffing dedicated to border control** generally reflects the national planning more closely

than in the previous year. At the same time, assessments in recent years have recorded a rise in national spending on border control, especially in Member States at the Eastern land borders. Although this is a positive development, the spike in spending in some Member States appears to result from one-off infrastructural investments rather than a constant longer-term rise in funding. In some other Member States, for example on the Mediterranean Sea, financing of border control remains stable at best, despite persistent gaps, even in locations with high risk levels. These gaps are then compensated for by sustained European support.

Cooperation between Frontex and the Member States in the framework of the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) continues to be assessed as a part of VA. BA 2025 marks the fifth yearly cycle when

staff and equipment contributions from Member States to the EBCG, as well as Member States' capacity to host EBCG officers, have been evaluated. Compared to 2023, in 2024 Member States contributed a lower percentage of human resources to the EBCG Standing Corps for the purpose of long-term deployments. A slightly better result was reached with regard to contribution of officers for short-term deployments. A major improvement was recorded in terms of equipment contribution – considerably more assets were effectively deployed compared to the previous year. Finally, obstacles remain in some Member States regarding the capacity to host EBCG Standing Corps. National legislation remains the main reason for inability to host, though procedural and technical obstacles contribute to the identified vulnerabilities.



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