

**Annual Information
on the Commitments
of the Member States
to the European Border
Guard Teams and the
Technical Equipment Pool**

Report 2014

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Foreword

Already a year has passed since Frontex started to use the fully established European Border Guard Teams (EBGT) and Technical Equipment Pool (TEP). One of the most important features of the development of both of those is the trend of a steady and continuous increase in the commitments made by the Member States.

Both EBGT and the TEP are used as sources of operational resources for joint operations which are co-ordinated by Frontex. The large number of pool members in the EBGT and assets in the TEP provides Frontex with the capacity to assist the Member States in the management of the external borders of the European Union.

Along with co-ordination of the joint operations carried out along the EU's external borders, Frontex also focuses on the quality of the assistance which is provided to the Member States.

In this regard, Frontex is continuing to develop and deliver training to EU border guards in different fields which are related to border control, as well as exploring the possibilities for the further development of the TEP by establishing new categories of technical equipment, such as Frontex's own equipment or procurement of services for border control.

In October 2013, Frontex held the annual bilateral negotiations with the Member States regarding the overall resources to be deployed on joint operations in 2014 and now, as a result, I have the pleasure of presenting the 'Annual Information on the Commitments of the Member States to the European Border Guard Teams and the Technical Equipment Pool'. The high level of availability of the resources provided by the Member States builds upon Frontex's efforts to improve the EU's capacity to respond to the dynamic situation along the external borders of the European Union.

Ilkka Laitinen
Frontex Executive Director
Warsaw, 19/03/2014

Introduction

This report provides information on the commitments of the Member States¹ to the European Border Guard Teams (EBGT) and the Technical Equipment Pool (TEP) pursuant to the Frontex Regulation², i.e.

- Article 3b(7) *“The Agency shall inform the European Parliament on an annual basis of the number of border guards that each MS has committed to the EBGT;*
- Article 7(7) *“The Agency shall inform the European Parliament on an annual basis of the technical equipment that each Member State has committed to the technical equipment pool”.*

The report presents information with regard to the following:

- **the current number of members of the EBGT**, as established by a decision of Frontex’s management board (No 11/2012 of 23 May 2012);
- **the current number of assets in the TEP**, including the Overall Minimum Number of Technical Equipment (OMNTE) for 2014, as established by a decision of Frontex’s Management Board (No 5/2013 of 26 March 2013).
- **the technical equipment provided by the Member States** for operational activities which are co-ordinated by Frontex, based on the call for contributions addressed to the Member States with regard to the provision of technical equipment pursuant to OMNTE needs in 2014;
- **the development of Frontex’s own operational capacity**, i.e. the state of play with regard to the development of new categories of technical equipment and the leasing of technical equipment and surveillance services for joint operations which are co-ordinated by Frontex.

¹ For the purposes of this report the term “Member States” reads “European Union Member States and Schengen Associated Countries”.

² Regulation (EU) No 1168/2011 of 25 October 2011 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004 establishing a European Agency for the Management of Operational Co-operation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (OJ L 349, 25.11.2004, p.1).

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Executive summary

Pursuant to the provisions of the Frontex Regulation, in particular Articles 2, 3 and 7 thereof, Frontex established the EBGT and the TEP as sources of operational resources for joint operations which are co-ordinated by Frontex. Both these sources are intended to increase Frontex's response capacity, as identified in the Frontex strategy and multi-annual plan for 2014 to 2017.

The EBGT is composed of border guards provided by the Member States. These border guards are registered in the pool in accordance with their expertise and following the classification of 13 specific expert profiles developed by Frontex which reflects the different areas of border management. The Member States contribute to the pool in accordance with the specialisation of the respective border guard service and the scale of national border guard pool.

Frontex contributes seconded guest officers (SGOs) to the EBGT. SGOs are also border guards provided by the Member States, but they are seconded to Frontex and subsequently deployed by Frontex on different joint operations as members of the EBGT.

At the moment, the TEP consists of equipment provided by the Member States. The overall number of assets in the pool is 804 pieces of equipment, including 285 maritime assets, 96 aerial means, 132 border surveillance vehicles and patrol cars, and 291 pieces of equipment for border control, such as hand-held surveillance equipment, document checking equipment, etc.

The main platform used by Frontex with regard to the provision of its operational resources is the annual bilateral negotiation session held in the last quarter of each year. The aim thereof is Frontex and the Member States agreeing on the overall amount of human and technical resources to be deployed on joint operations during the following year. The negotiations related to the operational resources for 2014 were formally concluded at the end of 2013 with the exchange of letters of agreement between Frontex and each Member State / Schengen Associated Country.

With regard to the acquisition of the OMNTE, in June 2013 Frontex addressed a call for contributions to the Member States, inviting them to offer technical assets to be deployed in joint operations 2014 and thus satisfy OMNTE needs. Along with the call for contributions Frontex presented the Member States with specific requirements with reference to each particular type of equipment regarding the technical parameters, operational capabilities and deployability of the assets.

In addition to the equipment provided by the Member States the amended Frontex Regulation allows Frontex to acquire (itself or in co-ownership with Member States) or to lease technical equipment to be deployed during joint operations, pilot projects, rapid interventions, joint return operations or technical assistance projects. In this regard, in 2013 Frontex launched and successfully finalised a tender for the purchase of aerial surveillance services for joint operations to be carried out at the EU's south-eastern external land borders in 2014.

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European Border Guard Teams

2.1. European Border Guard Teams (EBGT)

The EBGT consists of border guards from the national border authorities of the Member States. Team members are deployed on joint operations, pilot projects (Article 3 (1b) of the Frontex Regulation) and rapid interventions (Article 8a of the Frontex Regulation). The EBGT is made up of 13 different border guard profiles which are related to specific areas of border control, i.e. the following:

- field press officers;
- debriefing experts;
- screening experts;
- second-line interview experts;
- Frontex support officers for deployment and logistics;
- second-line airport officers;
- first-line officers;
- advanced level document officers;
- border surveillance officers;
- Frontex support officers for the Frontex situation centre;
- Frontex support officers;
- mobile operational unit officers;
- stolen vehicle detection officers.

Following a proposal by the executive director, Frontex' Management Board decides on the profiles and overall number of the border guards who are to be made available for the EBGT. The overall number of EBGT members was set forth in MB Decision No 11/2012 of 23 May 2012 and is currently 1,850 border guards. However, since that number refers to the annual average number of border guards being deployed on operational activities co-ordinated by Frontex, it is considered to be the minimum number of members of the pool.

At the end of 2013, the overall number of border guards in the EBGT stood at almost 2,500 and is still growing as Member States make their contributions. With this number of border guards in the EBGT, Frontex is in the comfortable position of having more officers available for possible deployment on operational activities. Some officers are enlisted by the Member States in multiple profiles. This means that one officer may be specialised in different areas and thus capable of performing tasks attributed to different profiles.

All guest officers deployed on joint operations, pilot projects and rapid interventions must belong to the pool. Guest officers have to be properly prepared prior to their deployment on joint operations and pilot projects. To this end, Frontex has developed a complementary operational briefing concept which offers specific EBGT profiles training with regard to job-competences (i.e. training for debriefers, screeners, etc), providing guest officers with the necessary knowledge to perform their duties during joint operational activities.

2.2. Contributions of the Member States to the EBGT

All EU Member States applying the Schengen acquis contribute to the EBGT. In addition, two Schengen Associated Countries (i.e. Norway and Switzerland) also contribute to the pool. As Ireland and the United Kingdom do not apply the Schengen acquis, their participation in joint operations, pilot projects and rapid interventions is based on the case-by-case decisions of Frontex's management board. However, the United Kingdom has expressed its willingness to contribute to the pool in the context of Article 12 of the Frontex Regulation. For the time being, officers from the UK who are deployed on operational activities have the status of special advisors.

The Member States make voluntary contributions to the EBGT, which results in large variations in the numbers contributed by each Member State, as is shown in the table below.

Table 1. Contributions to the EBGT, by Member State³

MS	AT	BE	BG	CH	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI	FR	HU
No	160	33	94	68	11	23	129	29	66	48	231	70	78	15

MS	HU	IT	LT	LU	LV	MT	NL	NO	PL	PT	RO	SE	SI	SK
No	35	82	130	17	139	32	191	50	136	228	223	65	72	29

³ The information provided in this table is an excerpt made on 31 January 2014 using data from the OPERA system.

2.3. Contribution of Frontex to the EBGT

Pursuant to Article 3b (3) of the Frontex Regulation, Frontex contributes seconded guest officers (SGOs) to the EBGT. These are guest officers seconded to Frontex by the Member States on a temporary basis, i.e. for six months. Subsequently, Frontex deploys the SGOs to different joint operations in accordance with operational needs and the recommendations of the risk analyses, thus filling operational gaps and taking advantage of the higher level of availability of experts (during the six-month secondments it is up to Frontex to decide where and for how long the experts will be deployed), as well as reducing the administrative burden related to the deployment.

At the beginning of 2013, Frontex addressed for the first time a “Call for secondment” to the Member States. As a result, 14 Member States made proposals and Frontex selected the best candidates by using an internal selection procedure and taking into consideration operational needs. The total number of selected SGOs for 2013 was 50 officers, who were drawn from 11 Member States, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of SGOs within the EBGT as of the end of 2013

MS	BG	DE	DK	EL	ES	IT	LV	NL	PL	RO	SI
No	1	1	2	2	6	11	2	1	4	17	3

As a result of the annual bilateral negotiations held in 2013, Frontex identified certain gaps in the operational needs with regard to the guest officers who are to be deployed in 2014. Those gaps will be filled by 57 SGOs. A new call for secondment was made at the end of 2013 and the selection procedure for that call should be finalised by the end of April 2014.

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Technical Equipment Pool

3.1. Technical Equipment Pool

The Technical Equipment Pool (TEP) was established on the basis of the provisions of Article 7 (2) of the Frontex Regulation, i.e. “The Agency shall set up and keep centralised records of equipment in a technical equipment pool composed of equipment owned either by the Member States or by the Agency and equipment co-owned by Member States and the Agency for external border control purposes”.

At present, the technical equipment pool consists only of equipment owned by Member States, including the following types of assets:

- ♦ Maritime equipment:
 - offshore patrol vessels (OPVs), i.e. vessels with autonomy of more than 1,500 nm;
 - coastal patrol vessels (CPVs), i.e. vessels with autonomy between 600 and 1,500 nm;
 - coastal patrol boats (CPBs), i.e. boats with autonomy less than 600 nm;
 - fast interception boats.
- ♦ Equipment for aerial surveillance and patrols:
 - fixed-wing aircraft (FWA);
 - helicopters.
- ♦ Mobile equipment for land border surveillance:
 - thermo-vision vehicles (TVV), i.e. vehicles equipped with thermo-vision cameras for land border surveillance;
 - border surveillance vehicles, i.e. vehicles equipped with radar or other sensors for border and coastal surveillance.
- ♦ Equipment for border control:
 - mobile laboratories, i.e. vehicles equipped with communications systems, computers, printers or other equipment for document checks;
 - heart-beat detectors;
 - carbon dioxide (CO₂) detectors.
- ♦ Hand-held surveillance equipment:
 - night vision goggles (NVG);
 - hand-held thermal cameras.
- ♦ Dogs⁴.

⁴ Dog teams are considered to be assets from the TEP.

The current amount of equipment in the TEP broken down by type of equipment and contributing Member State is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Contributions to the Technical Equipment Pool, by Member State⁵

Asset	OPV	CPV	CPB	FWA	Helicopters	TVV and mobile units	Patrol cars	Equipment for border checks	Hand-held equipment	Dogs
AT					1	6		2	2	2
BE			1		1					2
BG		1				8				
CH							1		6	1
CY		1								
CZ						1				
DE	1				4	3	3	1	10	
DK							10	2		
EE				1		1				
EL	10	4	55	5	1					
ES	1	5	1	2	2				14	4
FI	1		2	1	1					8
FR	2	3	10	4	4					
HR							3			
HU						5	1		19	
IT	6	32	41	8	25	1				
IS	1			2						
LT			1		3	2	2	2	1	
LU				8		1		11		
LV		1	2		1	2		25	7	
MT			3	3						
NL			1	1		2		129		1
NO										4
PL	1			2	2	2		40		
PT	2	11	79	3	1		50	2	3	
RO	1	5			1	2	15	10		8
SE				2						
SI					4	3	6		4	2
SK				1			2			
TOTAL	26	63	196	43	53	39	93	224	67	32

⁴ The information provided in the table is an excerpt made on 31 January 2014 using data from the OPERA system.

3.2. Overall Minimum Number of Technical Equipment

The Frontex Regulation stipulates that the TEP must contain the Overall Minimum Number of Technical Equipment (OMNTE). The OMNTE is the amount of equipment which enables Frontex to carry out joint operations, pilot projects, rapid interventions and joint return operations in accordance with operational needs identified. The OMNTE is established on an annual basis and is defined as “the minimum number of required technical equipment per type and per month”. This category of equipment has a specific status which requires the Member States to make available the equipment agreed to be part of the OMNTE and also requires Frontex to deploy that equipment. Therefore, the establishment of the OMNTE requires a relevant decision from Frontex’ Management Board.

The Management Board has the mandate to decide on an annual basis “the rules relating to the technical equipment, including the overall minimum number per type of technical equipment, the conditions for deployment and reimbursement of costs”. For budgetary purposes the management board should take such a decision by 31 March each year (Article 7 (5) of Frontex Regulation).

In March 2013, Frontex’ Management Board adopted a decision⁶ specifying the number and types of assets for the OMNTE in 2014, laying down the rules for deployment thereof, and setting the requirements for the technical equipment to be deployed for operational activities co-ordinated by Frontex.

The number of assets constituting the OMNTE in 2014 is shown in Table 4.

⁶ Management Board decision No 5 of 26 March 2013 adopting the rules related to the technical equipment to be deployed for Frontex operational activities in 2014.

Table 4. The OMNTE in 2014 as adopted by Frontex Management Board in March 2013

2014	OPV	CPV	CPB	FWA	Helicopters	TVV	Patrol cars	Mobile laboratories	Heart Beat Detectors	Dogs
Jan	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	2
Feb	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	2
Mar	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	1	2
Apr	0	0	0	0	0	8	5	0	1	3
May	1	3	7	3	1	10	7	1	0	7
Jun	2	3	7	3	1	10	7	1	0	7
Jul	3	7	7	5	2	10	7	1	0	6
Aug	4	7	7	5	1	10	7	0	1	27
Sep	3	7	4	4	2	6	7	0	1	28
Oct	1	2	4	2	1	6	7	1	1	5
Nov	0	0	0	0	1	5	6	0	1	4
Dec	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	2
TOTAL	14	29	36	22	9	78	66	4	6	95

3.3. Selection of technical assets for the OMNTE in 2014

In order to select the most appropriate equipment, in July 2013 Frontex made a “Call for contributions”, inviting the Member States to offer technical assets to satisfy the needs of the OMNTE in 2014, as set forth by management board decision No 5/2013. Along with the “Call for contributions” Frontex provided the Member States with a set of technical and operational requirements for each type of equipment. These requirements were established on the basis of an assessment of the operational needs for each specific operational area. During the selection procedure, along with the technical parameters of the equipment Frontex took into account the operational efficiency of the offered assets, i.e. the duration of the deployment and budget estimations, as well as the principle of European solidarity. As a result, Frontex managed to satisfy 78% of OMNTE needs for 2014. The gaps left were discussed between Frontex and the Member States during the annual bilateral talks in 2013: the additional needs will be covered in part by additional contributions from the Member States and in part by the purchase of surveillance services by Frontex.

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The way forward

4.1. The EBGT

In 2014, Frontex will carry out an assessment of the number of officers in the EBGT and current border guard profiles in order to potentially revise Frontex management board decision No 11/2012 of 23 May 2012 regarding the definition of the profiles and specification of the number of the border guards in the EBGT.

Furthermore, as the EBGT has been growing to its current size of approximately 2,500 border guards, Frontex will start supporting Member States more closely in the selection process, in order to reach a more tailored number of officers in the pool who are going to be deployed in each calendar year. In that regard, Frontex will promote the use of the “Guidelines for national selection procedure” developed in 2011, which provide the best practices at the European level and stipulate a more common approach in this regard. In addition, Frontex, in co-operation with the Member States, will work on the development of a targeted feedback mechanism regarding the performance of deployed guest officers, which will help the Agency to further improve the quality of the border guards who are deployed in the field. This mechanism is meant to be applied as a pilot and it will only be developed and implemented by Frontex and those Member States that agree to voluntary participation therein.

4.2. Technical Equipment Pool

Based on the Agency's previous experience, the availability of assets is the most important factor with a direct impact on the deployment of equipment for Frontex joint operations. The difference between the number of available assets within the pool and the overall number of those registered by the Member States indicates clearly that the TEP needs to be further developed. Frontex will gradually develop the pool by establishing new categories of equipment and enhancing its asset management capacity.

The first step in this regard was taken in 2013, with the procurement of aerial surveillance services via an open tender procedure. The service provider will deploy an aerial surveillance system consisting of: (i) aerial means, (ii) a mobile ground station, (iii) a communications system and (iv) personal equipment. The system will be made available for deployment in 2014 for operational activities co-ordinated by Frontex within a timeframe of four months upon a request from Frontex. The duration of the deployment will be 40 days, with an operational capacity of 100 flight hours.

In 2014, Frontex will analyse the operational effectiveness of the technical equipment and the cost-efficiency of the purchased surveillance services as compared to similar activities provided by Member States and will use that knowledge to plan the acquisition of its own equipment. Also in 2014, Frontex will explore the regulatory implications related to possible co-ownership of equipment with Member States.

In addition to the above-mentioned activities, in 2013 Frontex took part, at the invitation of the European Commission, in a dialogue on the next cycle of funding of equipment in the Member States under the Internal Security Fund – Borders (ISF-B) under the MFF 2014-2020.



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