



Consolidated annual activity report 2018

Frontex

European Border and Coast Guard Agency
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Contents

Glossary	2
Introduction	7
1. Developments	9
1.1. The situation at the external borders in 2018	9
1.2. Developments at policy level	10
1.3. Mandate of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency	15
2. Strategic action areas	16
2.1. European integrated border management	16
2.2. European cooperation on coast guard functions	20
2.3. Operational response	28
2.4. Return activities	31
2.5. Analysis	34
2.6. Management of pooled resources	36
2.7. Training	40
2.8. Research and innovation	45
2.9. Situation monitoring	48
2.10. International and European cooperation	50
2.11. Media and public relations	53
2.12. Fundamental rights	55
2.13. Data protection	58
2.14. Governance	60
3. Frontex key results and progress towards the achievement of objectives	64
3.1. Key performance indicators (KPI)	64
3.2. Key conclusions on management and internal control	69
4. Budgetary and financial management	71
4.1. Implementation of appropriations	72
4.2. Information on transfers and amending budgets	74
4.3. Implementation of appropriations from 2017 carried forward to 2018	75
4.4. Procurement procedures	76
4.5. Late payments — interest paid to suppliers	76
4.5(Bis). Negotiated procedures — Point 11 — Annex I to the Financial Regulation	77
4.6. Ad hoc grants and delegation agreements	77
4.7. Human resources management	78
4.8. Assessment by management	82
5. Management and internal control	84
5.1. Control results	85
5.2. Audit observations and recommendations	91
5.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system	95
5.4. Conclusions as regards assurance	96
6. Declaration of assurance	97

Glossary

ABAC	accrual based accounting (large financial management system)
ABC	automated border control
ABN	annual bilateral negotiations
ABRAN	air borders risk-analysis network
AFIC	Africa-Frontex intelligence community
AIS	automatic identification system
AO	authorising officer
AST	assistant (staff grade)
BCP	border crossing point
BFCS	budget, finance and corporate services
BMVI	Border Management and Visa Instrument
BN	annual bilateral negotiations
BSRBCC	Baltic Sea region Border control Cooperation
Carpol	network of EU law enforcement contact points for tackling cross-border vehicle crime
CCC	common core curriculum
CCE	customs control equipment
CCWP	customs cooperation working party
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CED	combating document
Celbet	customs eastern and south-eastern land border expert
CEPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
CGGS	Coast Guard Global Summit
CIC	crime information cell
CIRAM	common integrated risk analysis model
CRO	collecting return operation
CRRS	central repository for reporting and statistics
CSDP	common security and defence policy
CVAM	common vulnerability-assessment methodology
DG	directorate-general
DIS	document inspection systems
DPO	data protection officer
EaP	Eastern Partnership countries
EASA	European Aviation Safety Agency

EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EBCG	European Border and Coast Guard
EBCGT	European border and coast guard team
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ECGFF	European coast guard functions forum
ECGFO	European coast guard functions officer
ECN	Eurosur communication network
ECRet	European centre for returns
ECRIS-TCN	European criminal records information system for third-country nationals
ED	executive director
EDA	European Defence Agency
EDPS	European Data Protection Supervisor
EES	entry-exit system
EFCA	European Fisheries Control Agency
EFS	Eurosur/Copernicus Fusion Services
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ELC	expenditure life cycle
EMMA	European multipurpose maritime activities
IMPACT	European multidisciplinary platform against criminal threats
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
EMT	European monitoring team
EPSO	European Personnel Selection Office
ERRIN	European return and reintegration network
ESTA	electronic system for travel authorisation (United States)
ETIAS	European travel information and authorisation system
EUBAM	EU border assistance mission
eu-LISA	European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
Eunavfor Med	European Union Naval Force Mediterranean (also 'Operation Sophia')
Eurint	European return initiative
EURLO	European Union return liaison officers
Europol	European Union Agency for Law-Enforcement Cooperation
Eurosur	European surveillance system
EURTF	EU regional task force
FAR	Frontex application for return
FASS	Frontex aerial surveillance services
FER	Frontex evaluation report

Fields	Frontex Interpol electronic library document system
FISRoP	Frontex internal structure and rules of procedure
FLO	Frontex liaison officer
FOAR	Flexible operational activities in return
FOSS	Frontex one-stop shop
FRE	forced-return escort
FRM	forced-return monitors
FRO	fundamental rights officer
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
FSC	Frontex situation centre
FSO	Frontex support officer
FWA	fixed-wing aircraft/aeroplanes
FWC	framework contract
GACS	general administration of coastal security
GdF	Guardia di Finanza
GIS	geographical information system
GNI	gross national income
HCG	Hellenic coast guard (Greece)
HoU	head of unit
HR	human resources
IALN	Inter-agency legal network
IAP	interoperability assessment programme
IAS	Internal Audit Service
IBM	integrated border management
IBMF	Integrated Border Management Fund
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organisation
ICC	international coordination centre
ICF	internal control framework
ICI	Internal control indicator
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICMM	internal control management meetings
ICMPD	International centre for migration policy development
ICS	internal control system
ICT	information and communications technology
ILO	immigration liaison officers
IMS	integrated maritime services

IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IRMA	integrated return management application
ISF	Internal Security Fund
IT	information technology
ITEPA	International training centre at the Egyptian police academy
JAD	joint-action day
JHA	justice and home affairs
JO	joint operation
JORA	joint operation reporting application
JRO	joint return operation
LCC	local coordination centre
LEG	legal services sector
Legnet	legal expert network
LPU	legal and procurement unit
MALE	medium-altitude long-endurance
MAS	multipurpose aerial surveillance
MCGFF	Mediterranean coast guard functions forum
MFF	multiannual financial framework
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MPR	media and public relations
MRCC	maritime rescue coordination centres
MS	Member State(s)
NACGF	North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum
NCC	national coordination centre
NFPoC	national focal point of contact
NIST	National Institute for Standards and Technology
ORD	operational response division
OSINT	open source intelligence
PeDRA	processing personal data for risk analysis
PPE	personal protective equipment
PROC	procurement sector (LPU, Frontex)
PRU	pooled resources unit
QA	quality assurance
RAU	risk analysis unit
Recamas	return case management system

REX	rapid intervention exercise
RIU	research and innovation unit (Frontex)
RPAS	remotely piloted aircraft system
RRP	rapid reaction pool
SA	specific action
SAC	Schengen associated country/ies
SAR	search and rescue
SAS	statistical analysis software
Seesac	South-eastern and eastern Europe clearinghouse for the control of small arms and light Weapons
SIENA	Secure Information Exchange Network Application
SIS	Schengen Information System
SLA	Service level agreement
SOP	standard operating procedure
SQF	specific qualification framework
STM	seconded team members
TC	third (non-EU) country
TCN	third-country national
TE	technical equipment
TEP	technical equipment pool
THB	trafficking in human beings
TRU	training unit
TWA	tripartite working arrangement (Frontex, EMSA and EFCA)
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VA	vulnerability assessment
VAU	vulnerability assessment unit
VDS	vessel detection system
VIS	visa information system
VTOL	vertical take-off and landing
WCO	World Customs Organisation

Introduction

Article 68(3)(d) of the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) Regulation ⁽¹⁾ stipulates that each year the executive director (ED) shall **prepare the consolidated annual activity report** on the activities of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and submit it to the Management Board. Article 62(2)(i) of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation states that the **Management Board shall adopt** an annual activity report of Frontex for the previous year and forward it, by 1 July at the latest, to the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors.

To guide the readers and recipients of the information the report has been divided into three main parts, the first two of which form the consolidated annual activity report 2018.

I. The **first part** (1. Developments, and 2. Strategic action areas) of the consolidated annual activity report contains comprehensive and easily understandable information regarding Frontex's work. It outlines:

- the situation at the external borders in the course of 2018,
- developments at policy and agency level,
- the new and enhanced mandate of Frontex; and
- the main activities in each of the strategic action area during 2018.

It also reports on:

- cooperation with third countries,
- the way in which fundamental rights underpin Frontex's coordinated activities,
- public access to documents and the management of sensitive operational information.

As stated in Article 26 and Article 28(8) of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation, the main activities in each of the strategic action areas also provide a comparative analysis of the results of evaluations of core operational activities with a view to enhancing the quality, consistency and effectiveness of future activities.

As stated in Article 47 of the Frontex Financial Regulation ⁽²⁾, the authorising officer shall **report** to the Management Board on the performance of duties in the form of an **annual activity report** and **submit it for assessment**. No later than 1 July each year the report, together with its assessment, shall be sent by the Management Board to the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors.

II. The **second part** (3. Key results and progress towards the achievement of general and specific objectives, 4. Budgetary and financial management, and 5. Management and internal control) represents a major instrument for accountability management and constitutes the basis on which the executive director as the authorising officer takes his responsibility for:

- the management of human and financial resources with reference to the general and specific objectives set out in the work programme;
- the efficiency and effectiveness of the internal control systems, including an overall assessment of the costs and benefits of control activities;
- the accounts and the report on budgetary and financial management;

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 of 14 September 2016 on the European Border and Coast Guard (OJ L 251, 16.9.2016, p. 1).

⁽²⁾ Management board (MB) Decision No 01/2014 of 8 January 2014.

- the indication of the results of the operations with reference to the objectives set and the associated risks.

III. **The third part** contains additional detailed information on the previous parts of the report.

Mission statement

The European border and coast guard Regulation entered into force on 6 October 2016. The extended and enhanced mandate drove the need to revise the mission, vision and values applied by Frontex. The process of reevaluating the mission statement took until the end of 2017. When adopting the *Programming document 2018-2020* the Management Board also adopted the revised mission, vision and values of the Agency.

Mission

Together with the Member States, we ensure safe and well-functioning external borders providing security.

Vision

The European area of freedom, security and justice.

Values

- **We are professional.**

We have the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to fulfil our mission efficiently with high ethical standards and we continuously strive for excellence to improve our performance.

- **We are respectful.**

We recognise people, institutions and their roles and demonstrate respect by treating these as valuable and important.

- **We seek cooperation.**

Together with Member State relevant national authorities and with the participation of other stakeholders we manage the EU external borders together and seek cooperation with non-EU ('third') countries.

Together, we cooperate and collaborate across the organisation as well as with external stakeholders in order to accomplish common goals and objectives.

- **We are accountable.**

We are trusted with a shared responsibility to implement European integrated border management.

We are trustworthy in fulfilling our responsibilities in our work, its timeliness and quality.

- **We care.**

As European public agents we serve the interests of the public because we care about people and believe in European values.

1. Developments

1.1. The situation at the external borders in 2018

Member States (MS) reported 150 114 illegal border crossings in 2018, representing a 27 % decrease compared with 2017. The most decisive development for the overall level of migratory pressure in 2018 in fact dates back to July 2017, when the sudden reversal in the number of irregular migrants detected in the central Mediterranean took place. This reversal continues to be the most significant development at the EU's external borders since the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement (March 2016) ⁽³⁾. The decreasing trend in migrant arrivals on the central Mediterranean route, which lasted throughout 2018, was the primary reason for the decrease in the number of illegal border crossings as compared to 2017. On this route, the other third countries of departure — Tunisia, Algeria and Turkey — also had fewer successful departures. Egypt in 2018 did not see any departures of migrants to Europe on the sea route.

With the number of illegal border crossings plummeting on the central Mediterranean route, the spotlight moved onto the western Mediterranean route, where in 2018 mostly Moroccan and sub-Saharan migrants crossed the Strait of Gibraltar or the Alboran Sea in record numbers, making the western Mediterranean route the most frequently used route into Europe in 2018. Morocco was also the country of departure for slightly more than half of the migrants that targeted the Canary Islands on the western African route. Towards the end of the year, an increase in prevention activities by the Moroccan authorities was noticed, a development due essentially to the improved and reinforced cooperation with Moroccan authorities.

On the eastern Mediterranean route, the most significant development of 2018 was arguably the implementation of a relocation and return programme in Turkey for irregular Syrian migrants, which shifted the nationality makeup on the eastern Mediterranean Sea route in the second half of the year. The Western Balkan route in 2018 saw shifts between the Greek-Albanian corridor and the Serbian-centred corridor. Throughout the year, most of the migratory pressure on the route materialised at the Bosnian and Herzegovinian-Croatian border, and also, to a lesser extent, on Serbia's border with Hungary, Croatia and Romania.

In 2018, at the eastern land border, another third country, Russia, by introducing a temporary change in its visa policy created an opportunity to reach the EU's external borders. For the 2018 FIFA World Cup™, Russia allowed visa-free entry to Russia for those travellers in possession of match tickets. This enabled migrants to reach the EU's external borders via Russia, and also via Belarus and Ukraine, with migrants attempting to enter the EU illegally. This contributed to an increase in detections there as compared with 2017, however, detections remained at much lower levels than on other routes.

Corresponding with the changes in the flows of the main migration routes, the migrant population in 2018 changed its nationality makeup. Syrians remained the most common nationality as a result of Turkish relocation and return programme taking effect during the second half of the year. Moroccans were the second most common nationality, before Afghans and Iraqis. Turkish nationals increased in number and were the fifth-most common nationality in 2018.

In 2018, Member States reported an increase in the detection of clandestine entries. Nevertheless, the number of detected attempts of clandestine entry continued to be arguably below the level to be expected in times of tightened border surveillance at the land and sea borders.

Secondary movements continued on a large scale during 2018. Member States without external land and sea borders reported thousands of inland detections of illegal stay. These could, however, be over-

⁽³⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement>

stays after having entered via air borders. Since the European asylum dactyloscopy [fingerprint] database (Eurodac) registered high numbers in both land and sea clandestine crossings in 2018, this can be seen as evidence for an increased scale of secondary movement. In this context, the increase in the inland detection of people smugglers (+ 13 %) is also an indication of the involvement of organised crime networks in smuggling migrants to their countries of destination. Moreover, a significant increase in document fraud detections on secondary movements was recorded in 2018. In fact, the number of document fraud detections on secondary movements inside the EU and the Schengen area in 2018 reached its highest level since 2013.

The year 2018 once again signified a year of heavy workload for border guards in all Member States, who were faced with another increase in entry and exit checks to be performed at border crossing points with a further rise in passenger flows and the 2017 expansion of systematic checks on those passengers enjoying the right of free movement under EU law. This meant at times delays for passengers at certain border crossing points. The second line check was also under pressure in many Member States due both to an increase in refusals of entry along the external borders, and also to the increase in document fraud detections on secondary movements. In particular, at the borders with Ukraine, the increase in issued refusals of entry to Ukrainians was significant. The categories of refusals reported imply that visa liberalisation wrongly suggests to travellers that they no longer need to justify the purpose and conditions of stay and to present sufficient means of subsistence on request. As regards exit checks, illegal-stay detections on exit at air, land and sea borders increased slightly. This also meant an increase in workload in particular for the second line of border checks.

The number of effective returns in 2018 once again fell short of the decisions issued by Member States to return migrants. Around 148 000 migrants who were not granted asylum or subsidiary protection were returned to their countries of origin, this figure represents slightly more than half the total number of return decisions issued. In particular, no measurable progress was made as regards returns to West Africa — while the number of return decisions issued increased by roughly 80 % compared with 2017, effective returns remained unchanged, reflecting deficits in cooperation and administrative capacity in countries of origin.

In 2018, there was an increase in all indicators of irregular migration at air borders. The airports reporting to Frontex show some 16 000 asylum claims ⁽⁴⁾, which represents an increase of 12 % in relation to 2017, of which over 2 800 asylum applications were recorded on intra-EU/Schengen flights. Approximately 3 000 were related to migrants abusing the transit visa waiver and claiming asylum on arrival, mainly at Madrid airport. The unilateral reimposition of specific transit visa regimes on some nationalities by some Member States/Schengen associated countries (SAC) has led to displacement of the abuse to other EU airports, where the transit visa is not required.

1.2. Developments at policy level

2018 was marked by a high level of legislative and policy developments in the justice and home affairs (JHA) domain. As 2019 is the final year of the 5-year mandates of both the European Commission and European Parliament, 2018 represented the final opportunity for the European Commission to propose such legislation within this domain that could be agreed on during this legislative timeline. The most important initiative in relation to Frontex was the proposal for a new European border and coast guard regulation. The new text was tabled on 12 September and followed on from the June 2018 European Council meeting where the EU leaders confirmed the need for more effective control of the external EU borders and agreed that the role of Coast Guard Agency should be further strengthened through increased resources and an enhanced mandate.

⁽⁴⁾ An application for political asylum does not in itself represent an irregular process. However, in order for a migrant to lodge an application for asylum at a MS/SAC airport they may in some instances have had to obtain forged, counterfeit or otherwise improperly obtained documentation from a criminal network, or to have obtained a Schengen visa by making a false declaration as to their intentions, or to have abused the direct airside visa transit waiver on arrival at an MS/SAC airports. Therefore asylum is one of the indicators that help assessing a number of activities concerning the abuse of legal travel or migratory processes for irregular migration at air borders.

The European Commission proposal aims to provide the European Border and Coast Guard Agency with the resources and the mandate to fully respond to the level of ambition needed to effectively protect the EU's external borders and ensure EU solidarity on migration and border management. The central element of the proposal is to establish a new standing corps of 10 000 operational EU staff with executive powers and their own equipment to ensure that the EU has the necessary capabilities in place to intervene wherever and whenever needed along the EU's external borders as well as in non-EU countries. The staff of the standing corps would be able to carry out border control and return tasks in the same way as the border guards and return specialists of the Member States. This increases Frontex mandate in order to enhance its support to the Member States in returning third-country nationals who no longer have the right to remain on EU territory, though the final decision regarding return will nevertheless remain within the competence of Member States.

The new European Border and Coast Guard proposal should also be viewed in conjunction with the proposal for the new multiannual financial framework (MFF) (2021-2027). The new MFF provides a total of EUR 9.44 billion in connection with the planned new EBCG Regulation (mainly to cover the cost of the 10 000-strong standing corps and for Frontex to acquire its own technical equipment for operational deployments). The MFF is the EU instrument which sets the limits for the annual general budgets of the EU. It determines how much (in total and by activity heading) the EU may spend/commit each year. The Commission proposed an overall EU budget of EUR 1.135 trillion in commitments (in 2018 prices) over seven years: 1.11 % of the EU-27 gross national income (GNI). The MFF has seven headings including, 'Security and Defence', 'Migration and Border Management' and 'Neighbourhood and the World'. Additionally, the European Commission has proposed sectoral legislative texts, including the following.

- An Integrated Border Management Fund (IBMF), totalling EUR 9.3 billion, made up of two separate instruments: 'Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI)' and 'Customs Control Equipment (CCE)' to support the implementation of European integrated border management (IBM) and the common visa policy, and contribute to appropriate and equivalent customs controls through the purchase, maintenance and upgrade of customs control equipment.
- An Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF), EUR 10.4 billion, providing Member States with funding for the development of the common European asylum system (CEAS), integration, and countering irregular migration including returns.
- An Internal Security Fund (ISF), EUR 2.5 billion, providing funding in the area of security, combating serious and organised crime, terrorism and other security-related threats.

On 12 September, the European Commission also came forward with a proposed recast ⁽⁵⁾ of Directive 2008/115/EC on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals ('Returns Directive') ⁽⁶⁾. Making returns more effective and increasing the return rate throughout the EU has been a priority for the European Commission, as stated in the *European agenda on migration* (2015) ⁽⁷⁾, the *EU Action plan on return* (2015) ⁽⁸⁾, and in the *Renewed action plan on return* (2017) ⁽⁹⁾. The aim of the proposed recast directive is to clarify and further harmonise the existing rules on returns to maximise their effectiveness and ensure more consistent application across Member States, whilst safeguarding fundamental rights and the principle of non-refoulement ⁽¹⁰⁾. The changes

⁽⁵⁾ <https://europa.eu/!Md37Fr>
<https://europa.eu/!yv87Yy>

⁽⁶⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32008L0115>

⁽⁷⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration_en

⁽⁸⁾ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-towards-a-new-policy-on-migration/file-action-plan-on-return>

⁽⁹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170302_a_more_effective_return_policy_in_the_european_union_-_a_renewed_action_plan_en.pdf

⁽¹⁰⁾ 'Refoulement means the expulsion of persons who have the right to be recognised as refugees. The principle of non-refoulement was first laid out in 1951 in the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CRSR), Article 33(1) of which states that 'No Contracting State shall expel or return ['refouler' in French] a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where [that person's] life or freedom would be threatened on account of [that person's] race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.' Frontex, *VEGA handbook*. http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Training/VEGA_Children_Handbook.pdf

aim to address key challenges in return procedures and reduce the obstacles that Member States encounter when carrying out returns. The text notably aims to:

- accelerate and simplify border procedures;
- have clearer and faster procedures for issuing return decisions;
- streamline appeal procedures;
- introduce clearer rules on detention;
- introduce an obligation for Member States to establish national systems for return management that communicate with a central Frontex-established system.

The European Commission also proposed an amendment to the Council Regulation (EC) 377/2004 on the creation of an immigration liaison officers (ILO) network ⁽¹¹⁾. The proposed new regulation aims to ensure better coordination and use of European assets deployed in third countries (around 500 ILOs are currently deployed in 105 third countries) to enable them to more effectively respond to EU priorities (combating irregular migration and related cross-border criminality (such as document fraud, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings (THB)); facilitating returns; contributing to Integrated Border Management; and supporting the management of legal migration, including international protection and resettlement). This proposal's key innovation is the establishment of a formal governance mechanism ('Steering Board') to assist in coordinating the work of the ILO networks and which may issue ad hoc tasking to networks of ILOs. Significantly for Frontex, the liaison officers deployed abroad by Frontex constitute ILOs in the meaning of this regulation and can be included within the ILO networks. Frontex would also be represented in the proposed ILO steering board.

Another important field of JHA policy development is related to EU large-scale IT systems supporting security and border and migration management. 2018 was marked by important steps forward as the regulations ⁽¹²⁾ establishing the European travel information and authorisation system (ETIAS) were adopted, published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* and entered into force on 9 October 2018. ETIAS is a completely new electronic system which allows entry and keeps track of visitors to the Schengen area from visa-exempt non-EU countries. It resembles the United States electronic system for travel authorisation (ESTA), which serves a similar purpose. The system will carry out preliminary checks on travellers to determine whether their travel and stay in the EU would constitute irregular migration, or a security or public health risk. Travellers would fill in an online application form providing certain information in advance (e.g. name, travel document details, intended travel destination, and other background questions). The regulation envisages the setting up of an ETIAS central unit within and managed by Frontex. Operating on a 24/7 basis, the ETIAS central unit will do the following.

- Ensure that the data stored in the application files and the data recorded are correct and up to date.
- Verify the travel-authorisation applications with regards to a traveller's identity in cases of a hit obtained during the automated process.
- Specify, test, implement, evaluate and revise specific risk indicators of the ETIAS screening rules.
- Carry out regular audits on the management of applications and on the implementation of the ETIAS screening rules, particularly as regards their impact on fundamental rights, privacy rules and data protection.

In line with the EU interoperability strategy ⁽¹³⁾, ETIAS is designed to be interoperable both with existing systems and with systems currently being developed, such as the entry-exit system (EES). To the maximum extent possible and when technically feasible, the ETIAS will reuse the hardware and software components of the EES and its communication infrastructure. Interoperability will also be established with the other information systems to be consulted by ETIAS such as the visa information system (VIS), Europol data, Schengen Information System (SIS), Eurodac and the European criminal records information system for third-country nationals (ECRIS-TCN).

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32004R0377>

⁽¹²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 and Regulation (EU) 2018/1241.

⁽¹³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/library/european-interoperability-strategy-eis_en

In order to achieve full interoperability across the EU large scale IT systems, a number of proposals were under negotiation in 2018, most notably the interoperability regulations (Interoperability between EU information systems (police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration); interoperability between EU information systems: borders and visa). These texts aimed to ensure that end-users, particularly border guards, law-enforcement officers, immigration officials and judicial authorities have fast, seamless, systematic and controlled access to needed information from large-scale IT systems. In order to achieve the objectives, a number of components should be established:

- a European search portal,
- a shared biometric-matching service,
- a common identity repository,
- a multiple-identity detector,
- a central repository for reporting and statistics (CRRS).

Another important development in this domain is the revision of the three Schengen Information System (SIS) regulations which were agreed and entered into force in December 2018. These proposals cover the use of the system (a) for border management, (b) for police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, and (c) for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals. Importantly, these regulations provide access to SIS for (i) risk analysis (ii) ETIAS purposes, and (iii) for Frontex-deployed teams, i.e. the staff involved in return-related tasks and migration management support team members. A technical interface providing this access will now need to be established.

Finally, progress was also made in discussions on the revised Visa Information System but an agreement has yet to be reached on this file. The revision of the Eurodac Regulation is also still under negotiation.

Interoperability and information systems

European travel information and authorisation system (ETIAS)

During 2018, the preparations for the implementation of the ETIAS central unit started. A decision to create an ETIAS and an interoperability task force was made and the first staff members were assigned to the task force. Members of the task force participated in meetings organised by the European Commission which also included representatives of the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and the EU Member States in order to define the implementing and delegated acts envisaged by the regulation and necessary to finalise the specifications for the tendering of the development of the ETIAS.

Access to the entry-exit system (EES)

The project for granting access to EBCG teams was initiated in 2018 by the Agency.

In view of the establishment by 2020 of an Entry-Exit-System (EES) in the Schengen area to register the entry and exit data of third-country nationals in relation to short stays (maximum 90 days within any 180 days), the Frontex training unit participated in meetings with eu-LISA and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) to find a common approach on training development and delivery. The three agencies agreed on a common training-needs assessment exercise (kicked off by means of a joint awareness-raising webinar) and on close cooperation and coordination in training development and delivery.

The Frontex research and innovation unit (RIU) organised the 'Getting it right: harmonised implementation of Entry/Exit System (EES)' workshop in June 2018 (Sofia, Bulgaria), attended by over 60 representatives of the Member States, EU agencies and EU-funded project representatives. The RIU also, in cooperation with eu-LISA, co-organised the conference on the EU borders, 'Getting Smarter through Technology' in October 2018 (Tallinn, Estonia), attended by over 200 participants representing the Member States, EU agencies and the private sector.

Additionally, RIU representatives contributed to various working groups on EES, including the smart-borders committee, the eu-LISA advisory group on EES (and the EES handbook) and, at the request of EU Member States, set up a workshop with industry and the Member States on border-control devices and systems for entry/exit related to registration equipment and systems which could be deployed at border crossing points to comply with the EES regulation. In this area, Frontex continues to facilitate the EES process and conduct tests, developing and proposing common solutions to: help Member States with requirements, help industry with specifications and create a reference list of equipment.

European surveillance system (Eurosur)/European Earth Observation Programme (Copernicus) input

Development of the joint operation reporting application, JORA 2, continued throughout 2018 with five modules being finalised and rolled out to end-users (both internal and external) in the Member States. The business processes currently supported by JORA 2 cover the European centre for returns (ECRet) (readmission reports, flexible operational activities in return (FOAR) identification missions and FOAR implementations) and the risk analysis unit (RAU) (air borders risk analysis network (ABRAN) reporting and Western Balkans information-exchange reports) activities. Progress was also made on other modules not yet rolled out to end-users.

Development of the software platform GeohuB (version 1) began in 2018. Version 1 is to automatically retrieve Earth-observation data (satellite imagery and annotations) from the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and the European Union Satellite Centre (EU SatCen) and to process and catalogue this data for further dissemination in a more efficient way. GeohuB is also able to process full-motion video coming from crewed and not crewed aerial platforms. Further improvement of this platform is planned to be carried out in 2019.











Frontex has been engaged in the development of the renewed EU policy cycle (as stipulated in Council conclusions 8654/17) on setting the EU's priorities for the fight against organised and serious international crime between 2018 and 2021. Consequently Frontex is actively participating in the 4-year multiannual strategic plans (MASPs) under the European Commission's guidance and annual operational action plans (OAPs) launched in autumn 2017.

Frontex participated in the drafting as well as in the first year of the implementation process in relation to seven crime priority areas identified within the framework of the EU policy cycle/EMPACT 2018-2021⁽¹⁴⁾. These seven areas include: document fraud (cross-cutting area), facilitated illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, firearms trafficking, excise fraud, environmental and organised property crime. As part of the Frontex commitment to the respective Operational Action Plans of these crime priority areas, Frontex led 3 joint-action days (JADs) during 2018. Frontex also supported other JADs coordinated by Europol or EU Member States.

The Frontex engagement in the prevention and detection of cross-border crime contributes to the objectives of the EU policy cycle/EMPACT facilitating the fight against organised and serious international crime and thus enhancing multiagency cooperation.

⁽¹⁴⁾ 'EMPACT is an ad hoc management environment to develop activities in order to achieve pre-set goals. It is a structured multidisciplinary cooperation platform of the relevant Member States, EU institutions and agencies, as well as third countries, international organisations and other (public and private) partners to address the prioritised threats of organised and serious international crime.' <https://www.europol.europa.eu/empact>

1.3. Mandate of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency

	Risk analysis and vulnerability assessment	<p>The agency collects data on the situation at and beyond Europe's external borders. The data is used to identify trends in irregular migration and patterns in cross-border crime.</p> <p>NEW The agency conducts annual stress tests to assess the ability of each EU member state to face challenges at their external borders.</p>
	Operations	<p>The agency deploys border and coast guard officers along with vessels, aircraft, helicopters and other equipment to assist countries requiring support at their borders.</p> <p>NEW In emergency situations it can quickly deploy border and coast guard officers from the rapid reaction pool of at least 1 500 officers.</p>
	Returns	<p>The agency assists the member states in the return of migrants who are ineligible to stay in the EU. The decision as to who should be returned remains the exclusive responsibility of the national authorities of the EU member states.</p> <p>NEW A pool of monitors, escorts and return specialists will be created. The agency may also play a role in the organisation of voluntary departures.</p>
	Situation Monitoring	<p>The agency 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 the events at the external borders.</p> <p>NEW To assist in this task, the agency deploys liaison officers to the individual member states.</p>
	Coast Guard Functions	<p>NEW 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.</p>
	Cooperation with non-EU countries and international organisations	<p>The agency develops cooperation and signs working arrangements with non-EU countries and international organisations to exchange information about trends in migration and cross-border crime and provides assistance in capacity building.</p> <p>NEW The agency can carry out operations on the territory of non-EU countries neighbouring at least one participating member state, if it requires assistance due to high migratory pressure.</p>
	Combatting cross-border crime	<p>The agency focuses on preventing smuggling, human trafficking and terrorism as well as other forms of cross-border crimes.</p> <p>NEW The agency shares intelligence gathered at the borders on persons suspected of involvement in criminal activities with national authorities and European agencies.</p>
	Research and Innovation	<p>The European Border and Coast Guard Agency facilitates cooperation between border control authorities, research and industry.</p> <p>NEW The agency assists the member states and the European Commission in identifying key border security technologies and draws up and implements the EU framework programmes for research and innovation activities in the border security area.</p>
	Training	<p>The agency develops harmonised curricula and training standards for border guards in all EU countries. It conducts various courses to share knowledge and best practices, including capacity building programmes in non-EU countries.</p> <p>NEW The agency delivers training on integrated border management and the coast guard functions to border and coast guards across the EU. It also trains experts who will carry out vulnerability assessments.</p>
	Respect for fundamental rights	<p>Respect for fundamental rights is at the heart of all activities undertaken by the agency.</p> <p>NEW Complaint mechanism – Any person who has been directly affected by the actions of staff involved in an activity of the agency can submit a written complaint regarding possible violations of his/her fundamental rights.</p>

2. Strategic action areas

2.1. European integrated border management

Summary

On the basis of shared responsibilities within the EBCG, Frontex continued to support and coordinate the implementation of the European integrated border management (IBM) through various operational activities during the course of 2018. By far the largest operational activities were the 12 joint operations at the external land, air and sea borders while the main operational focus for Frontex in 2018 was on the central, eastern and western Mediterranean areas which experienced the most significant migratory pressure.

In 2018, Frontex significantly enhanced the border-control activities of the EU Member States and Schengen associated countries by providing technical and operational support totalling over 465 236 working days and 52 254 asset days.

The number of working days committed to operational activities decreased by almost 22 % compared to 2017 (from 337 943 in 2017 to 263 833 days in 2018), supported by coordinating staff from the host countries who contributed an additional 55 787 working days to the activities (an increase of 14 % compared to 2017). To add to this, the number of heavy-equipment crew members deployed increased by more than 21 % (3 713 in 2017 and 4 497 in 2018) performing 12 % fewer working days in the operational areas compared to 2017 (165 136 in 2017 and 145 616 in 2018).

In 2018, Member States (MS)/Schengen associated countries (SAC) contributed 10 960 asset days of heavy technical equipment. The number of surveillance-purpose patrolling hours undertaken by aerial and maritime means amounted to 69 130, an increase of almost 6 % compared to 2017 (65 424). The land means technical equipment (patrol cars, thermo-vision vans and light equipment such as surveillance cameras, detectors and cameras) contributed 41 294 asset days. In addition, Frontex deployed a great number of its own technical resources for border control to joint operations (JOs) including different document-inspection devices (hand-held magnifiers, portable hand-held/on-body document-inspection systems, portable desktop or mobile document-inspection systems), CO₂ probes, heartbeat detectors and different equipment for border surveillance (night vision equipment and binoculars).

The budget dedicated to the activities of the operational response division in 2018 was EUR 174 761 622 (including EUR 49 404 080 for the activities of ECRet) this represents almost 55 % of the overall Frontex budget for 2018 (EUR 320 198 000) and is almost 38 % higher compared to the budget for operations in 2017. Frontex also developed a number of new tools for the management of resources and for more precise and extensive reporting of deployment information.

Thus, 2018 was a year of significant change, challenges and readjustment in the implementation of activities. At the same time Frontex continued to assist MS/SAC in developing their own border-control capacity and effectiveness through the exchange of good practices, expanding its network of contacts (both in the MS/SAC and third countries), as well as learning by example.

Frontex 2018 JOs detected 1 187 facilitators and human smugglers and a wide variety of other types of cross-border crimes, illegal goods and substances such as: 88 656 litres of alcohol, 528 pieces of ammunition, 117 kilogram (kg) of cocaine, more than 154 tonnes (t) of hashish and marijuana, nearly 1 t of heroin (937 kg) and more than 3 130 t of other drugs. Furthermore, the JOs detected 397 stolen cars and 561 cases of stolen car parts. Enhancing operational effectiveness, Frontex implemented three EMPACT operations (JADs) as a part of JOs.

Within the joint operations, Frontex ensured the smooth running of the EU regional task force (EURTF) platform for European migration management teams as well as supporting Member States in the management of the flows of disembarked migrants (including proper referral mechanisms), by enabling the reliable identification and registration of persons as well as the identification of persons in need for international protection. Moreover, Frontex referred potential security-threats (particularly those concerning suspected terrorists) or other criminal activities to law-enforcement authorities and collected personal data to share for the purpose of criminal investigation. Ensuring full compliance with fundamental rights has been an integral part of the activities.

Frontex maritime surveillance operations have significantly increased the search and rescue (SAR) capacities of Member States. The maritime-operations vessels have helped rescue more than 37 000 migrants during their patrolling activities. Cooperating collectively with all relevant MS authorities in the planning and implementation of operations, Frontex provides a real platform for inter-agency cooperation; among the national authorities, with Frontex as well as with other EU agencies. The JO coast-guard and law-enforcement/cross-border-crime operational activities brought additional European and national authorities and organisations together to cooperate under the same operational concept. Operational reporting during the activities provided significant data for risk analysis and for the management of the Eurosur situational picture.

Joint operations also provided a practical framework for implementing Frontex working arrangements with third-country partners. The deployment of third-country JO observers enabled Frontex to share best European practices and skills to third-country officers (involving more than 32 border crossing points and border-control units) thus improving the practical cooperation between the competent authorities controlling irregular migration flows and tackling other cross-border crime. In total 42 third-country officers were deployed to MS within different operations, enabling them to familiarise themselves with European operational methods. Focal points and police customs cooperation centres made intense use of the EURTF platform to exchange information, which ultimately contributed to the Member States and EU agencies fight against cross-border crime and terrorism.

Highlights: Joint operations 2018

Supporting Western Balkans air borders (JO coordination points air 2018)

In August 2017 Serbia abolished visas for Iranians. Due to an increase in the number of Iranian nationals identified as being in possession of forged/counterfeit documents arriving at EU airports and land BCPs via Serbia, Frontex enhanced its presence at Belgrade airport and provided support and expertise to the Serbian authorities with additional deployments of border-guard experts as observers. In total 103 incidents were reported and several unlawful departures towards EU destinations were prevented by the Serbian authorities. In October 2018 the Serbian government cancelled visa-free entry for Iranian passport holders.

UEFA Championship League Final (JO coordination points air 2018)

In April 2018 Frontex received a formal request from the Ukrainian authorities to support the local border guards in border checks on the occasion of the UEFA Championship League Final in May 2018 at the Kiev Olimpiyskiy Stadium. Two Spanish team members were deployed at Kiev — Boryspil Airport as EU advisers.

For the first time, in 2018, seconded team members were deployed in various third country (TC) airports. The deployment of Frontex experts as second-line officers and advanced-level document experts resulted in increased mutual understanding of different aspects of border control enhanced operational cooperation.

Drug smuggling — sailing vessel El Canonero (JO Themis 2018)

On 29 November 2018, following a drugs investigation led by Europol, French authorities and the Italian ministry of the economy law-enforcement agency, Guardia di Finanza (GdF), the Rome international coordination centre (ICC) received a request to locate and monitor a sailing vessel suspected of smuggling drugs. On the same day, based on the coordinates provided by Frontex to ICC Rome, the Frontex aerial surveillance services (FASS) fixed-wing aircraft (FWA) 'Tasty' detected the mentioned sailing vessel. The target was intercepted by the GdF maritime assets, three smugglers (2 Spaniards and 1 Columbian) were arrested and more than 6.3 tonnes of hashish worth approximately EUR 50 million were seized.

Drug smuggling — cargo vessel Noka (JO Poseidon 2018)

On 4-5 December 2018, the suspect commercial vessel was spotted by not crewed aerial vehicle (UAV) Heron (deployed within JO Poseidon 2018 (RIU pilot project)) and later monitored (shadowed) by a multipurpose aerial surveillance (MAS) FWA. The Hellenic coast guard (HCG) off-shore patrol vessels deployed in the area intercepted the vessel and escorted it to Crete for a thorough investigation. After a few days of intensive search on the container vessel, the following drugs were discovered: 6.05 t of hashish and 3 127 360 pills of Captagon (also known as 'the drug of the jihadists'), worth approximately EUR 100 million. In addition, 11 crew members were arrested.

The concept of IBM was also complemented by the contribution of Frontex to the EU policy cycle/EMPACT. Aside from engagement in operational actions, Frontex got involved in the Joint Action Days initiatives developed by the Council under the EU policy cycle/EMPACT. Frontex led three Joint Action Days (JADs) and supported several others that were led either by Europol or MS under the Cycle/EMPACT priorities. Three JADs: Danube 3', 'Mobile' and 'Olympus', were organised with the co-leadership of the MS and Europol (in case of JAD 'Mobile' was co-led also with Europol). Moreover, Frontex provided support to the 'Western Balkans' JAD, the large-scale JAD and JADs related to human being trafficking. In search of synergies with other stakeholders, Frontex took advantage of its coordinated land and joint operations (namely JO focal points 2018 land, JO flexible operational activities 2018 land on border checks, JO flexible operational activities 2018 land on border surveillance, JO coordination points 2018 land and JO Pegasus) and embraced several additional elements specific to JADs, entailing partners from police, border-guard and customs authorities to jointly tackle cross-border crime. During the above activities customs-police collaboration was further enhanced via the participation of customs eastern and south-eastern land-border expert team (Celbet) experts and the already-existing cooperation with Europol and Interpol was further increased. Frontex-coordinated JADs established a coordination centre allowing the MS and TCs and Europol to exchange information and fostered operational cooperation by deploying Frontex document-fraud task-force officers.

Frontex progressed regarding law-enforcement services for MS, EU agencies and entities by developing robust modules for operationalising working arrangements and providing fully-fledged services to border-guard, police and customs field cooperation to counteract the variety of cross-border crime and terrorism threats according to the Frontex mandate. Additionally, in 2018 Frontex provided enhanced MS operational-cooperation support with the agencies responsible for investigation and prosecution, making the best use of the Frontex multipurpose operations and other related actions to support their activities.

In 2018 the investigation support activities for cross-border crime (ISA-CBC) pilot project combined the analytical and surveillance tools offered already by Frontex with the equipment provision and financial support to MS when targeting concrete cases of illegal trafficking via EU external borders. This pilot project is a step for Frontex to become a fully-fledged service provider for all MS in terms of tackling cross-border crime in the maritime, land- and air-border domains — in line with the requests from the MS services having competence in cross-border prevention and detection.

Highlights: law-enforcement activities 2018**Cooperation with EU customs services**

Under the EU IBM and the Frontex mandate, Frontex has increased its operational interaction with EU customs services to counteract cross-border crime. Customs operational-cooperation development is key to a successful and modern protection of the borders and at the same time to preventing and detecting as well as investigating cross-border crimes. In 2018 Frontex established itself as a reliable partner for the EU customs services and bodies and increased the strategic and operational collaboration in the frame of or with customs-cooperation working party (CCWP), Celbet, within joint police customs operation (JPCO)/Joint Customs Operations (JCOs)/Joint Investigation Activities (JIAs), Frontex joint operations and other tools. Contributing and supporting initiatives which have the customs-enforcement component included, such as police-customs cooperation centres (PCCCs), EU border assistance mission (EUBAM) to Moldova and Ukraine, South eastern and eastern Europe clearinghouse for the control of small arms and light weapons (SEESAC) and others.

Lastly, Frontex established a new centre of excellence for combating document fraud (CED) with the aim of reinforcing the multipurpose character of Frontex joint operations, enhancing the involvement of Frontex in field activities undertaken against document and related identity fraud.

Highlights: Centre of excellence for combating document fraud (CED) activities 2018

Frontex document alert (FDA)

In the course of 2018 Frontex streamlined the way to collect and disseminate information on document-fraud cases detected in its operational activities. Frontex designed three simple document alert templates for the EBCGT reporting team members (a document fraud alert, a transportation means alert and a method ('modus operandi') alert template). The new Frontex document alert system also simplifies the fraud cases reported for the use of different law-enforcement agencies in the Member States. Frontex established a formal process for the reporting, validation and dissemination of those document alerts by using the technical expertise of specialists and advanced-level document experts pooled in its centre of excellence for Combatting Document Fraud (CED). Contextually, a new service, the **Frontex document alert helpdesk**, is available for all deployed European border and coast guard team (EBCGT) members who can receive support on document fraud cases directly from the **Frontex document fraud task force** available during working hours (09.00-17.00).

In 2018, there was a high level of expectation and development in the field of return. With an increasing number of cases in the MS/SAC, Frontex increased both its capacity as well as the catalogue of supporting activities in order to assist the MS/SAC in effectively implementing returns.

As one of the last parts of the migration management chain, returns had been one of the areas where cooperation between national, European and non-European stakeholders was most crucial. Frontex facilitated this through the focus on supporting ICT developments that provide common frameworks for current and future cooperation, presenting and fine-tuning the model of the return case management system (model-RECAMAS), functioning as a guideline for MS to align national case-management systems. Through cooperation with internal and external stakeholders (such as EU-funded projects and third countries) over 1 500 cases were reviewed to support identification and documentation of returnees, leading to over 900 confirmed identifications and the issuance of over 460 travel documents.

Member State capacities to implement effective returns continued to be supported by Frontex. This was achieved by expanding the pilot project on returns by scheduled flights which allowed Member States to successfully return third-country nationals by making use of the special agreements Frontex concluded with different airlines. In addition, Frontex continued to organise and coordinate return operations by charter flight including collecting return operations requiring close cooperation with third countries.

Frontex continued to enhance its role in promoting standards and developing guidelines for forced-return operations which seek to harmonise procedures during the operations while ensuring full compliance with fundamental rights.

These achievements contribute to the strengthening of the European integrated border management (IBM) concept, with returns as one of its key domains.

Highlights: Return operations 2018

Return Case Management System

Frontex presented its model Return Case Management System (model-Recamas) which serves as a guideline to align the functionalities of national systems.

Regarding the capacity development dimension, in parallel with the development and adoption of the technical and operational IBM strategy, Frontex's training section worked together with MS and SAC authorities to translate the requirements from the EBCG regulation on the European Integrated Border Management into national strategies, an obligation they must meet within six months from the adop-

tion of the technical and operational IBM strategy. To this end, Frontex delivered four courses to MS and SAC that benefited 98 experts. The ultimate goal of this course was to ensure that enough appropriately trained experts are available and capable to support their national authorities in drafting national IBM strategies and action plans in line with EU standards. One awareness session on EU IBM was also delivered to 22 third-country representatives from Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and the Western Balkans.

Two Schengen evaluator training courses were delivered in 2018 to prepare 95 national experts in conducting Schengen evaluation missions, while another two iterations of the Frontex course on customs and border guard cooperation at the EU external land border crossing points were held, a total of 44 officials were trained to enhance cooperation at border crossing points.

Frontex research and innovation unit provided support and technical assistance to the Western Balkans in the context of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) II programme 'Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey', under Phase I, Intervention 2 'Enhancing the capacity and tools in IPA II beneficiary countries to perform the registration of mixed migration flows in a harmonised manner, observing future interoperability with EU/Schengen member states systems and practices, and in full respect of fundamental rights'.

The activities and the results achieved were focused on the development of a roadmap for improving the identification and registration process of mixed migration flows in the beneficiary countries. As a continuation of implementing the regional action plan for the Western Balkan region and the national action plans, key priority areas have been identified: the need to assess and upgrade the IT and communication national infrastructures for the management of mixed migration flows and the need to establish national integrated border management information systems connecting all relevant authorities in the respective countries. The assessment will be provided through the delivery of a feasibility study that was launched in December 2018 and will be concluded in the six beneficiary countries by June 2019 ⁽¹⁵⁾. The results, conclusions and recommendations of the feasibility study will further allow the development of activities envisaged for Phase II of IPA II project.

To contribute to a uniform and high level of control of the EU external borders, Frontex works together with MS/SAC on the development of minimum technical and operational requirements for maritime, terrestrial and aerial technical equipment to be purchased by MS via the ISF (Internal Security Fund). In 2018, the working group established for this purpose focused on maritime assets. The ISF aims to support Member States to achieve a uniform and high level of control of the European Union (EU) external borders. In 2018, the European Commission secured additional EUR 128.7 million for the purchase of technical equipment via the ISF Border and Visa Instrument/Specific Actions (SA). Such an approach is in line with the Frontex operations aiming to contribute to the effective implementation of the main IBM components Integrated Border Management i.e. operational activities at air, land and sea borders, and solidarity and quality control mechanisms.

2.2. European cooperation on coast guard functions

Summary

Inter-agency cooperation has been strengthened following the annual strategic plan 2018 of the tripartite working arrangement (TWA) between EMSA, the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) on coast guard functions, including the successful work conducted within the Frontex chaired technical subcommittee on capacity sharing and legal issues.

As the first chair of the TWA steering committee, EFCA hosted the annual European coast guard event (Isla de La Toja, Pontevedra, Spain, 11-12 April 2018). The aim of the event was to serve as the main fo-

⁽¹⁵⁾ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

rum for discussions on specific subject matter, to receive feedback from the stakeholders and to identify possible activities for future cooperation among the agencies to support national authorities in carrying out coast guard functions.

Frontex actively participated in and contributed with its expertise to several coast guard function forums at European level (e.g. the Baltic Sea region border control cooperation (BSRBCC), European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF), and the Mediterranean coast guard functions forum (MCGFF) and the international (NACGF, Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS)) and in other regional initiatives related to coast guard functions. Frontex also internally coordinated the implementation of the coast guard functions within the agency's activities.

Frontex took part together with EFCA, EMSA and Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden in operation 'Baltic Tracking 2018' (17-30 September 2018). The aim was to establish a common 'Maritime Multi-risk Awareness' in the frame of BSRBCC with the focus on implementation of coast guard functions (CGFs) as border control, fisheries control, pollution control at sea, response to oil spills and SAR. The outcomes of operation 'Baltic Tracking 2018' were as follows.

Technical equipment (TE) available	Total no. of TE (readiness state and on duty)	Daily average TE used	Dedicated TE for search and rescue (SAR) operations	Total no. of dedicated TE for SAR operations	Daily average no. of TE used for SAR
Cars	246	18	Cars	4	0
Vessels	694	50	Vessels	1 538	110
Aircrafts	98	7	Aircrafts	163	12
Other	229	16	Other	6	0
Total units available	1 267	91	Total SAR units available	1 711	122

Activity	Border	Fishing	Pollution	Customs	Other	SAR
No of Inspections	312	125	8	20	83	2
Measures	10	2	3	3	15	
% Measures of inspections	3	2	38	15	18	0

Frontex organised and implemented two SAR workshops within JO Poseidon in Greece (Samos, 24-25 September 2018 and Lesbos, 23-24 October 2018). The aim was to enhance coordination and cooperation among all operational entities involved in SAR operations, as well as to boost capacity in order to save lives at sea and improve the humanitarian response to those rescued at sea. The practical exercise was based on as realistic a scenario as possible, inspired by the current challenges faced by crews in each of the islands. A total of 19 naval/aerial assets and 100 crew members from HCG staff/participating MS took part in both events.

In 2018, as a pilot project, seconded team members (STMs) with the European coast guard functions officer (ECGFO) profile were deployed in JO Poseidon (ICC Piraeus), JO Themis (ICC Rome) and JO Indalo (ICC Madrid). Additionally, one STM was redeployed for a short period on board the EFCA offshore patrol vessel (OPV) during the Baltic Tracking operation.

Highlights: Coast guard activities 2018

Collaboration within the framework of BSRBCC was continued and enhanced with the participation of more Frontex units (Field Deployment Unit, Frontex Situation Centre, Risk Analysis Unit) within the framework of the operation Baltic Tracking 2018. For the second year in a row two SAR workshops took place within the framework of JO Poseidon. For the first time, one ECGFO officer was deployed for three months in each of the main maritime Frontex JO (Indalo, Themis and Poseidon).

Regarding the capacity development dimension, a new course for European Coast Guard Functions Officers (ECGFO) was successfully launched in Pratica di Mare air base, Italy, in April 2018. The aim of the course was to establish common training standards for Member State Border and Coast Guard services and to enhance the learner competence levels, thereby strengthening the opportunities for operational cooperation during Frontex joint maritime operations.

Among the training products related to preparation for deployment in joint maritime operations, to enhancing cooperation skills, to further develop competence related to maritime border surveillance activities, to employing advanced maritime/aeronautical communication skills and to prepare participants for their future deployment in Frontex joint maritime operations, Frontex training unit (TRU) delivered the following courses.

- Border surveillance officers — maritime operations (three iterations in 2018, totalling 61 officers trained)
- European coast guard function officers (four iterations, totalling 46 officers trained)

As part of the border package adopted by the European Parliament and the Council, the mandates of Frontex, European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and European Maritime Safety Agency's (EMSA) were amended by introducing in their regulation a request for them to work together with the aim to provide more efficient and cost-effective support to the MS authorities carrying out coast guard functions. Frontex air crew preparation for joint operations course is a good example of cooperation among the three agencies in the area of capacity building, embedding both the EFCA and EMSA contributions related to fisheries and environmental pollution control operational procedures. In the course of 2018 three such courses were delivered to air crews, totalling 41 crew members trained.

A three-day intensive workshop on mobile boarding for representatives from authorities of 18 Member States performing coast guard functions was held in Lübeck (Germany) under the German chairmanship of the European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF). The workshop was supported by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), with the participation of the European Fisheries and Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). The purpose of the workshop was to:

- discuss common border protection standards based on the Frontex 'Best Practice Operational Guidelines for Automated Border Control (ABC) Systems';
- clarify training needs and requirements for a possible common training concept on boarding based on a pre-delivered questionnaire;
- identify experts for possible training development;
- further reflect on common standards.

Frontex training unit played an active role within Frontex 2018 annual coast guard conference: search and rescue, maritime surveillance by supporting the identification of training needs expressed by the coast guard community. The maritime domain was also at the core of the Frontex annual training conference 2018, where experts from different areas had the opportunity to share experience and best practice.

Frontex training unit contributed to the development of the coast guard sectoral qualifications framework in the context of the EFCGA-Net project, ensuring comparability and compatibility with the specific qualification framework (SQF) for border guarding. TRU represented Frontex in the governing and advisory boards of the project, providing advice on the development of a quality-assurance system for the coast guard SQF and its further implementation — including the development of learning-outcome-based training in areas of common interest.

Under the auspices of the EU Austrian Presidency, the European Defence Agency (EDA) and Frontex hosted a kick-off event (12 October, Warsaw, Poland) for a training programme to enhance the preparation of law-enforcement and naval personnel to operate together for effective border security in the maritime domain and provide efficacious response to threats and challenges at sea.

Frontex research and innovation unit set up the working group for the development of minimum technical requirements for maritime equipment. Composed of experts from Frontex and MS, the working group met four times and conducted two study visits to the island of Lesbos, Greece and to Helsinki, Finland. The development of a technical report on the minimum technical and operational requirements for maritime equipment was finalised in the course of 2018 and its publication (limited) is envisaged for Q2 2019.

A pilot activity assessing the existing maritime analysis tools — maritime 'big data' (e.g. maritime reporting systems data, information on ship ownership/management, historical movements of vessels and relevant open-source information), and the capacity to build on them to produce information of interest for border/coast guard and law-enforcement authorities was carried out, obtaining excellent results.

In the context of inter-agency cooperation and sharing of capacities, Frontex framework contract for aerial surveillance services supported the European Fisheries Control Agency's (EFCA's) activities in the central Mediterranean.

The execution of the coast guard functions was as well supported by Frontex situation centre (FSC) with the provision of Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance (MAS) service in the central Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Aegean Sea, and Atlantic Ocean (area south of Portugal). The sightings performed by MAS aircraft were shared with MS partners, which included national authorities from Italy and Malta, and European partners, which included EUNAVFOR MED and EFCA. The sightings resulted in MS and European partner operational follow-up activities. There were 81 cases reported of search and rescue and law-enforcement activities following detections. These led to the rescue/interception of 4 924 migrants at sea.

In the frame of implementation of the tri-partite working arrangement, related to coast guard functions activities during 2018 the highlights of the achievements are depicted in the tables below.

Objectives 2018	Lead organisation/outcomes
Strategic/Horizontal	
<p>Develop a concept and format for an annual European coast guard event, to be tested for the first time in Vigo (Spain) to involve national authorities performing coast guard functions and other EU and international partners for consultation and feedback on agencies' cooperation activities.</p>	<p>The first TWA agencies annual European coast guard event was held in La Toja (Pontevedra, Spain, 11-12 April 2018). A total of 118 participants attended the event from 22 Member States and Norway and the European institutions. It was the first event after the signature of the Tripartite Working Arrangement, having the communities of the three agencies together for consultation and feedback on the cooperation. The event was structured into an opening session, a technical session and a wrap up and closure session. The technical session covered in succession the five cooperation areas defined by the co-legislator and was the main forum for consultation and feedback from national authorities. Building on the conclusions of the first annual event, the second TWA annual European coast guard event (organised by Frontex in cooperation with EFCA and EMSA) focused on coast guard topics discussed in the format of workshops representing EU agencies and Member States. This event was held in Swinoujscie, (Poland, 15- 17 April 2019).</p>
<p>Set up the three technical subcommittees to support the implementation of the annual strategic plan.</p>	<p>The three technical subcommittees have been set up and chaired by EMSA (Areas 1 and 2), EFCA (Areas 3 and 4) and Frontex (Area 5).</p>
<p>Identification of new areas of mutual interest for inter-agency cooperation including new or amendment of existing memoranda of understanding (MoUs)/service level agreements (SLAs).</p>	<p>There are bilateral Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) signed between the agencies covering different subjects, such as information sharing or procurement procedures. The EMSA-Frontex SLA was amended to include an automatic renewal clause. Frontex and EFCA signed a MoU for an interinstitutional framework contract for aerial surveillance services.</p>
<p>Increase coordination of the TWA agencies' communication activities related to the implementation of the inter-agency cooperation on coast guard functions.</p>	<p>Communication activities were coordinated through an agreed communication plan.</p>

Area 1 Information sharing

To further develop the data-sharing framework, and to investigate possibilities to increase interoperability between information systems.	The three TWA agencies' systems are fully interfaced and exchanging and sharing all maritime information identified as being of interest for the different coast guard activities. The exchange of information has been organised in an information matrix to detail the source and any restriction on access rights to be applied to the final users.
Identification of information gaps and possible new information products as well as development and launching of new services (see also Area 4 Risk analysis).	A request from Frontex to provide additional vessel-positioning data for the eastern part of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean was evaluated and will be contracted and implemented in 2019 by EMSA to share the data among agencies.
Conduct organisational and technical work to integrate positions of assets (active during joint operations) in a maritime picture.	The agencies agree that rather than sharing the positions of assets that could (in some cases) conflict with security considerations, the maritime picture could include the areas of operations per agency (e.g.: the 'stand by' area of the EMSA pollution response vessels, the area of fisheries control campaigns or Frontex joint operations or pre-frontier surveillance).
Continue to validate the vessel detection system (VDS) by organising joint validation campaigns.	Five operational exercises were undertaken involving representatives of the three agencies.

Area 2 Surveillance and communication services

Integration of remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS) data into a maritime picture (integrated maritime services (IMS), Eurosur, fusion services).	The RPAS data streams were integrated with other IMS-system data layers through a specific web interface available for real-time command and control of the RPAS operation and access to the information from the aircraft sensors overlaid on other maritime information.
Roll-out of Frontex Fixed-Wing Aircraft (FWA) services and EMSA RPAS services for multipurpose operations and evaluation of first results, paving the way for a new concept of common surveillance services by joint deployment of airborne (RPAS and FWAs) and seaborne means and appropriate command and control structures (also relevant for Area 5 Capacity sharing).	New procurement in 2018 made it possible to increase the available RPAS portfolio for the three TWA agencies with, in particular, a medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) aircraft, new vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) capabilities and smaller quadcopters, to be operated also from vessels. EMSA provided to Frontex mid-size fixed-wing RPAS services over Portuguese waters with a payload configuration composed of optical and infrared cameras, a maritime radar and automatic identification system (AIS) and distress signal receiver. This aircraft is equipped with satellite communications which allow beyond-radio-line-sight operations.

Area 3 Capacity building

<p>Assist the European Commission in the preparation of a practical handbook of European cooperation on coast guard functions.</p>	<p>In March 2018, the European Commission prepared a concept note establishing the general scope of the handbook, recommending that it be developed in close cooperation with national competent authorities and requesting that the agencies coordinate the drafting process by setting up a cross-sectoral framework. The handbook is to cover the five cooperation areas and focus on cross-sector cooperation.</p> <p>During the April 2018 annual European coast guard event, a dedicated session was held on the handbook and general feedback was provided by the national authorities.</p> <p>The agencies started the drafting process by requesting that their governing boards nominate experts in the five cooperation areas. The nomination process concluded at the end of November 2018 and a kick-off meeting took place in January 2019. A discussion document prepared for the kick-off meeting, proposed specific content and structure for the handbook.</p>
<p>Collect training needs from Member State national authorities and agencies staff. Identification and preparation of joint training modules among agencies.</p>	<p>During 2018 the three TWA agencies consulted their respective communities (EMSA: consultative network on technical assistance (CNTA), Frontex: annual training conference, EFCA: steering group on training and exchange of experience (SGTEE)) and raised awareness on coast guard cooperation and the importance of cross-sectoral training.</p> <p>During 2018 joint cross-sector training modules were developed and implemented, including tailor-made maritime safety and fisheries control modules for Frontex, EMSA and EFCA; air-crew preparation for JOs and pre-deployment briefings for multipurpose operations for Frontex.</p> <p>During the annual coast guard event held in April 2018, two possible training topics were identified by the national authorities. These included search and rescue for maritime rescue coordination Centres (MRCC) operators and maritime surveillance for surveillance operators. The TWA agencies are currently analysing how existing training modules could be combined to cover the three communities.</p> <p>The TWA agencies are currently working on additional channels to collect cross-sector training needs from national authorities.</p>
<p>Identifying opportunities for and preparing joint capacity-building projects for non-EU partner countries, taking into account existing projects.</p>	<p>The three TWA agencies are currently implementing capacity-building sessions or projects independently with non-EU countries. As the first step, the three TWA agencies did an inventory and mapping of these current activities and specifically for 2019 set up a map by quarter and region (enlargement countries, the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, the Middle East and North Africa and West Africa) to specifically analyse where synergies could be developed. The TWA agencies consider that the development of fully joint capacity-building projects could be challenging due to constraints within the scope and terms of reference of existing projects and also due to possible different communities within the non-EU partner countries that are targeted by the current projects. The TWA agencies consider therefore that, as the first step, back-to-back training and capacity-building events could be organised by the three agencies. If the feedback and experience is positive, cooperation could be deepened to greater levels of integration at a later stage.</p>
<p>Assess the need and feasibility of a common training event on coast guard functions.</p>	<p>Currently, the three agencies organise different training events for their own communities. During the annual coast guard event, the TWA agencies requested input from national authorities on possible cross-sectoral training needs. Also, the agencies raised awareness on the European cooperation on coast guard functions. Therefore, the agencies considered it premature at that stage to develop a common training event on coast guard functions.</p>

Area 4 Risk analysis

<p>Developing an understanding of the type of data, methodology and analytical output that each of the three TWA agencies is producing and which of these analytical products have interest for the other agencies and can be shared with them.</p>	<p>The three TWA agencies developed their own risk-analysis frameworks within their mandate to support national authorities performing coast guard functions (e.g. providing risk-assessment tools, risk-assessment analysis and products and/or abnormal-behaviour monitoring). In order to develop a common understanding, the three agencies exchanged information about the types of data, methodologies (steps, levels and objectives of risk assessment) as well as analytical products that are currently used by each agency. They are also in the process of developing a common glossary of risk-analysis terminology.</p>
<p>Determine which type of analytical products can be jointly developed by the three agencies and which can lead to a more comprehensive analysis of operational challenges and emerging risks in the maritime domain.</p>	<p>The different mandates of the three agencies resulted in the development of different analytical products. The TWA agencies discussed possible levels of integration in respective analytical products, considering the advantages and disadvantages of each level and the appropriate spatial and temporal dimensions. The three agencies also looked at the levels of planning between strategic planning vs tactical day-to-day monitoring and the identification of complementarities relevant for each agency (e.g. data-poor situations and low risks with high impacts).</p>
<p>Test mechanisms on periodical exchange of data related to risks and threats in the maritime domain.</p>	<p>The technical subcommittee plans to identify types of information (and/or data) to potentially be exchanged. Once the data, information and products are identified, the exchange mechanism can be considered and proposed.</p>
<p>Develop a first joint risk assessment of emerging risks in the Mediterranean area to contribute to the preparation and development of capacity sharing.</p>	<p>The main objective of this priority is to inform multipurpose operations of the risks and threats in the Mediterranean area. This could be structured by season and geographical area. The development of joint risk-assessment products was considered by the three agencies as challenging due to each agency's different risk-assessment framework. The three agencies therefore started to map the currently available information of risks and threats in the Mediterranean. This information has fundamental differences in characteristics, in some cases it includes observations of real past events, and in other cases it includes statistical likelihood (possible) events. The different nature of the data and information is not a problem as such, but the end-product of overlaying different risk information of different natures should be clear when using the information to assist decisions making. The three agencies are currently analysing the different possibilities of a joint risk assessment, but the central question is on how the Member State needs could be addressed. The development of a joint risk assessment products shall be carried out only if it brings a benefit to the Member States.</p>

Area 5 Capacity sharing

<p>Introduction of the concept of multipurpose missions during planning and implementation of operations in the areas of mutual concern, keeping a geographical balance. Planning to be shared between the three agencies, including periods and type of operational means to be used.</p>	<p>The concept draft of the European multipurpose maritime activities (EMMA) (with the integration in operational modules) is under development. The Inter-agency concept will be further discussed with Member States during the second annual European coast guard event.</p>
<p>Continue involving national authorities to steer the sharing-of-capacities process for multipurpose operations, look for synergies in the agencies' operations and provide an analysis of the results.</p>	<p>A mapping of the existing authorities performing coast guard functions has been conducted. The mapping is based on the authorities participating at the agency level but it also relies on European and international forums related to coast guard functions (BSRBCC, ECGFF, NACGF, MCGFF, and CGGS). The document is being finalisation.</p>
<p>Establishment of cooperation between the agencies operational centres (Frontex, EMSA and EFCA) for exchange of information in real time and provision of responses to threats in the areas of operation (also relevant for Area 1 Information sharing).</p>	<p>The mapping of agencies operational centres for exchange of information in real time has been conducted. The document is under finalisation.</p>
<p>Analyse the legal aspects that may impact the implementation of multipurpose operations in European cooperation on coast guard functions.</p>	<p>Legal issues reflecting the 'flag state' enforcement powers in the international waters have been explored, including the EU flag, also in relation to leasing/chartering of the agencies' equipment.</p>
<p>Sharing information about existing and planned sea and air surveillance possibilities (agencies, commercial procurement, governmental assets) and preparation of a database accessible to the agencies.</p>	<p>Frontex and EFCA signed a memorandum of understanding on new Frontex Aerial Surveillance Services (FASS). Cooperation with EFCA in the use of Frontex's RPAS pilot was established. Frontex and EFCA established operational contacts and exchange information on periodical basis in connection with EFCA OPV operational activity.</p>

2.3. Operational response

Summary

In 2018, Frontex further enhanced the operational response at the external borders of the EU by allocating additional budget to operational activities and focused on the following activities.

Enhanced border security at the land border

- Supporting the national authorities in disclosing cases of smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings and other cross-border crime.
- Active support in detecting irregular migrants at the border crossing points (BCPs), false documents, stolen vehicles as well as preventing cross-border criminal activities at 47 focal points.
- New focal point established in Raigardas (Lithuanian-Belarusian border).
- Establishment of five new coordination points at land borders in third countries, including a new participating third country: Georgia.
- Establishment of a new local coordination centre (LCC) and activation of operational area at Greek-Albanian border: fully-fledged activities including intelligence gathering.

- New monitoring area — Moravita at Romanian-Serbian border.
- Initial steps taken for planning of fully-fledged operational activities, including intelligence gathering in Albania and North Macedonia, following the entry into force of status agreements.
- Increased deployments during FIFA 2018 World Cup and joint action days.
- New deployment profile: 'Cross-border crime detection officer'.

Enhanced operational cooperation at the land border

- During REX 2018 additional resources were deployed, reinforcing/covering the gaps at certain operational areas.
- Enhanced cooperation with Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bulgaria.
- Focal points and coordination points used efficiently as a platform for hosting other operational activities: EMPACT-JADs (Danube III and Mobile) and focal points: police customs cooperation centres information exchange.
- Cooperation with Europol, Interpol, Celbet, the European network of national contact points for the fight against cross-border vehicle crime (Carpol) and several national customs authorities during the JADs.

Establishment and exchange of best practices at the land border

- The staff-exchange programme continues to be a regular part of the operation, including the deployment of third-country officers.
- Workshops and ad hoc training for local staff on detection of falsified documents and stolen vehicles delivered by team members and seconded team members.

Budgetary breakdown of operational response division (ORD) appropriations for 2018

- ORD field deployments: EUR 116 563 943 (technical and human resources deployment cost).
- ORD divisional support: EUR 8 794 599 (costs of participants of Frontex organised meetings, meeting logistics, business trips ('missions') (Frontex staff and STM) and other).
- Return activities: EUR 49 403 080 (return and pre-return activities which are described in more detail in Section 2.4. Return activities).
- Total financial allocation ('budgetary envelope'): EUR 174 761 622.

The activity-based utilisation of ORD appropriations for 2018

- Focal points concept JOU-1: EUR 5 062 215.
- Multipurpose maritime activities concept JOU-2: EUR 97 859 347.
- Flexible operational activities concept JOU-3: EUR 13 341 072.
- Operational cooperation in the area of law-enforcement JOU-4, Additional products and services JOU-5, and Divisional-support-related costs: EUR 9 095 908.
- Return activities RSU-1: EUR 49 403 080.
- The total amount of EUR 174 761 622 was committed at the year end with 30 % carried over to 2019.

Frontex involvement in the EU policy cycle

Following the change of Frontex mandate, the newly established law-enforcement sector proved to be a key provider of the operationalisation of EU policies addressing cross-border crime, especially in the frame of EMPACT/policy cycle, the extension of Frontex support for the prevention and detection of all types of cross-border crime, in harmony with the respective internal authorities, and in close collaboration with EU agencies and bodies, MS border guard, police and customs authorities and international organisations.

In 2018, Frontex led, co-led and participated in 57 various operational actions under the EU policy cycle. Moreover, Frontex joined the drugs EMPACT priority for the first time, focusing on support to EU MS and Europol in the area of counteracting drugs (cocaine, heroin and cannabis) trafficking via EU external

borders. The first actions with Frontex participation are to be launched in 2019. This marks already the eighth EMPACT Priority with Frontex engagement making Frontex a fully recognisable law-enforcement authority in the EU. In autumn 2018 Frontex took an active part in drafting OAPs for all related EMPACT Priorities. Many operational actions are also supported by the Frontex fusion services, analytical and surveillance tools provision, as well as training-related activities.

Regarding the Frontex's co-ordinated JADs the following summaries shall reflect the operational success under the EMPACT/ policy Cycle umbrella.

JAD Danube 3, was implemented from 11–22 June 2018, focusing on facilitation of illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, and excise fraud and document fraud associated with the facilitated illegal immigration and THB OAs. It was co-led by Bulgaria and Lithuania (in this case by customs authorities). For the first time, this action was co-led by customs authorities contributing with enhanced control measures at the EU external borders along with border guard officers.

This JAD was to tackle facilitated irregular migration, as well as to detect cases of excise-goods smuggling and document fraud use. A joint Frontex-Europol risk analysis was prepared before the action and Frontex deployed JAD-specialised European border-guard team members at selected border crossing points at the EU's external land borders, along with customs authorities from several Member States and third countries, Europol and Interpol experts.

The coordination centre set by Frontex in Bulgaria reported: 23 migrant-smugglers arrested; 63 fraudulent documents detected; 510 kg of drugs, 330 000 cigarettes and 12 tonnes of tobacco seized and 31 stolen vehicles recovered. Frontex officers also supported the detection of more than 2 160 irregular migrants and 580 persons staying in the EU illegally.

JAD Mobile (24 September-7 October, 2018) focused on stolen vehicles, illegal immigration and document fraud and was co-led by Europol, Germany, Greece and Poland. The coordination centre was established at Frontex headquarters (HQ) (Warsaw, Poland) for the first time and was attended by 16 MS, 4 third countries, Interpol, Celbet and Europol. Europol supported the action in the field as well with its technical tools enhancing SIENA-related data exchange between the parties involved. This JAD delivered significant operational results and detected: 500 stolen vehicles; 26 stolen motorcycles; 324 stolen vehicle parts; 202 identity-document-fraud cases; 33 vehicle-related document-fraud cases; 7 handguns; 712 kg heroin in one single seizure (largest ever seizure of heroin: Kapitan Andreevo, Bulgaria) and 547 kg of marijuana/hashish/skunk/cannabis.

JAD Olympus (8-21 October, 2018) was co-led with France and focused on document fraud and facilitated illegal immigration with particular reference to the forgery and misuse of EU national identity documents. JAD Olympus was based on the Frontex-coordinated air Joint Operation Pegasus 2018, with the additional deployment of document-fraud experts at selected airports. Ten airports were selected based on a tailored risk analysis.

Key operational outcome: 19 arrests (1 facilitator of illegal immigration identified; 1 trafficker identified); 84 forged/counterfeit documents (visa, passport, identity document); 61 incidents of document fraud detected and 29 refusals of entry; 55 genuine documents held by impostors detected. Data from 50 000 passengers was checked against an Interpol nominal database, resulting in three hits and one arrest.

Highlights: Law enforcement 2018

It 2018 Frontex coordinated three Joint Action Days, namely Danube 3 (June), Mobile (September-October) and Olympus (October). Those three JADs alone resulted in the detection of more than 6 800 illegal migrants, 177 migrant smugglers; the seizure of more than 530 stolen motor vehicles, 12 tonnes of tobacco and 825 000 pieces of cigarettes; 390 document-fraud cases; as well as the seizure of more than 1.9 tonnes of various drugs. These results could only be achieved due to the joint efforts of various Frontex units and the active engagement of the relevant border guard, criminal police and customs services of the Member States.

In 2018, the Agency established the Centre of Excellence for Combatting Document Fraud to enhance field activities on document checks.

Frontex became rapidly the point of reference in activities related to document and identity frauds, enhancing the coordination of implementation of Council and Commission policies on this matter, as well as reinforcing the operational partnership with Europol and Interpol. Cooperation with the latter was particularly successful in the frame of the Frontex-Interpol electronic library document system (Fields) project, dedicated to defining the business and technical requirements of a transactional system integrating in the frontline databases the Frontex quick-check cards.

The newly established Frontex structure has pulled documents and related identity expertise and knowledge into the Frontex expert group on document control (96 experts and forensic officers from 27 Member States) that contributes horizontally to several of Frontex's activities. A joint conference with the participation of the European Commission and the Frontex International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) new technologies working group set the scene for future synergies between the EU and the ICAO on the electronic security of travel documents and future standards.

The Frontex handling of document and identity frauds in field activities was enhanced by deploying its document experts in operations for more than one of every three working days.

Highlights: Centre of excellence for combating document fraud (CED) 2018

During one of those deployments, the large-scale joint-action day implemented under the umbrella of EMPACT, Frontex Centre of Excellence document experts contributed to the achievements of JAD where 68 stolen and lost travel documents were detected in a parcel sent from Brussels to Athens, with the aim of facilitating the move of irregular migrants from Greece towards mainland Europe.

The rapid border exercise (REX) 2018, an annual 'trial' operation aimed at testing and improving the capacity of Frontex and Member States to launch a rapid border intervention, corroborated the synergy and cooperation across the agency. The capacity-building division mobilised human and technical resources from 23 Member States via its Opera system for the rapid reaction pools and conducted a two-week intensive training phase benefiting border-surveillance officers, and screening and debriefing experts from 20 Member States, preparing them for the REX deployment.

As per the training delivered to members of the EBCGT, in the course of 2018, several iterations of nine profile-related courses were delivered to benefit 1 106 members of the teams (For details see Section 2.7. Training).

2.4. Return activities

Summary

Return operations

During the reporting period, Frontex increased the operational assistance to Member States by providing support in the following areas.

Returns by scheduled flights - Frontex pilot project: Member States carried out over 1083 return operations by scheduled flights to 49 destinations in the frame of the pilot project. Over 1477 third country nationals were successfully returned by 17 Member States.

Return operations by charter flights coordinated or organised by Frontex: Member States organised 345 return operations by charter flights, handing over 12 245 returnees and reaching 38 third countries of return. While the number of return operations remained almost unchanged compared with 2017,

the number of third-country nationals returned decreased by 14 % in 2018. Out of all return operations by charter flights organised in 2018, 139 were joint return operations, 67 collecting return operations and 139 national return operations ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Readmission operations from Greece to Turkey under the EU-Turkey statement: 44 were carried out (31 by sea and 13 by air), readmitting 322 third-country nationals. The activity is to continue in 2019.

Deployment of monitors and escorts from the Frontex return pools: the Frontex pool of forced-return monitors totalled a number of 66 monitors contributed by 21 Member States. Two hundred thirty-one out of all 345 return operations by charter flights in 2018 were carried out with a monitor on board: 159 of these operations were monitored by monitors from the Frontex's pool.

The pool of forced-return escorts consists of 446 persons from 24 Member States. During the course of 2018, 355 forced-return escorts were deployed.

Framework contract (FWC) for chartering aircrafts: Frontex chartered 13 aircrafts: 6 for return operations, 2 for connecting flights and 5 for readmission operations.

Frontex application for returns (FAR): three new versions of the FAR module on charter flights were released during the year, implementing 291 new requirements. A new FAR module on scheduled flights has been developed and implemented, becoming an integrated part of FAR accessible for all Member States' to use.

Pre-return activities

ECRet achieved substantial progress in the field of pre-return throughout 2018, with a key focus on supporting MS and facilitating the cooperation with non-EU countries and other key partners in the field of pre-return. Additionally, there were key developments in the area of digitalisation.

In 2018, ECRet supported the **deployment of 18 return specialists** to three different locations, focusing on different areas of support. In terms of language support, a part-time interpreter (in cooperation with JO Poseidon) supported (pre-) return-related activities including identification interviews.

In the field of **identification support** ECRet supported 12 identification missions (both short and long term), involving 1 592 cases, resulting in the identification of 926 migrants, and issuance of 488 travel documents. Additionally there were nine workshops, familiarisation visits and sensitisation missions, building new or enhancing existing cooperation with non-EU countries. One best practice document has been prepared, one is currently being discussed. A pilot project has been set up to use video-conferencing equipment for identification purposes.

Cooperation with the EU-funded projects, European Union return liaison officers (EURLO), the European return initiative (Eurint) and the European return and reintegration Network (ERRIN) has been strengthened, with the phase-in/phase-out activities for Eurint in full swing. Frontex is part of the ERRIN management board (MB), and a pilot has been set up for the deployment of a Frontex funded EURLO to Ghana to test the possibilities for a handover of the project to Frontex. Frontex is part of the ERRIN MB, and is starting the assessment of a possible handover of ERRIN activities to Frontex in the future. Cooperation with EASO and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is further enhanced.

⁽¹⁶⁾ — Joint return operation is a return operation in which two or more Member States jointly return third-country nationals by using the same means of transportation or provide mutual technical support (by sharing human resources and/or technical means).

— National return operation is a return operation carried out by a single Member State.

— Collecting return operation (CRO) is a return operation in which means of transport and/or escorts are provided by the third country of return. CRO can be implemented as a joint or national return operation.

In the field of **ICT developments**, ECRet developed and consolidated the reference model-Recamas (Return Case Management System). The reference model-RECAMAS is a blueprint of an ideal Recamas for the MS, allowing for greater effectiveness on the management of return cases. The digitalisation of the return process via the implementation of the model-RECAMAS is expected to lead to improved statistical reporting at MS and EU level. In order to achieve these goals, the reference model-RECAMAS introduced key functionalities.

The model is to be used as a baseline for a gap analysis of the national Recamas. Frontex is to provide support to the MS under the findings of the gap analyses. In 2018 3 pilot countries were chosen for a gap analysis of their RECAMAS and were offered support according to the findings. Concretely, Greece received expert advice in order to expand its system and Belgium was offered a grant in order to conduct further analysis for improving its system.

Furthermore, ECRet secured the handover of the integrated return management application (IRMA), from the European Commission. Concretely, business continuity was ensured: the service-desk team was established and trained and the hosting and maintenance of the platform was secured. When it comes to improvements, the planning for the restructuring of the platform was completed and approved, as well as the planning for the development of IRMA 2.0.

Regarding the capacity development applied to return activities: in addition to the flights chartered by the MS, Frontex now has the possibility to provide additional capacity through its own framework contract established by the pooled resources unit (PRU). Thirteen flights were organised under this contract in 2018.

In addition to the flights, the PRU continued to provide fully-fledged logistical support in organising the readmission operations under the EU-Turkey statement of 2016. In 2018, 33 readmissions were carried on from Greek islands to Turkey using the ferries, buses and medical services contracted by this unit as well as providing support to Frontex training activities by ensuring the availability of ferries to be used for return-support-officer training. Furthermore, Frontex training unit contributed to the development of the human-resource capacities necessary for implementing the return-related activities, by developing and delivering specialised return-related training programmes.

In 2018, 385 readmission officers deployed on the Greek island of Lesbos were trained during 12 dedicated pre-deployment training sessions. In addition, 75 escort leaders were trained in four escort leader training sessions to participate in JROs as leaders of national escort teams and 55 officers received return-specialist advanced specialised training to prepare them for upcoming deployments as per the relevant EBCG profile. Furthermore, an escort-officer training programme consisting of four modules (one online, two for escort officers and one for leader) continued, the programme is to be delivered in 2019.

Cooperation with the International centre for migration policy development (ICMPD) for delivering training for monitors and training for trainers continued in the context of the EU Forced Return Monitors (FRm II) project. In addition, Frontex provided assistance to the Western Balkan, to the countries who are the beneficiaries of the IPA II 'Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey, component 1' by providing return related training sessions. Within the same project, TRU and ICMPD organised one training for forced return monitors of third countries.

The Eastern Partnership Integrated Border Management Capacity-building project was completed, with the final conference held on 20 November 2018. All of the beneficiary countries as well as project partners were represented at the event.

A new cooperation plan with Moldova for the period of 2018-2020 was concluded on 26 March 2018. Preparations for new cooperation plans for the period of 2019-2021 were initiated with Canada and Ukraine. Discussions with Australia on a possible joint declaration of intent, aimed at fostering cooperation, progressed in 2018.

Highlights: ECRet in 2018

1. Recamas

- Beta version of the model-Recamas presented to the MS and version 1.0 ready for dissemination in 2019.
- Gap analysis conducted in three MS (Belgium, Greece and Austria) and further expert support provided (to Greece and Belgium).
- Development of an application-programming interface with FAR in order to connect it with MS Recamas. Process ongoing with Austria.

2. Returns by scheduled flights

- Throughout 2018 the pilot project on scheduled-flight return exceeded performance goals and contributed substantially to continuous efforts to assist MS in the implementation of returns.
- By the end of 2018, 17 Member States participated in the pilot project returning 1 476 third-country nationals to 49 destinations.

2.5. Analysis

2.5.1. Risk analysis

Summary

2018 was another year of change for the Frontex risk analysis unit (RAU). The delivery of regular strategic and operational analytical outputs was marked by structural changes at Frontex, such as the establishment of a situational awareness and monitoring division, changes within the unit such as the establishment of a third-country analysis sector, the elevation of the vulnerability-assessment component within RAU to the status of a new unit and the preparation for further reorganisation within the situational awareness and monitoring division to take effect in 2019, namely the move of one of the risk-analysis sectors to a newly established entity within the situational awareness and monitoring division. Furthermore, 2018 was marked by the continuous challenge to continue delivering the products as planned, as well as developing new projects and products while at the same time continuing to provide the expected quality and the timely delivery of analytical support for the enhanced operations of Frontex, as per the EBCG regulation. This was combined with management changes at division, unit and sector levels, and in a scenario of limited HR, following the stretched HR capacity for recruitment.

Based on EU Regulation 2016/1624, the Risk Analysis Unit launched an analysis of cross-border crime, terrorism, the risk analysis relevant to the coastguard function, as well as information exchange and cooperation with Europol.

The cooperation with Europol in 2018 included also the participation in the information clearing house and the launching of joint-analytical products. Furthermore, the RAU deployed staff to the flagship maritime operation Sophia (EUNAVFOR MED) with the main objective of enhancing the sharing of intelligence between Frontex, EUNAVFOR MED and Europol, in relation to illegal activities from and towards Libya.

Another example of successful cross-divisional cooperation was the handover of the integrated Migration management application (IRMA) by the Commission to Frontex. Due to the close cooperation of Risk Analysis Unit and the European centre for returns within Operational Response Division IRMA can from January 2019 function as a web-based platform where the Commission, Member States, EU Funded projects (Eurint, EURLO, ERRIN) as well as Frontex can exchange strategic and operational (non-personal) information on return activities as well as third-country information.

As of February 2018 the third-country monitoring team was transferred into a new sector (third-country analysis sector (TCA)) within RAU where the DG International Cooperation and Development-funded

project 'Strengthening the Africa-Frontex intelligence community (AFIC)' yielded its first concrete results. Furthermore, the product portfolio of the third-country analysis sector was consolidated by publishing close to one hundred dedicated analytical reports in 2018. In response to the developments on the Western Balkan route, based on the established risk-analysis cooperation within the Western Balkan risk analysis network and in coordination with other relevant Frontex Units, the European Commission and several EU MS, a dedicated daily information-exchange mechanism was updated, which will serve the purposes of early warning (among other things).

Continued increase of data availability for risk analysis and vulnerability assessment by automating data processing and reporting allowed for further reduction of the response time to numerous requests for data, information, and analysis. Moreover, open-source data was integrated with data collected in-house in order to provide a wider picture of the irregular migration at the European and neighbouring third-country levels. Online data-access solutions were implemented for the Air Border Risk Analysis Network to enable Frontex and the Member States to have constant access for to an up-to-date picture at EU level for well-informed operational response and risk analysis. The vulnerability-assessment-data-project management delivered by RAU in support of vulnerability assessment allowed for improving the processes for data collection and information sharing related to the vulnerability-assessment processes. The continued implementation of imagery intelligence services under the Copernicus Delegation Agreement ⁽¹⁷⁾ combined with training on their relevance for border surveillance led to increased awareness and availability of relevant Earth-observation products.

Highlights: Risk analysis in 2018

AFIC DG International Cooperation and Development capacity-building project

In 2018 the implementation of the DG International Cooperation and Development funded project 'Strengthening the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC)' continued. A highlight worth mentioning is the opening of the first out of eight planned risk-analysis cells, officially inaugurated at the end of 2018 in Niger, in cooperation with Nigerien authorities.

In parallel, in 2018 the project contained activities to develop the training concept and the delivery of the first three training sessions for African partners as well as organising of a series of regional workshop discussions on the migration trends in the region.

Cooperation between Frontex and 26 AFIC partners is a key element in battling cross-border crime and security threats affecting African countries and the EU.

Maritime-intelligence risk-analysis community

In 2018, a new project was launched to establish a thematic 'maritime-intelligence community and risk-analysis network (MIC-RAN)'. The project develops maritime risk-analysis capabilities against cross-border crime and supports EU cooperation on coast guard functions under the extended mandate of Frontex (EU Regulation 2016/1624). From June 2018 the project successfully deployed and pilot tested an advanced maritime-analytics system which enabled the creation of different risk-analysis workflows and the production of numerous operational and strategic products for various internal and external customers. Within a relatively short period of time, a number of operational successes have been recorded with MIC-RAN support (e.g. identification and targeting of high-risk vessels, detection of multi-tonne cannabis-resin smuggling, oil smuggling and other confidential cases). The inaugural MIC-RAN meeting with all competent MS agencies took place on 8 October 2018.

Analytical activities supporting return

The analytical products and services supporting return were enhanced with the first annual assessment on return, consolidation of the existing portfolio of analytical products supporting return, including a monthly return support analysis, as well as regular meetings of the working group on return data for analysis.

Increased data quality and availability of user-tailored data reports

In 2018, an important part of Risk Analysis Unit activities were dedicated to augmenting the data quality by implementing procedures which facilitated the prompt detection of outliers, trend fluctuations and discrepancies with other datasets.

Also, extensive development was made in providing data reports which are tailor-made for the user, for both internal and external stakeholders, which allowed for direct access to integrated data from various and trusted sources of information.

⁽¹⁷⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/content/signature-copernicus-satcen-delegation-agreement-0_en

Regarding the capacity development dimension, in order to ensure the harmonisation of border-management-related risks analysis and develop the specific skills and competence needed by analysts, following the adoption of the common integrated risk-analysis model (CIRAM), TRU delivered two full courses (four modules each) to certify 48 analysts and provided support to eight intensive courses on CIRAM for national border agencies, totalling 200 risk analysts trained in 2018.

2.5.2. Vulnerability assessment

2018 represented an important year with further consolidation of vulnerability-assessment (VA) activities. To highlight the important role of this new task (entrusted to Frontex in the 2016 EBCG regulation) a new specialised VA unit (VAU) was created within the situational awareness and monitoring division in February 2018. Although established as an organisational structure, the unit was not fully staffed until the end of 2018, leading to the assessments and other related activities in 2018 being completed with relatively scarce HR. Many recruitments to fill the existing posts were still ongoing at the end of the year.

Overall, the VA activities gained more maturity with the second full cycle of assessments completed in 2018. The quality of information provided by the MS improved, combined with an increase of the analytical capabilities of Frontex. VAU conducted baseline assessments establishing the overall capacity for border control for all EU MS/SAC with external borders. Furthermore, tailored simulation exercises were launched to assess the capacity and readiness of selected MS to face anticipated challenges. Frontex also continued to scan the situation at the EU external borders, leading to initiation of several emerging-threat assessments to evaluate and remedy situations at the border before they escalate. In order to mitigate the vulnerabilities identified in the assessments, over the course of 2018 the ED issued a series of recommendations on necessary measures to the MS concerned.

Frontex also released two biannual reports to the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the Commission highlighting the results of vulnerability assessments. These reports offer an overview of main vulnerabilities at EU level and serve to provide new type of information to the high-level decision makers.

An important milestone for vulnerability assessment was achieved in November 2018, when the Management Board adopted the revised Common Vulnerability Assessment Methodology (CVAM). The successful update of the methodology was a result of strong engagement of Member States experts in thorough discussions throughout 2018. The new methodology will help Frontex to better identify and remedy vulnerabilities, by also empowering Frontex to assess Member States' capacities to prevent and detect cross-border crime.

Crucial developments in terms of IT-projects supporting the implementation of vulnerability assessment were also completed in 2018: in order to collect vulnerability assessment information in an efficient and secure way and also to alleviate the administrative burden for the Member States, at the end of 2018 the vulnerability assessment platform was launched. The platform has been rolled out to all 29 MS/SAC and is expected to significantly ease the data-collection and information-exchange efforts for vulnerability assessment activities.

2.6. Management of pooled resources

Summary

Development and deployment of operational capabilities

The tables below show the numbers of deployed human resources and technical equipment in the operational activities in 2018 as a result of the annual bilateral negotiations (ABN) and the subsequent calls for additional resources.

Deployments in 2018: total number of EBCGT members, special advisers and additional experts deployed in 2018 by profile in number of HR and working days

Type of deployment/HR profile	No of HR	No of working days	% of working days in total
European border and coast guard team (EBCGT)	4 047	178 502	100
Advanced-level document officer	371	16 168	9
Border-surveillance officer	1 280	55 165	32
Cross-border crime-detection officer	11	372	0
Debriefing expert	317	14 365	8
Dog handler	97	4 035	2
European coast guard function officer	3	315	0
Field press coordinator	5	370	0
First-line officer	119	4 783	3
Frontex information management officer (FIMO)	191	7 718	5
Frontex support officer (FSO)	186	8 589	5
FSO for logistics and deployment	7	1 009	1
Interview expert	7	551	0
Registration and fingerprinting officer	847	36 109	18
Screening expert	367	17 663	10
Second-line officer	153	6 467	4
Stolen-vehicle detection officer	86	4 823	3
Special advisers	59	3 932	100
Debriefing expert	42	2 730	69
Screening expert	13	1 055	27
Second-line officer	4	147	4
Additional experts	2 611	119 552	100
Crew member/technical staff	2 018	91 209	80
International coordination centre (ICC)/local coordination centre (LCC) (coordinating staff)	9	222	0
Interpreter/cultural mediator	401	22 217	19
Liaison officer — general (coordinating staff)	12	580	1
Liaison officer — technical equipment (TE) (coordinating staff)	6	276	0
National official (home country)	165	5 048	4
Total	6 717	301 986	

Number of assets deployed from technical equipment pool (TEP) by type of equipment and asset days

Technical equipment (TE) type	No of assets	No of asset days	% of asset days in total
Heavy	101	7 362	100
Offshore patrol vessel (OPV)	16	815	11
Coastal patrol vessel (CPV)	12	1 054	14
Coastal patrol boats (CPB)	30	2 864	39
Fixed wing aircraft (FWA)	28	1 885	26
Helicopter	15	744	10
Light	209	18 132	100
Patrol car	158	13 382	74
Thermo vision vehicle (TVV)	40	2 595	14
Transportation vehicle	11	2 155	12
Portable	234	29 438	100
CO ₂ detector	26	1 360	5
Heartbeat detector	7	442	1
Other equipment for border surveillance (cameras, thermal/infrared cameras, night vision goggles etc.)	201	27 636	94
Total	544	54 932	

2018 marked an important change in the way operational capabilities, including technical equipment and human resources, are mobilised for operational activities. In the wake of the challenges faced to cover the 2018 operational needs, a revision of the ABN process was launched with the aim of helping Member States and Schengen associated countries to increase their contribution.

The resulting new ABN process, which is now divided into two 6-months stages, aligns the resources with operational needs in a flexible manner throughout the year as the two-step approach facilitates MS/SAC in planning their pledges. The use of an electronic system for pledging and selecting capabilities was also welcomed by the MS, as an interim solution, ABNet brought high expectations for a long-term solution in the form of Opera Evolution for which the contract was signed in December 2018. Its gradual implementation is envisaged through several releases in 2019 and 2020, in order to deliver a comprehensive tool to manage all aspects of the operational-capability pools.

Looking specifically at the rapid reaction pool (RRP), it is populated with 1 500 border guards under the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation Article 20(5).

The rapid border intervention exercise (REX) 2018 (18 October-14 December 2018) aimed to test and to contribute to the increase in the Frontex and MS/SAC response capacity. REX was based on a fictitious scenario simulating a migratory crisis at the Croatian external EU borders requiring increased technical and operational assistance.

Workplace inspections, aimed at assessing safety and health conditions in operational areas were carried out in Greece (May 2018) and Italy (June 2018), with visits to the competent national authorities. As a direct outcome, the best practice identified in Italy was made available to MS/SAC along with Frontex's own safety and health guidelines (developed earlier in 2018). Further safety and health activities included the acquisition of personal protective equipment (PPE) and patrol emergency-bleeding kits. In addition, research into national vaccination schemes commenced to provide recommendations on how to complement them in a harmonised way in the interest of the safety and health of border and coast guards.

Frontex also began developing the process and methodology for capability development and investment planning, a comprehensive approach assessing what border and coast guard capabilities will be needed for the short, medium and long term. The aim is to launch subsequent development actions in e.g. training, science, technology, equipment, logistics, safety and health.

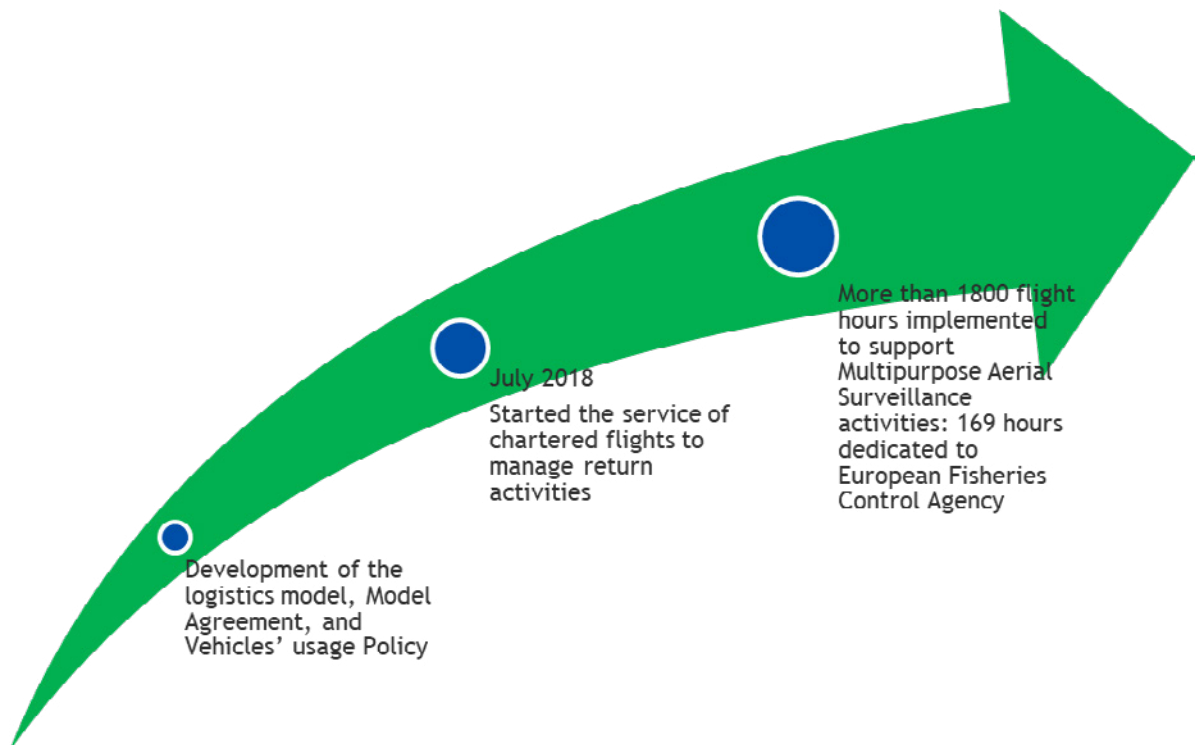
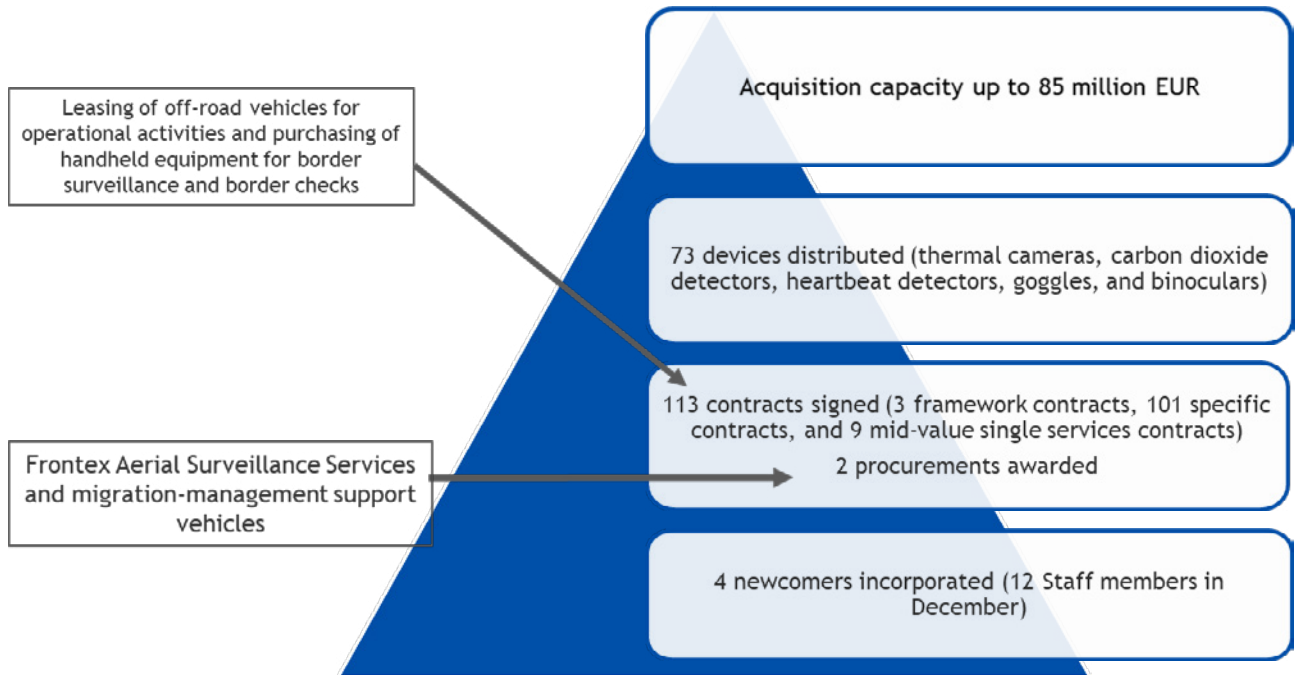
Frontex's own equipment, support and logistics

The strategy for acquisition of own technical equipment (adopted by the Management Board in September 2017) allowed an incremental approach in the acquisition and leasing of Frontex's own technical equipment.

Furthermore in 2018 Frontex initiated the development of its own logistics model, governing the use of vehicles, facilities and storage of equipment. Tailored model agreements are to be signed with the Member States in the course of 2019.

In 2018 Frontex, under the framework of research and innovation, commenced developing minimum technical and operational requirements for the assets deployed in Frontex operations, focusing initially on the requirements concerning maritime equipment. From the work in progress, overarching requirements were extracted as a baseline for the Commission's 2018 call to MS for proposals for the Internal Security Fund specific actions (ISF-SA). As a result, the Member States, when launching a procurement procedure for technical equipment under this call, have an obligation to consult Frontex with regard to compliance with these minimum technical and operational requirements. Furthermore, for all assets purchased in this way, Frontex decides in which deployment periods they will be put at the disposal of Frontex. Additionally, in 2018, Frontex introduced ceiling requirements on the asset running costs to be reimbursed to Member States by Frontex.

Acquisition and Through-Life Management / Logistics 2018: Qualitative Results



Highlights: Management of pooled resources in 2018

The **revised annual bilateral negotiations** (ABN) process was successfully implemented, adopting a semester-based approach to mobilising resources. Mobilising resources for the upcoming six months of the operational lifecycle, as opposed to a full year as in the previous years, makes it easier for MS/SAC to plan and commit contributions.

The **Rapid Reaction Pool (RRP)** remains fully populated with 1 500 border guards as required by the regulation and the rapid-reaction equipment pool has significantly improved its coverage of identified needs.

Safety and health activities resulted in the acquisition of PPE and patrol emergency-bleeding kits as well as the publication of Frontex's own safety and health guidelines and a translation of the Italian contingency plans for Sicily.

Frontex Aerial Surveillance Services (FASS) contract has been developed into a new enhanced, interinstitutional framework contract for the next 4 years, contributing to the achievement of the requirements as set by Article 52 of the EBCG Regulation. This contract supports the implementation of Frontex operational activities including the activities under Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance (MAS). The contract covers the operational needs of Frontex and its partner agency EFCA.

The very first flight under the Frontex contract for **chartering of aircraft for return operations** took place in July 2018, and 13 flights were made by the end of the year. This contract provides Frontex with its own capacity to charter flights for return operations for the upcoming period of three years, and for a total amount of EUR 20 million.

According to the adopted strategy for **acquisition and leasing of technical equipment**, Frontex supported the implementation of operational activities by acquiring light equipment for border surveillance and border checks: 73 units (various devices, e.g. thermal cameras, CO₂ detectors, heartbeat detectors, night-vision goggles and binoculars) were distributed to the operational locations. In parallel, Frontex undertook activities for concluding the contracts for the acquisition of terrestrial technical equipment, such as patrol vehicles and migration-management support vehicles.

2.7. Training

Summary

Operational/pre-deployment training

Frontex training unit continued to support the development of the HR capacities required for the implementation of the operational activities coordinated by Frontex. In 2018 the following courses were delivered.

Title of the course	Course iterations in 2018	Number of border and coast guards trained	Satisfaction rate (%)
Second-line airport officer profile training	4	61	94
Training for pool of return specialist	3	55	90
Pre-deployment course for dog handler (tracking)	1	17	100
Pre-deployment course for dog handler (explosive detection)	1	14	100
Frontex support officer (Profile 11)	3	36	96
Border surveillance officer — land operations (Profile 9)	5	90	98
Profile training for screening expert	4	74	98
Training for pool of forced-return monitor	1	20	(a)
Profile training for debriefing expert	3	45	96
Advanced level document officer (Profile 8)	5	75	96
Rapid exercise (REX) training	1	57	96
Frontex course for readmission officer	12	385	92
Air crew preparation for joint operations	3	41	95
Basic pre-deployment for EBCGT course	34	618	88
Escort leader training	4	75	94
European coast guard functions officer	4	46	96
Border surveillance officer — maritime operations	3	61	92
Return-related training for third countries	1 (b)	GEO authorities	(c)

(a) N/A: The course was run by the ICMPD with the support of Frontex: different satisfaction criteria.

(b) And assistance to training delivered in the context of the IPA II regional programme.

(c) N/A: The course was run by ECRet with the support of TRU: different satisfaction criteria.

Thematic training

Frontex Training Unit continued its support concerning the capacity development in the Member States in the areas covered by the Frontex founding regulation, delivering training in the following specialised areas.

Title of the course	Course iterations in 2018	Number of border and coast guards trained	Satisfaction rate (%)
Road show on falsified documents	5	375	91
Training for visa section staff of EU MS/SAC embassies and consulates in third countries	3	99	95
European course for specialists on identity and security documents	1	13	90
Table-top exercise on foreign terrorist fighters	1	24	100
Certification of canine instructors	1	23	100
Common integrated risk analysis model (CIRAM) intensive awareness course	8	200	87
European course for CIRAM risk analysts	2	48	100
Training for Schengen evaluators	2	95	95
Training on the customs and border guard cooperation at the EU external land border crossing points (BCPs)	2	44	98
Integrated border-management strategy advisers training	4	98	97
EU integrated border management (IBM) awareness session for third countries	1	(a)	96
The European course for national coordination centre (NCC) operators	1	26	96
Mid-level management course	1	17	87
European course for Frontex fundamental rights trainers	2	40	99
Ad hoc training on fundamental rights for first- and second-line officers (delivered upon the Partnership Academy (PA) request)	1	18	98

(a) Representatives from 22 countries (EaP and Western Balkan beneficiaries)

In the area of fundamental rights, in 2018, Frontex delivered two iterations of the European course for Frontex fundamental rights trainers for a total of 40 border guard officers. One of these iterations was primarily focused on providing training support to the Western Balkan states in the area of fundamental rights via the IPA II project 'Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey'. As a result of these training events Frontex certified a total of 37 specialists in the area of training of fundamental rights for border guards.

Manuals and educational materials produced: TRU oversaw the development and/or publication of new handbooks and educational material in support to Frontex training activities, such as those in the following list.

- *Frontex manual on fundamental rights for trainers.*
- *Frontex manual for the protection of children at the borders.*
- *Frontex course on the enhanced custom/border guard cooperation at the external land border.*
- *European course for Frontex canine team instructors (product scent detection).*
- *European course for Frontex canine team instructors (general use).*
- *European course for NCC (Eurosur) operators.*
- *European course for CIRAM risk analysts (Trainers' handbook).*
- *Best practice for communication via an interpreter.*
- *Trainers' handbook: screening and nationality assumption.*
- *Trainers' handbook for pre-deployment trainers.*

Course development: Frontex TRU developed new courses (either delivering them in 2018 or to be delivered in 2019).

- *European course for the protection of victims at the borders.*
- *Frontex course for the protection of children at the borders.*
- *European course for anti-trafficking specialists.*
- *European course for predictive border profiling specialists.*
- *Escort officers training programme.*
- *Basic pre-deployment online course for EBCGT member.*
- *Thematic workshop for dog handlers (tracking).*
- *Thematic workshop for dog handlers (explosive detection).*
- *Course for European coast guard functions officer.*
- *Schengen borders code online training (first-line officers).*
- *Course for air crew preparation for joint operations.*
- *Team leader training (in cooperation with EFCA).*
- *European course for customs and border guard cooperation advisers.*

Career-path education

Common core curricula

2018 saw the implementation of the common core curriculum (CCC) for basic level in the MS, SAC and the finalisation of the development process of a new common core curriculum for mid-level (CCC-ML). The CCC-Interoperability assessment programme 2019-2020 was designed to evaluate the integration of CCC into the national curricula.

Study tour to enhance cooperation between EU and Western Balkan border and coast guard training institutions

Frontex engaged representatives from the border and coast guard academies of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia ⁽¹⁸⁾ and Serbia in a study tour to the German federal police academy in Lübeck and to Frontex HQ to familiarise them with the respective facilities and training programmes, to get acquainted with the organisation of basic and advanced courses, the relevant structures and entities in charge and the instruments available to benefit from international cooperation and European pre-accession assistance. The initiative was arranged by Frontex in the context of the Frontex mandate to organise training activities with Member States and third countries and its commitment to promote international cooperation in border and coast guard education.

European joint master's in strategic border management

Out of the originally enrolled 27 students, 26 accomplished the first year of the second iteration of the European Joint master's in strategic border management and had their dissertation topics approved by the research ethics committee for discussion in 2019.

Mid-level management

2018 saw the development and the delivery of a new mid-level management course on strategic border and coast guard management, with 17 participants from 15 MS/SAC acquiring the knowledge, skills and competence for leading functions in the framework of EU border and coast guarding. For the first time, nearly 25 % of the 17 participants in the four modules of the course were female officers (all either already in leadership roles in their home organisations or about to take on leadership responsibilities once successfully having completed the course).

⁽¹⁸⁾ Until 15.2.2019, 'the former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia'.

Networks

A new cooperation framework for the partnership academies network has been developed with the establishment of a working group to increase mutual engagement and cooperation with the network now encompassing 39 academies, including two coming from non-EU Member States: Albania and Georgia. The annual conference for partnership-academy heads was organised back to back with the EBCG day in May to discuss the strategic matters and operational challenges in EBCG training and education.

Grants

Following the call for proposals, Frontex awarded grants to five joint projects for the development of products and tools for training related to integrated border management. The projects were presented by border and coast guard training institutions coming from Member States, Schengen associated countries and non-EU countries who have working arrangements with Frontex.

Frontex-CEPOL joint exchange programme

A total of 49 border and coast guards participated in the pilot Frontex-CEPOL joint exchange programme covering the following subcategories:

- migration management (debriefing, screening, interviewing);
- border surveillance (land/sea/air);
- border checks (land/sea/air);
- falsified documents;
- return operations;
- fundamental rights and anti-trafficking in human beings;
- border management at EU level;
- cross-border crime.

Annual training conference

The 2018 annual training conference focused on the maritime domain and involved representatives from Frontex, EU border and coast guard organisations, EU partner agencies, as well as representatives from the United States. They shared experience and best practices in the realm of border control at sea.

To increase networking and information sharing within the border and guard community, Frontex training unit improved the readability of a quarterly newsletter and continued its regular dissemination to its key stakeholders.

Training capacities

The implementation of a pilot quality assurance (QA) system related to training started in early January 2018. In cooperation with a contracted external accreditation agency, an independent review of Frontex Training Unit was undertaken, focusing on existing quality assurance policies and procedures, on the development of quality mechanisms and processes, and on Frontex training courses design, delivery and assessment to ensure that Frontex training is designed and delivered in line with EU guidelines and good practices, enabling the required operational competence to be achieved.

The findings from the review contributed to the accreditation process of seven selected Frontex training courses, involving a thorough amendment of the QA system in place and a revision of the courses that were nominated for accreditation. In 2018 four hands-on workshops covering quality assurance of assessments and the harmonisation of course materials and Frontex's e-Learning platform as well as the standard approach to course design and assessments were delivered to benefit Frontex course managers, external trainers and assessors.

The implementation phase of the 'border and coast guard training delivery methodology — train the trainers' course started in 2018. The course ensures that, upon completion, the certified trainers are

able to contribute to the overall quality of training standards when acting as Frontex trainers, enabling them to effectively design and deliver training content and be able to competently assess the learners' performance and achievements.

In 2018, Frontex certified 50 subject-matter experts (SMEs) as Frontex trainers, and 25 participants benefited from the training on 'Course design in line with Bologna/Copenhagen principles using the sectoral qualifications framework for border guarding', to ensure the operational relevance, standards and quality of training in border and coast guarding in line with the Frontex Sectoral Qualifications Framework (SQF) and European principles of course design.

In summary, in the context of the training capacities area, the following training activities took place in 2018:

Title of the course/workshop	Course iterations in 2018	No of people benefiting from the training	Satisfaction rate (%)
Course design in line with Bologna/Copenhagen principles using the SQF for border guarding	1	25	85
Border and coast guard training delivery methodology — train the trainers	2	50	95
Introduction to educational technology	1	30	92
Workshop on accreditation benchmarks (process, criteria, evidence requirements)	1	10	N/A (*)
Workshop on harmonisation of Frontex training programmes	1	10	N/A (*)
Workshop on assessment quality assurance (QA) — how to effectively plan and assess learner achievement	1	25	N/A (*)
Workshop on QA: how to effectively assure the quality of training programmes	1	20	N/A (*)
English language course for border and coast guards — level 1	(**)	1 050	N/A

(*) Training activities that are not courses do not use the standard feedback form which is used to measure the satisfaction rate.

(**) Online as of 1 August 2018.

In December 2018, Frontex TRU released a renewed electronic training portal Aula (<https://truaula.frontex.europa.eu>), expanding the capabilities of collaboration, communication and cooperation within the border and coast guard community.

In 2018, the online English course for border and coast guards was launched. It's a new product to enable officers responsible for performing first-line checks and border surveillance to become familiar with specific English terminology and practice their English language skills to break possible language barriers hindering communication. Between the launch of the product (August 2018) and the end of the year, 1 050 users enrolled.

Manuals and educational material produced

- *Border and coast guard training delivery methodology — course handbook (online).*
- *Course design in line with Bologna and Copenhagen Principles using the SQF for border guard (BG) course handbook (online).*
- *Training materials package for train the trainers (online).*
- *English course for border and coast guarding (online).*

Highlights: Training activities in 2018

Training delivered, courses developed and training material produced

In 2018, Frontex TRU delivered 40 courses in different iterations, totalling 135 training sessions held to benefit more than **3 080 participants** among border and coast guards, members of the EBCGT pools, Frontex staff, third countries law-enforcement representatives and consular staff, averaging a satisfaction rate of 95 %.

There were thirteen new courses developed in the course of 2018, with **14 new manuals** in support of training activities produced. An online English course for border and coast guards was developed and launched in August 2018. Between the launch and the end of the year, 1 050 users enrolled.

Interoperability assessment programme (IAP)

In 2018, Frontex TRU developed the concept of the Interoperability Assessment Programme (IAP) to assess the implementation of the Common Core Curriculum for border and coast guard training at national level. The IAP focuses on the degree to which participants apply what they learned during the training once they are back on the job, and the effect of the training delivered on the institution they belong to. By allowing monitoring the practical implementation of job competencies gained, the IAP facilitates professional development and the provision of feedback on the relevance of training resources given. This data will contribute to profiling national officers for their deployment in Frontex joint operations.

Frontex training quality assurance system and accreditation

Both the quality assurance system and the trainers' certifications contributed to increasing the TRU capacity to develop operational competence, streamline and increase the effectiveness of training processes and scale up the capacity to deliver practical applied training to border and coast guards and enable trainers to design and deliver training and assessments to ensure that the operational competence is met.

The establishment of the QA system enabled the accreditation for seven Frontex vocational courses for border and coast guards.

- European course for national coordination centre (Eurosur) operators.
- European course for canine trainer (product scent detection).
- European course for canine team instructor (product scent detection).
- European course for CIRAM risk analysts.
- European course for fundamental rights specialists.
- Course design in line with Bologna and Copenhagen principles using the SQF for border guarding.
- Border and coast guard training delivery methodology — train the trainer.

Graduates from these courses will now receive internationally recognised certificates.

2.8. Research and innovation

Summary

Harmonisation

In 2018, the following activities and results were achieved.

- Provided support to Member States, eu-LISA, and the European Commission pertinent to the EES at the borders. Frontex organised the EES workshop targeting the end-user community; co-organised with eu-LISA a conference on smarter technologies including the EES; contributed as an observer to the EES advisory group, the EES working group on land and sea borders, the smart-borders committee and the working group on the practical handbook.
- In support of the harmonisation of the EU border-control capacities with a view to developing best practices and standards, a Fronted launched a working group on technology and standards, drafted baseline technical requirements for maritime equipment; and developed (and tested in a real environment) a methodology for testing and assessing the performance of document-inspection systems.
- Frontex developed capabilities and practices in the field of automated border control (ABC) and biometric systems for border control and organised a risk management and mitigation workshop for ABC and biometric systems. It also developed a risk-management and mitigation framework for ABC

and biometrics systems; conducted and published a report on an ABC implementation survey; revised trainer's manuals on ABC systems and organised a technical expert meeting on the latest operational performance data on ABC systems.

- In support of European and international standardisation activities in the area of border security, Frontex provided contributions to the European Commission technical subgroup of the Article 6 Committee, the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN/European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation (Cenelec)), the ICAO, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) and other forums.
- Frontex provided technical support on biometric technology and its vulnerabilities to Frontex business units (CED, RAU and TRU) for border control, in particular, pertinent to morphing and document fraud.

Development and technical assistance

In 2018, the work focused on providing technical support and expertise to a variety of stakeholders.

- Finalised guidelines on advance information, to support Member States with the development of traveller-analysis capacities.
- Provided regular technical expertise to the European Commission in relation to the feasibility study for a centralised routing mechanism and interactive API.
- Provided technical support to Member States in order to better plan their border-management operations, with an operational research model developed by Frontex for simulation.
- Provided technical support to Western Balkan countries under the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA II).

Technology assessment

The most relevant achievements were the following.

- Undertook a technology assessment of the effectiveness of the border control systems and technologies to support the future acquisition of border-management technologies within the EU.
- Enhanced the capacity of Member States to perform land, sea and aerial border surveillance thus contributing to improved border security.
- Enhanced the operational capacity at EU level through the identification of new communication solutions.
- Increased the capacity of the border-management community to share sensor data/information at local level.
- Enhanced the awareness of the Frontex stakeholders on the different technologies and systems for border control through the dissemination of the results of the assessments performed.
- Increased the operational border control capacities at EU level.

In line with the abovementioned, the main activities implemented were as follows.

Identification of emerging technologies and/or innovative technical solutions for border control:

- biometrics on the move, trial preparation;
- working group meeting on low flying objects;
- workshop and demonstration on mobile devices for border checks.

Testing, trials and demonstrations of technologies/solutions for border control:

- trial of medium-altitude long-endurance remotely piloted aircraft system (MALE RPAS) for long-endurance Maritime Aerial Surveillance;
- maritime analysis tools pilot trial.

Cooperation activities:

- testing and evaluation of a new Copernicus service (wake detection);
- organisation of a workshop with the industry on forecasting changes in the migration flows using open sources;

- participation in Frontex meetings with the industry organised under the innovation project;
- participation in external meetings and conferences addressing technology issues relevant for border control and coast guard functions;
- technical support to other partners such as the European Commission, EU agencies, MS and TCs.

Innovation

The work in this area focused on the following.

- Strengthening, stimulating and nurturing the dialogue between the industry/academia and the border guard community in order to:
 - (a) significantly increase border guards' knowledge on border-security research and innovation and the latest border-control technologies available;
 - (b) provide input to industry/academia regarding current research so that its results are useful for the potential end-users;
 - (c) make industry/academia aware of the real needs of the border-guard community as a basis for future research.
- Preparations for implementing the provisions referring to the EU framework programme for research and innovation mentioned in the Article 37 of Frontex Regulation.

In this context, the following main activities were implemented.

- Evaluation of the offers received by the European Commission in the framework of Horizon 2020, the Work Programme 2018 (Secure societies — Protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens); involvement in EU-funded border security-related projects' reviews, workshops, tests/demonstrations.
- Discussions with the European Commission related to implementing the provisions referring to the EU framework programme for research and innovation mentioned in the Article 37 of Frontex Regulation.
- Study on joint cross-border procurement.
- The biannual meetings with the industry and the workshops on EU-funded border security research projects and on border-security research and innovative solutions/technologies.

Highlights: Research and innovation (R & I) in 2018

Performance-assessment methodology for document-inspection systems (DIS)

The activity marked the first attempt ever to develop a methodology applicable to different operational environments. The methodology has been tested during a series of dedicated 'test exercises' that took place at five different border crossing points across Europe. The test exercises helped underpin the importance of the methodology, facilitating the assessment of document inspection systems (DIS) performance and allowing for comparison between different document inspections systems in operational use. The test exercises focused primarily on the assessment of DIS for manual control and the automated border control (ABC) systems where applicable.

The methodology constitutes a set of procedures developed to measure DIS overall and detailed performance. It has proven to be **accurate** as it revealed several shortcomings and/or weaknesses of the tested DIS in operation, and **flexible** due to its applicability to different border crossing points and ability to capture performance of DIS in both manual and automated checks. The methodology and the test results are to be published in a report to be presented and critically discussed with the Member States, and the results are also to be used to complement current and future standardisation efforts in this area, e.g. in support of the work undertaken by the technical subgroup of the Article 6 Committee, ISO/CEN, and ICAO, to name a few, feeding into the development of harmonised technical and operational requirements for DIS as well as international standardisation activities related to border security.

Standards for technical equipment

The activity concerning the development of minimum technical and operational requirements for maritime equipment is in line with the Agency's mandate to ensure the compatibility and interoperability of the equipment listed in the technical equipment pool by defining technical standards to be met by the Member States contributing to Frontex joint operations.

Research and Innovation Unit was assigned the task to develop minimum technical and operational requirements for technical equipment in support of Frontex operations. After an extensive mapping exercise of different equipment within the technical equipment pool, very fragmented requirements at different levels were found. In order to address this issue and starting with maritime equipment in 2018, a working group comprising of MSs and Frontex experts was created, with the objective to elaborate on harmonised and compatible maritime equipment.

The working group has successfully elaborated the minimum technical and operational requirements that will support Frontex in purchasing its own equipment, support the EC in their decision-making when funding the purchase of technical equipment by MSs financed through the Internal Security Fund and also when MSs make available to Frontex technical equipment that should meet the same minimum requirements thus making the selection procedure objective and transparent. Likewise, the minimum technical and operational requirements will also support the development of the new version of Opera by ensuring the compatibility and interoperability of the items in the technical equipment pool.

Maritime surveillance capabilities

Frontex conducted a pilot project to explore Medium Altitude Remotely-Piloted Aircraft Systems (MALE RPAS) in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. The project was conducted with the support of the Hellenic (Greek) authorities during the last quarter of 2018. The objective of this particular pilot project was to enable Frontex and the EU border-control authorities to test, assess, and evaluate MALE RPAS capability to deliver long-endurance maritime border surveillance operations supporting coast guard functions.

To materialise this pilot activity, Frontex conducted an open procurement out of which a public contract (OP/800/2017/JL) was signed with a consortium (Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) — Israel and Airbus Defence and Space) to provide a service consisting of 600 surveillance flying hours, delivered over 120 calendar days in 2018. The execution was contracted as a 'turn-key' service, meaning that Frontex pays the provider for surveillance flight hours delivered and the contract price includes all the operational and logistics tasks related to RPAS deployment and use.

The payload on board the RPAS (radar, AIS, and camera) fulfilled the coastguard function missions assigned as efficiently as any other surveillance asset deployed in the JO Poseidon, with the added advantage of providing extended endurance, availability, and reliability. The flight integration scheme set up by the Greek authorities enabled the RPAS to fly in non-segregated airspace, and to prove its capability to deliver long-endurance maritime border surveillance in a regular, reliable, and cost-efficient way.

2.9. Situation monitoring

Summary

In 2018, Frontex launched 24/7 duty service allowing for a round-the-clock monitoring of the situation at the borders and in the pre-frontier areas. A dedicated team of 13 senior duty officers supports this task (since 1 October 2018).

Regular and ad hoc reports provided stakeholders with accurate and close-to-real-time situational picture of the EU's border and pre-frontier areas, improving situational awareness and increasing reaction capability. In 2018, Frontex produced 4 023 situation monitoring reports, enhancing the situational picture at the borders (14 % decrease compared to 2017), detected, reported and validated in JORA 41 039 incidents (4 % decrease) (including 124 serious incidents), provided 7 848 JORA users with access to the system (62 % increase), processed 131 requests for information on operational data were (senior duty officers team), and uploaded 6 891 documents to the Frontex one-stop shop (FOSS) ⁽¹⁹⁾ (4 % decrease).

⁽¹⁹⁾ <https://foss.frontex.europa.eu>

Eurosur/Copernicus fusion services (EFS)

In 2018, a decision was made to create the Information Fusion Centre in order to consolidate the capacities of Frontex Situation Centre Eurosur Fusion Services Sector, and Risk Analysis Unit analytics sector in addressing growing internal and external demand for the Eurosur/Copernicus Fusion Services. This demand was reflected in 2018 in the stakeholders' rising interest in satellite data, vessel-tracking information, and multipurpose aerial surveillance. The year marked also enhanced cooperation with EFS stakeholders: EMSA, EFCA and EU SatGen, and enhanced Copernicus programme implementation.

The EFS continued to support Member States and other partners with situation-monitoring and information-exchange capabilities. In 2018 the EFS contribution included 937 optical satellite images (16 % increase), 2 313 vessel-detection satellite images (87 % increase), 34 reports on tracked vessels of interest (72 % decrease), 37 vessels of interest tracked in total (38 % decrease), and 491 activated vessel-anomaly searches (44 % increase).

Eurosur/Copernicus Fusion Services (EFS) real-time surveillance

Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance (MAS) activities were extended to new geographical areas, and in 2018 covered the central Mediterranean, the Western Balkans, the Aegean Sea, the Black Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. For the first time in Frontex's history, a remotely piloted aircraft was used to support its activities during MAS activities in the south of Portugal. This effort resulted in 4 924 migrants being detected in the central Mediterranean and reported to the competent national authorities for follow-up action (SAR and law-enforcement cases) and 635 migrants being spotted inland of the Western Balkans and reported to the competent national authority (cross-border crime cases). Throughout the year MAS, as one of the Eurosur/Copernicus Fusion Services, was provided to the stakeholders in combination with other EFS services.

In 2018, FSC launched for the first time real-time surveillance activities over land areas. The Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance service was activated over the pre-frontier area of the Croatian section of the EU's external border. The MAS-Western-Balkans mission started on 18 July 2018 in cooperation with the Croatian ministry of the interior. MAS performed flights over the pre-frontier areas from the Zadar Airport. Cooperation with the Croatian authorities included the involvement of Croatian experts in the European monitoring team (EMT) at Frontex, coordinating the MAS mission, as well as continuous communication between the EMT and the authorities, ensuring appropriate follow-up activities are performed following MAS sightings.

From 18 July 2018 until the end of the year, 635 irregular migrants were sighted by the MAS aircraft attempting to cross the EU external border from Bosnia and Herzegovina into Croatia. MAS reported 46 sightings, all of which were notified to relevant authorities. The single biggest detection took place on 22 August, when MAS aircraft sighted a group of 89 irregular migrants attempting to cross the border towards Croatia. The Croatian authorities were swiftly notified of the detection and an operational response on the ground followed.

The real-time surveillance on land did not only contribute to the detection of irregular migration, but also triggered law-enforcement activities. On 27 September 2018, MAS aircraft sighted a group of migrants boarding a van in the proximity of the border. The aircraft closely monitored the van and its movements, and reported the incident to the authorities. Thanks to MAS intelligence, the van was intercepted on a highway, and two facilitators, together with the migrants, were apprehended. Regarding the capacity-development dimension, Frontex Aerial Surveillance Services (FASS) proved to be of high added value to the Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance activities (MAS) conducted under the lead of Frontex Situation Centre. During 2018, more than 1 800 flight hours were implemented to support MAS activities, out of which 169 hours for specific purposes of EFCA.

2.10. International and European cooperation

Summary

Cooperation with third countries

In line with the international cooperation strategy 2018–2020, Frontex has further increased its international engagement with countries of origin and transit for illegal immigration along the key migratory routes to the EU. In 2018, particular effort was dedicated to strengthening the dialogue with North and West African countries, including official visits of the executive management to Egypt, Senegal and Ghana. Frontex started the implementation of a new EU-funded project 'EU4BorderSecurity' addressing countries in the Southern Neighbourhood of the EU and continued the implementation of another project aiming to strengthen the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC) (see also Section 2.5.1). Risk analysis). Moreover, Frontex supported the International training centre at the Egyptian police academy (ITEPA), an EU-funded project of Italy and Egypt that entails the delivery of a series of training to border police officers from 22 African countries in Cairo. Frontex also started negotiations on working arrangement with The Gambia and further advanced on negotiations with the authorities of Senegal, Niger and Guinea.

Frontex also worked closely with civilian common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions (e.g. EUBAM Libya, European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Sahel Mali/Niger), supporting their work with expertise and advice and relying on their cooperation frameworks for engagement with the third-country authorities. For example, since 2017, Frontex experts have regularly supported EUBAM Libya in Tunis: first through short-term deployments. In cooperation with Italy and EUBAM Libya, Frontex developed a pilot training module for the general administration of coastal security (GACS) of Libya: to be carried out in 2019.

Turkey and the Western Balkans region continued to be important priorities across various areas of Frontex's work. Frontex continued to support Western Balkan authorities through the multiannual capacity-building project for the 'Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey'.

Cooperation with the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries continued through the EaP Integrated Border Management capacity-building project and some bilateral initiatives. A cooperation plan was concluded between Frontex and the general inspectorate of border police of Moldova for 2018–2020.

Highlights: International and European cooperation in 2018

Eastern Partnership Integrated Border Management (EaP/IBM) capacity-building project

At the end of 2018, Frontex successfully closed the Eastern partnership integrated border management capacity-building project. Under the umbrella of the EaP/IBM flagship initiative, the project aimed to strengthen the capacities of the EaP countries to apply IBM in line with the European best practices. With an overall budget of EUR 4.5 million over 4 years (2014–2018), the project represented an integral part of the overall EU support to the countries of the region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine).

The project was the first technical assistance initiative implemented by Frontex as a leading agency in close cooperation with the World Customs Organisation (WCO), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). This initiative supported the establishment of an IBM training system on in the six beneficiary countries and served as a regional platform of exchange on IBM best practices and lessons learned. At the same time, it facilitated inter-agency cooperation between border guards and customs services in the EaP region.

More than 120 activities and 83 training sessions took place within the framework of the project. As a result, 1 200 border and customs officials were trained on topics such as document checks, interview techniques, screening and identification of nationalities, combating trafficking in human beings and fundamental rights.

Start of a new project in the Southern Neighbourhood — EU4BorderSecurity

In December 2018, Frontex started a 3-year capacity-building project 'EU4BorderSecurity'. Financed by the European Neighbourhood Instrument, the project seeks to enhance border security in the southern Mediter-

anean, North Africa and the eastern part of the Mediterranean ('Levant'), by fostering bilateral and regional cooperation, while facilitating *bona fide* travel. It is to contribute to building trust, understanding, structured partnerships, and exchange of experiences and practices in the IBM domain. The project familiarises the participating countries with the mandate and work of Frontex and enhances their capacity to conduct risk analysis, situation monitoring and operational border and coast guard operations. This way it aims to contribute to the fight against security threats, particularly organised crime and terrorism in the region. Operational and country-specific capacity-building support will be based on the priorities identified by the partner countries.

The EU4BorderSecurity project will proactively seek to identify and exploit synergies by complementing and enriching ongoing activities in the border-management/security domain. The action plan will take into account specific idiosyncrasies of each country's border-management context and needs, and will promote increased ownership by the partners. Furthermore, the project will combine development of bilateral relations with Frontex and will deliver capacity-building support to national border-management authorities. It will pursue close cooperation with international organisations and EU Member States active in the region.

EU4Border security is multidimensional and built upon two axes:

- horizontal and cross-cutting dimension with the objective to build trust and understanding through a dedicated platform for sharing knowledge and experiences;
- capacity-building dimension focusing on IBM component areas through sub-regional activities, tailor-made national training programmes and small-scale technical assistance actions.

Cooperation with EU partners and international organisations

In 2018, Frontex continued to strengthen its cooperation with both EU and international partners by, among others, implementing and revising various cooperation plans and working arrangements. Frontex also supported the EU policymakers and legislators on numerous cases by providing technical and operational advice within its area of expertise.

In the area of freedom, security and justice, Frontex continued its close cooperation with its peer agencies, in particular Europol, EASO, eu-LISA, CEPOL and Eurojust, within the framework of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies network as well as through bilateral partnerships. Contacts with EU entities outside of the JHA remit, such as the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) or EDA, also took place, reflecting Frontex's broad, multidisciplinary approach to security.

Frontex activities reflected the growing need for cooperation between civil and military organisations, reinforcing and bridging the internal and the external security of the EU. In this regard, Frontex enhanced its cooperation with the CSDP EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia, including the deployment of its officers to the operation's crime-information cell. It enhanced fruitful cooperation with the European Defence Agency (EDA). The first joint training project between Frontex and EDA under the auspices of the Austrian Presidency was conducted.

In the area of coast guard functions, the cooperation through the tripartite working arrangement among Frontex, EMSA and EFCA allowed for a greater support to the activities of the national authorities in the maritime domain.

Frontex became a regular, active participant in the Customs Cooperation Working Party (CCWP) as well as a strategic counterpart in the customs environment, in particular in the relationship with the customs eastern and south-eastern land border expert team (Celbet). This reflects the increasing need to improve structural cooperation between customs and law-enforcement, as they operate in the same environment and tackle the same threats.

In 2018, Frontex also explored possibilities on how to further enhance its cooperation and develop strategic partnerships with international organisations such as Interpol, WCO, OSCE and UNHCR. Cooperation covers fields such as migration, border management and fighting cross-border crime. Frontex sought to build upon the existing working arrangements and to explore the possibilities of developing new ones.

A new ICT platform for facilitating the reporting mechanism serving the coordination of Member States' activities in third countries has been developed and delivered; it will contribute to the cooperation with Member States and Schengen associated countries.

Highlights: EU partners and international organisations

Joint Europol-Frontex Management Board meeting

In October 2018, Frontex and Europol held a joint Management Board in The Hague. It was the first meeting of this kind. It offered a unique opportunity for Frontex to present the agency's tools and capabilities to its partners in Europol and Member States. Frontex informed participants about its presence on the ground, as well as providing a comprehensive picture of the situation at the external borders. The meeting was also a good occasion to discuss both agencies' work in many fields, such as information exchange, risk analysis, joint presence in hotspots and preparations for the implementation of ETIAS. The Management Board discussion was facilitated by concrete examples of operations conducted jointly by the two agencies and Member States.

The executive directors of both agencies took the opportunity to sign a statement of principles for collaboration between Europol and Frontex. They will be guiding the daily cooperation between the agencies, strengthening the synergies and mutual operational support between the two agencies. They confirm and strengthen the special partnership between Europol and Frontex and their joint commitment to tackle key security challenges.

The joint Frontex-Europol management board meeting was a remarkable event, showing the strengthening partnership and increasing cooperation of the two agencies. The meeting offered a great opportunity to present the work the agencies do together and to discuss future cooperation. The Member States offered their feedback and ideas on how to shape joint work against key security challenges. The meeting confirmed that Frontex is a well-established security authority and a valuable partner to the police community. This was particularly important in light of the growing need for enhancing cooperation between the EU security organisations.

Regarding the capacity development dimension, in the context of the Frontex-led IPA II Regional Programme, Frontex Training Unit supported the development of border-management capacities in the Western Balkan countries by delivering train-the-trainers and specialised courses in the areas of fundamental rights and return. In addition to that, a study tour was organised engaging representatives from the border and coast guards academies of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. The study tour took participants to the German federal police academy in Lübeck and to Frontex HQ. The aim was to familiarise participants with the training programmes, the organisation of basic and advanced courses, the relevant structures and entities in charge and the instruments available to benefit from international cooperation and European pre-accession assistance.

In the context of inter-agency cooperation and synergy, TRU supported the following.

- EASO in the development of the Sectoral Qualification Framework for asylum officials and reception.
- The European Security and Defence College in the development of Sectoral Qualifications Framework for military officers.
- EFCA in the feasibility assessment on the development of a potential Sectoral Qualifications Framework for fisheries control.
- JHA agencies training network on developing a common approach for quality assurance of law-enforcement training.
- CEPOL on developing a sound approach to align the training to the European qualification framework.

Liaison officers to Member States and third countries

In 2018, Frontex continued to develop and maintain networks of Frontex liaison officers (FLOs) in Member States and third countries.

Frontex recruited and trained 11 FLOs to be deployed in MS and SAC, most of them with a regional mandate covering up to four MS/SAC. By the end of 2018, four FLOs were effectively deployed in Member States hosting the main seats.

Frontex also continued to develop its FLO network in third countries. The presence of FLOs in Turkey, Niger and the Western Balkans (main seat in Serbia) are already showing first results in closer engagement with the authorities of third countries.

The FLOs are collocated with the respective EU delegations in third countries and closely cooperate with the European migration liaison officers (EMLOs), Immigration Liaison Officers (ILOs of the EU Member States and other EU representatives in CSDP missions.

Further deployments are planned in the priority regions indicated by the Management Board in 2018: northern and western Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Silk Route region, and the Western Balkans. In this light, and following the decision of the Management Board, Frontex started to work on the deployment of a FLO in Senegal: expected to be recruited and deployed in 2019.

In order to support the FLO networks, Frontex established a dedicated back office within the international and European cooperation division. The back office provides support, monitors and guides the FLOs, and facilitates the interaction between FLOs and the Frontex HQ. It also analyses and processes the outcomes of the FLO activities (e.g. regular reports), and ensures awareness and follow-up by various Frontex business entities.

Highlights: Frontex liaison officer networks in 2018

Frontex liaison officers (FLOs) to EU Member States

In 2018, Frontex started the deployment of FLOs to 30 EU Member States and Schengen associated countries – a new task entrusted to Frontex in the EBCG regulation. The role of the FLOs is to foster cooperation and dialogue between Frontex and national authorities responsible for border management and return, including coast guards to the extent that they carry out border control tasks. They are also to play an important role in the context of the Frontex's vulnerability assessment activities.

Following the decision of the Frontex Management Board, 11 FLOs are deployed to the following country clusters.

1. Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, Switzerland — the main seat in Germany.
2. Belgium, Iceland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands — the main seat in Belgium.
3. Bulgaria.
4. Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania — the main seat in Hungary.
5. Cyprus, Greece — the main seat in Greece.
6. Czechia, Poland, Slovakia — the main seat in Slovakia.
7. Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden — the main seat in Sweden.
8. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania — the main seat in Latvia.
9. France.
10. Italy, Malta — the main seat in Italy.
11. Portugal, Spain — the main seat in Spain.

In the course of the year, all 11 FLOs were recruited and started their pre-deployment phase in at Frontex HQ (Warsaw). Each FLO undergoes (on average) 3 months of pre-deployment training.

2.11. Media and public relations

Summary

To promote the achievements of Frontex and in line with its commitment to openness and transparency, the media and public relations (MPR) unit continued to facilitate journalist access to Frontex operations. In 2018, some 50 journalists visited operational areas in Spain, Italy, and Greece. Furthermore, almost 30 of them were carried on vessels, helicopters or aircrafts during patrolling activities and SAR operations.

The journalists represented national and international media outlets including BBC, CBS, *El País*, *El Mundo*, AFP, *New York Times*, *London*, Bavarian TV/ARD, YLE, France 3, NHK, Japan Broadcasting Corporation, *Le Figaro*, ZDF, *The Independent*, France 5 and Discovery Channel. Frontex also organised six ED press conferences and briefings. These took place in Brussels (Belgium), Athens (Greece), Sopot (Poland), Dakar (Senegal) and Madrid and Algeciras (Spain), and gathered about 120 journalists.

In 2018, MPR office continued to carry out a wide range of outreach activities. In its HQ in Warsaw, Frontex hosted over 560 guests (including students, researchers, police-academy cadets and military officers). Our spokespersons briefed them on Frontex activities, answered their questions and provided relevant printed materials.

Each month, Frontex receives numerous requests for information and access to its operations from the general public. Frontex also contributed to a wider academic discussion about migration by providing information about Frontex (and the role of European institutions in general) to Master and PhD students and researchers from European academic institutions and beyond. Additionally, our spokespersons were invited to present at a number of different venues including universities, embassies, and various government departments, speaking to over 150 people in total.

In 2018, Frontex published 39 press releases on migratory flows, new operations and events organised in the HQ and in operational areas. The press releases were often accompanied by short videos published on Frontex social media channels. MPR supported the expansion of the 'Vega Children' concept, an initiative to better identify and refer 'children at risk on the move' across the EU external borders, through the publication and dissemination of a thematic Vega handbook in 32 languages.

MPR also supported different teams and divisions by organising in-house and external training sessions including editorial training for myFX content creators, media training and presentation workshops.

Last year, Frontex continued to expand its presence on social media by launching Frontex's Facebook page where, in the first 4 months it published 66 Facebook posts, gained 3 850 followers and reached an average of 10 000 people with Frontex video content. In 2018, the number of followers of Frontex on Twitter grew to 21 000, and the number of tweets published reached 277. Frontex also put together social media guidelines, accompanied by an animated video, for all Frontex staff and deployed officers.

Last year, the total number of followers of Frontex LinkedIn page (launched in 2017) increased by close to 100 % (from 6 118 in 2017 to 12 202 in 2018) and the total number of organic impressions (the number of times each update is shown to LinkedIn members) increased by 322 % in comparison to 2017 (from 429 878 in 2017 to 1 388 471 in 2018).

In 2018, MPR produced eight short videos about key Frontex activities as well as over one hundred reports, training manuals and brochures. The films were part of the most-viewed content on the Frontex website and on social media channels in 2018. MPR also produced eight feature stories for the website and created profiles of 24 officers deployed in Frontex operations and shared this content on Frontex social media platforms. MPR was involved in the 'EU Protects' project (coordinated by the European Commission) promoting European cooperation and produced communication materials focused on security and migration: these Frontex videos and web stories will be published in the first quarter of 2019.

To make the information about Frontex accessible to the public throughout the EU, in November 2018 Frontex launched a multilingual version of its website in all 24 official languages of the EU. Moreover, most new videos were also subtitled in 24 languages.

Frontex's growing staff was the focus of the internal communication team which launched several new initiatives aimed at staff integration. These included monthly breakfast meetings with the executive director, family day and other staff integration events. We also organised an internal day which focused on sports activities and a Christmas party for all staff and their spouses or partners.

2.12. Fundamental rights

Summary

As part of its regular duties, the fundamental rights office (FRO) continuously provided observations and recommendations on all operational plans and evaluation reports for the consideration of operational units. The FRO was appointed as the coordinator for three fundamental-rights serious-incident reports either submitted by participants to operations or derived from open source reporting in 2018. The FRO team supported operational training sessions and during the 2018 operational-activities evaluation meetings, the FRO addressed to MS the need to discuss methods and scope of data collection to effectively measure referral-mechanism implementation.

The FRO team actively participated in numerous operational activities, such as briefings for team members to be deployed within the JO 'Focal points land' and JO 'Coordination points', for Frontex MS and TC liaison officers, for airport representatives and international organisation experts for JO Alexis, for deployed officers/EU advisers and airport representatives for JO 'Coordination points air' and, within the framework of Vega children, several training sessions and workshops for debriefer team leaders. Likewise, the FRO supported the harmonisation of procedures related to medical assistance in return operations, engaged in TC familiarisation visits in the area of return and took part in the direct contact points in return matters and pre-return activities network meetings.

The FRO team undertook several field visits to the EU external borders to monitor the operational activities and provide guidance on fundamental rights compliance.

In 2018, the FRO received over 150 monitoring reports which mainly served to provide concrete recommendations as well as to adjust training needs of those organising the implementation of return operations.

With regard to the deployment of forced-return monitors from the pool of monitors, the FRO was regularly involved in the selection of monitors, together with Pooled Resources Unit and the European centre for returns, followed by an open call sent to relevant bodies in the Member States. By taking part in this process, the FRO ensured that the skills and competence of the monitors allow them to carry out their tasks under fundamental rights.

The FRO team took part in return and readmission operations to monitor the return activities, provide guidance on fundamental rights compliance and participate in meetings and workshops related to the Forced-return monitoring II project (FRM) implemented by ICMPD in conjunction with Frontex and FRA.

Additionally, the FRO team participated in the development of several training sessions and training materials (CCC basic and mid-level, preventive profiling and operational training AID 2019). For the CCC basic level, the team reviewed and provided comments for mainstreaming fundamental rights in the CCC Interoperability Assessment Programme (IAP).

Throughout 2018, the FRO and her team were engaged in the induction training sessions for newcomers on a monthly basis. The engagement in this activity is deemed crucial since the new regulation has clearly stepped up the fundamental rights obligations of the European Border and Coast Guard staff. The FRO also was engaged in revising the Frontex staff training on the concept of fundamental rights.

In 2018 a total of 10 complaints were received. After performing an admissibility review, three complaints were declared admissible and have been forwarded to the relevant MS authorities and the executive director. In relation to complaints declared inadmissible, the FRO responded individually and provided information on other remedies available for complainants to address to other institutions or authorities, under the principle of good administration.

With regard to the complaint mechanism, the FRO further developed and disseminated communication materials such as a booklet and a poster to raise awareness about the complaints mechanism.

Hard copies of the booklet are available in operational areas and via the Frontex website in 11 languages: English, French, Arabic, Urdu, Pashtu, Tigrinya, Albanian, Serbian, Farsi, Russian and Spanish. A video on the complaints mechanism has been produced for debriefings and other relevant training activities/presentations for Frontex staff, in particular deployed officers and members of the teams ⁽²⁰⁾, with the aim to raise awareness of the complaint mechanism.

Highlights: Fundamental rights in 2018

Child protection

The FRO substantially contributed to the design of child-protection training for border guards: including the necessity of a child-friendly and gender-sensitive approach when collecting fingerprints and other biometric data. Child-protection training enhances awareness among the border guard community about the rights and needs of children on the move to ensure that border guarding measures take the best interest of the child into account.

The FRO was intensively engaged in the development of the *Vega Handbook on land borders* which is available at FOSS. The handbook aims to increase the awareness of border guard officers with regard to children (minors) who are crossing the external land border of the European Union, whether they are unaccompanied or not. This can improve the identification of children on the move at risk at land borders, while ensuring respect for their rights and enhancing action taken against criminal threats to their well-being.

Return operations

The FRO contributed to the new *Code of conduct for return operations and return interventions*. This new code offers a strong basis to raise behavioural standards and ensure that return operations and return interventions are performed in a humane manner, with the strictest compliance with fundamental rights.

Regarding the capacity-development dimension, in 2018, two iterations of the European course for Frontex fundamental rights trainers were held for a total of 40 border guard officers. One of these iterations was primarily focused on providing training support to the Western Balkan States in the area of fundamental rights via the IPA II project 'Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey'. As a result of these training events Frontex certified a total of 37 specialists in the area of training of fundamental rights for border guards.

As of 2018, mobile training teams specialised in fundamental rights and child protection are available to conduct training activities upon request. Taking advantage of this possibility, an event was conducted at the Romanian Alexandru Ioan Cuza police academy, where Fundamental Rights training for first and second line officers was conducted and attended by 18 Romanian border police officers.

In December 2018, following an extensive process, the European course for fundamental rights specialists was successfully accredited, attesting the course's alignment with the European standards for vocational education and training and that the courses provides the border and coast guards with the relevant skills and competence required to perform their demanding jobs.

With the support of national border-authority experts, EU agencies (in particular, EASO and FRA), international organisations (in particular, IOM, UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross) and the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of the Frontex consultative forum on fundamental rights, Frontex continued its work on developing new courses and updating the existing ones in line with the latest developments in the area of fundamental rights and child protection. The content of a new manual for Frontex fundamental rights trainers was developed in cooperation with the Frontex FRO and the Frontex consultative forum on fundamental rights (publication envisaged in 2019).

In 2018, Frontex training unit also completed its work on the European course on the protection of children at the borders. The course streamlines the child-protection and best-interest considerations in line with international and EU law and relevant good practices in the operational work of frontline officers at

⁽²⁰⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 of 14 September 2016 on the European Border and Coast Guard (OJ L 251, 16.9.2016, p. 1). See the Regulation Art 2 (8) definitions: (8) 'member of the teams' means a member of the European Border and Coast Guard teams or teams of staff involved in return-related tasks participating in return operations or return interventions.

all stages of border control. The manual on protection of children at the borders was produced in cooperation with key international, EU and non-governmental stakeholders (Publication envisaged in 2019).

In the course of the year, Frontex training unit focused its attention on following the victim-centred approach and the protection of the fundamental rights of victims of trafficking and of other serious cross-border crime in a number of new courses and/or course modules, such as:

- the European course for Frontex anti-trafficking specialists;
- the course on anti-trafficking for border officers;
- the course on the protection of children against cross-border crime;
- Frontex course on protection of victims at the borders;
- the course module on preventive profiling.

Information on the complaints mechanism as part of the 2018 annual report

Pursuant to Article 72(9) of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation (EBCG) 2016/1624, the Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO) 'shall report to the executive director and to the management board as to the Agency's and Member States' findings and follow-up made in response to complaints. The Agency shall include **information on the complaints mechanism in its annual report**'.

The complaints-mechanism framework is set up as an administrative mechanism to safeguard compliance with fundamental rights in all Frontex field or return activities. The FRO is responsible for handling complaints received in writing by Frontex either from individuals directly affected by Frontex activities, or their representatives, under the right to good administration. The FRO is in charge of performing an admissibility check and referring admissible complaints for follow-up and findings to the relevant Member State authorities and the Frontex's executive director, as applicable.

In 2018, the FRO received a total of 10 complaints, performed admissibility reviews and declared three complaints admissible. National procedures are currently ongoing and the FRO is consolidating information on the findings upon receipt, requesting updates as necessary.

Further details of the admissible complaints as per Recital 50 of the EBCG regulation

CMP-2018-00005 in relation to CMP-2017-00001

- Complainant: family of six persons, including four children, who had formally expressed to the competent authorities their will to seek for asylum in Greece.
- Frontex activity: Air readmission operation on 20 October 2016 from Greece to Turkey.
- Allegation types: right to asylum (Article 18 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights); Rights of the child (Article 24); protection in the event of removal, expulsion or extradition (Article 19).
- Alleged perpetrator: Member State, Frontex implementation.
- Type of case: standard, reported weeks after the event.
- Follow-up and findings:

The FRO ensured the follow-up on the case, pursuant to Article 72 (4) of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation since January 2017. On 25 October 2017, after several requests from the FRO, the Hellenic national focal point of contact (NFPoC) notified the FRO via email that the complaint was still under investigation by the general inspectorate of public administration. On 13 February 2018, the ED submitted a letter to the Greek NFPoC asking for urgent follow-up on the investigations.

On 17 July 2018 a new complaint CMP-2018-0005 was submitted based on the lack of response on findings and follow-up of complaint CMP-2017-00001. Violation of the right to good administration is added to the previous alleged violations mentioned above. The FRO periodically requested a response from the NFPoC on the follow-up and a meeting was held. On 3 December 2018, the director of the border-protection division submitted a letter to the FRO reporting that the actions of the Hellenic police do not fall under the competence of the general inspector of public administration.

In light of the results, the Hellenic police informed that they ordered an internal preliminary administrative investigation.

To the end of the reporting period (31 December 2018) the FRO did not receive feedback from the Hellenic authorities and the deadline set out in the Frontex Rules has expired. In the opinion of the FRO, this situation endangers the effectiveness of the complaints mechanism and the principles of good administration and due diligence that should be observed.

CMP-2018-00008

- Complainant: one person returned by plane from Madrid, Spain.
- Frontex's activity: Joint return operation on 26 September 2018 from Spain to Colombia.
- Allegation types: human dignity (Article 1 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights); prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 4).
- Alleged perpetrator: Member State, Frontex implementation.
- Type of case: standard, reported 2 months after the event.
- Follow-up and findings: The Spanish police on 18 December 2018 reported back to the FRO. The FRO requested additional information on allegations addressed by the complainant.

CMP-2018-00009

- Complainant: person with disabilities and reduced mobility.
- Frontex activity: Joint operation land on border checks. Polish-Ukrainian border, Dorohusk border crossing point, 13 September 2018.
- Allegation types: integration of persons with disabilities (Article 26 of the European Charter European Charter of Fundamental Rights).
- Alleged perpetrator: Member State, Frontex implementation.
- Type of case: standard.
- Follow-up and Findings: pending; complaint forwarded to NFPoC on 17 January 2019.

In relation to complaints declared inadmissible, the FRO responds individually with detailed explanations about the reasons for inadmissibility, and provides (whenever possible) information on other remedies available (when known) where complainants might wish to address their complaints or concerns to other institutions or authorities, in accordance to the principle of good administration and the information provided by MS themselves.

Outlook

Following the principle of good administration and the subsequent need to ensure access to information on the complaints mechanism, the FRO further developed and continues with the dissemination of information material to raise awareness about the complaints mechanism and its procedures.

2.13. Data protection

Summary

Throughout 2018, the data protection officer (DPO) has been involved in 145 meetings in its capacity to provide guidance and advice on an array of activities with an impact over the processing of personal data. DPO, in addition, received over 130 requests for advice. Under the previous data-protection legal regime, 53 notifications were received for consultation; of these nine have been completed, three were suspended and 41 remain pending ⁽²¹⁾ at different stages of completion or awaiting either DPO input or

⁽²¹⁾ Notifications labelled as 'pending' remain in the hands of different stakeholders, i.e. some are pending on the DPO's side for review and comments. Others were commented and are pending on the controllers' side for adapting the notification in ac-

redrafting by the controllers. The DPO received two data-subject ⁽²²⁾ requests that were answered within the legal time frame, and was involved in the handling of two data breaches and commented or drafted over 120 documents, ranging from contracts, agreements or policies.

The DPO conducted an inventory of Frontex data-processing activities, which resulted in the identification of 188 processing operations conducted on personal data. Out of these, 53 are in the public register of processing operations.

The entry into force (11 December 2018) of the new data protection regulation marks a shift in the way data protection is handled within Frontex. A highlight in this topic is that the specific operational personal-data chapter may be used for the processing of personal data conducted by processing personal data for risk analysis (PeDRA) and that its applicability is no longer excluded from Frontex operations. This is the result of several actions conducted by the Data Protection Officer, Frontex management and the Brussels liaison office to explain the operational needs of Frontex. Those actions were recognised by the EU legislator, who then granted the flexibility required for the processing of operational personal data for analysis and transmission purposes.

Due to the new obligations set by the new data protection regulation, the DPO has issued a new template for records of processing operations with guidelines on how to fill them in. Likewise, and in order to fill the legislative gap created between the entry into force of the new general data protection regulation (GDPR) and the EU institutions' data-protection regulation, the Data Protection Officer issued a template with model clauses for annexing to contracts when contracting third parties that process personal data on behalf of Frontex.

In December 2018 the DPO organised a first meeting with the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) to initiate dialogue on the PeDRA expansion and the new activities conducted by Frontex for implementing the 2016 mandate in relation to the processing of personal data. In addition to this meeting, the EDPS provided training on the new data protection regulation specifically for Frontex controllers.

Highlights: Data protection in 2018

Frontex Application for Returns (FAR) got the EDPS prior approval: some recommendations need to be implemented and ECRet has drafted an implementation plan in cooperation with the DPO to address them.

A new draft for repealing and replacing the Management Board rules on operational personal data has been presented to the Management Board and comments by MS and the EU Commission were received. Likewise, the DPO has been heavily involved in the main features for expanding PeDRA, in particular on data transmission to MS, on expanding the data collection, on the anonymisation of personal data and on the collection of data of persons who cross the external border without authorisation.

Heavy involvement of the DPO in the crime information cell, in particular drafting its terms of reference, the SOP for the processing of personal data, the communication of the pilot vis-à-vis the European Data Protection Supervisor, and the reporting templates.

The DPO was heavily involved in the exchange of information with Europol, which led to formal consultation with the EDPS on the possibility of receiving personal data from Europol. The outcome of the opinion was negative.

The DPO actively participated in meetings, drafted documents for the amendment of the new data-protection regulation in order to be able to use the police cooperation chapter for the purposes defined under Article 47 of the Frontex Regulation.

Finally, the DPO raised awareness, in particular through specific dedicated training delivered by Maastricht University on the new data protection regulation applicable to EU institutions.

cordance to the comments received. It needs to be considered that since 11 December 2018, notifications do not longer exist and all notifications will have to be re-submitted following the obligations of the new data protection regulation.

⁽²²⁾ A data subject is any person whose personal data is being collected, held or processed. <https://eugdprcompliant.com/what-is-data-subject>

2.14. Governance

Finance and corporate services

Highlights: Finance and corporate services in 2018

From a financial management perspective, budget, finance and corporate services (BFCS) contributed significantly to achieving efficiency gains in 2018 by implementing a simplified grants in close cooperation with ORD, which led to a 73 % reduction in the number of grants (from 1 824 to 499).

Budget management and financial governance contributed to maintaining Frontex full-scale operations through the verification of 3 153 commitments amounting to close to EUR 384 million (budget 2018 and anticipated budget 2019). Budget-transfer management was enhanced and reporting made more efficient by the budget team via the introduction of a budgetary-correspondent function.

Another significant BFCS achievement in 2018 was the opening for use of five fully furnished new office floors (5 000 m², 23 % of Frontex office space total) with 325 new workstations. Continued support was provided to existing staff, newcomers and contractors throughout the year, amounting to more than 800 workstations being managed at the end of 2018. Each newcomer was provided with a stationery set. Additionally, the introduction of a control system led to significantly higher efficiency in the use of office supplies. As part of caring for the staff well-being and facilities, uninterrupted operation of the canteen, kitchens and cleaning service were guaranteed. Also, the necessary repair and maintenance programmes of both buildings' facilities were ensured.

To facilitate the growing cooperation and exchange with external stakeholders, more than 5 800 meetings were organised with more than 24 000 visitors registered. Over 5 500 parcels were handled. More than 500 training events on myFX were provided as part of the roll-out of the document-management system. Effective support was provided to the expatriate staff, including direct assistance in almost 1 500 cases and 75 expatriate services information mailings, the latter for the use of all staff.

BFCS enabled all Frontex entities to perform duties related to travel with nearly 4 000 official trip ('mission') orders processed, followed by a similar amount of claims.

On 24 May 2018, Frontex hosted more than 600 participants (European border and coast guards from more than 30 countries, as well as representatives of ministries and local authorities) at the European Border and Coast Guard Day organised by Budget, Finance and Corporate Services Unit (BFCS and several other Frontex entities). Every year the EBCG Day provides a platform for sharing best practice in the field of border control and exchanging views between key border-management players. For the first time in the event's 9-year history, EBCG Day 2018 was organised outside Warsaw, in the Polish town of Sopot. Following the official conference, participants witnessed a spectacular maritime exercise conducted by the Polish border guard.

Human resources and security

Highlights: Human resources and security in 2018

- Successful management of all related HR activities, namely in areas of rights and entitlement of staff, learning and staff development **(including a newcomer-induction programme and leadership and management development programme)**.
- Launch of 56 new recruitment procedures.
- Filling of 187 vacant posts (temporary agents (TAs), contract agents (CAs) and seconded national experts (SNEs)), including 13 posts of directors, heads of unit (HoU), heads of task force and heads of sector.
- Management of Frontex **traineeship programme with 30 positions filled during spring and autumn intake**.
- Management of Frontex interims programme with 40 positions **filled during the year**.
- Successful implementation of the concept of HR business partners.
- Arrangement was signed for sharing EU classified information **between the General Secretariat of the Council, the European Commission, and European External Action Service, on the one part, and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, on the other**.
- Physical security risk assessment for B-building and incorporation in refurbishment planning.
- Start up and drafting of **travel security advice for Frontex staff**.
- Recruitment for security sector **with six posts filled**.

(Detailed data and figures available in Section 4.7. Human resources management)

Information and communications technology (ICT)

Highlights: Information and communications technology in 2018

Support of the further development of FAR and of Frontex application for return — return by scheduled flights (FAR RSF)

During 2018, the FAR charters application has been maintained and developed further with 11 new releases covering 215 new requirements, including the development of a software interface in order to allow the MS return systems have direct connection with FAR charters. Major improvements covered finance module, monitors pool, escort pool, passenger list overbooking and family cluster and the new role of escort leader.

The FAR RSF application has been maintained with over 200 tickets solved and further developed with seven new releases covering 120 new requirements. Major improvements covered the interfaces with travel agency IT systems.

New version of Eurosur

After 8 years of operation, the Eurosur application user interface was refurbished following the prior security analysis recommendation that an obsolete software component (no longer supported by its maker, Google) be replaced. This required a major overhaul of the user interface and related parts of the Eurosur application: including the introduction of a dashboard feature, the rationalisation and optimisation of the look and feel of the interface; improving its aesthetics and the user experience. This task was carried out in continuous consultation with the volunteering countries (Norway, Bulgaria and Greece). The new interface has since served as a design pattern for other Frontex software developments such as Opera Evolution and the vulnerability assessment platform data collection module. The Eurosur application was extended to widen the support to the browsers requested by MS: in effect the four most popular browsers for Linux and Windows can be used to access the application. In total, one major release and three minor patch releases were deployed in 2018, further improving and solidifying the Eurosur application.

Consolidation of statistical analysis software (SAS) solution

In 2018, migration of the SAS solution was planned and initiated, with the delivery of a consolidated SAS solution being in progress. As a final result of those activities overall reliability and performance of the solution will be improved, which will enable future extensions of the SAS solution. In parallel, support services for SAS solution were procured and delivered, facilitating smooth and reliable operations.

Delivery of data collection tool for vulnerability assessment (VA)

In December 2018, Frontex delivered a new vulnerability assessment data-collection module which has been installed in the Eurosur nodes at all Member States and Schengen associated countries. This solution provides each country with a central point to give answers to the baseline assessment questionnaire at the EU restricted level.

Delivery of analysis tools

Operational-data analysis tools were delivered in the end of 2018, to use data contained in all Eurosur layers (including JORA events) of the Frontex Eurosur communication network (ECN) node. The data is stored in a data-warehouse system, can be processed with the integrated business intelligence, geographical information system (GIS) and document-analysis software. Reports produced through the system can be scheduled and shared with selected Eurosur users (including those in the Member States) of the analysis-tools web portal.

Digital signature

In July 2018, Frontex deployed the components of electronic signature, which paved the way for a pilot implementation of a number of signing and sealing mechanisms. These mechanisms are to be integrated into existing workflows gradually throughout 2019.

Tender for Opera

On the 18 Dec 2018 we have signed the framework contract for the development of an ICT software solution for the management of Frontex operational resources: the Opera system. This contract will provide four incremental releases of the new Opera system across 2 years.

Tender for a framework contract for the further development, the maintenance and the support of Eurosur

The 2-year end-to-end work to secure a new framework contract for Eurosur was successfully completed and it resulted in the signing of a new EUR 12 million contract. It entered into force on 30 July 2018 and is expected to cover Frontex needs until 2022.

ICT support performance statistics for 2018

- Total number of service requests and incidents created in 2018: 27 441 (2017: 21 325, a growth of 29 %).
- Total number of incidents created in 2018: 3 471 (13 % of all registered requests).

- The average number of service requests and tickets created in 2018 daily: 125 (rounded).
- Total number of service requests and incidents completed in 2018: 27 306 (2017: 20 947, a growth of 30 %).
- Total number of incidents completed in 2018: 3 437 (13 % of all registered requests).
- The average number of service requests and tickets completed in 2018 daily: 124 (rounded).
- Percentage of service requests and incidents completed in 2018 within agreed SLAs and service level specification (SLS): 90 %.
- Percentage of service requests and incidents completed in 2018 within agreed SLAs: 91 %.
- Percentage of service requests and incidents completed in 2018 within agreed SLS: 90 %.
- Total number of infrastructure changes created in 2018: 217 (2017: 149, a growth of 46 %).
- Total number of infrastructure changes completed in 2018: 141 (2017: 181, a drop of 22 %).

User-related projects completed

- Upgrade of the end-users workstations operating system from Windows 7 to Windows 10: 93 % office workstations completed.
- Replacement of the audio video-conferencing infrastructure components and deployment of the new audio video terminals (12) in HQ and operational areas.
- Replacement (16 new multifunctional devices) and extension (14 additional multifunctional devices) of the printing fleet together with implementation of the new print-management solution.
- Extension of the 'EU restricted' network by implementing the end-points-management solution (system centre configuration manager (SCCM)) together with an increase and replacement of the obsolete end-user equipment (100 new workstations).
- Migration of the users from the legacy EU restricted network to the new one: 74 % completed (91 out of 123).
- Extension of the audio-video-projection infrastructure for the purposes of the MAS project (new high resolution wide displays).
- Implementing dual boot, unclassified/EU restricted workstation solution to limit the number of distributed workstations.
- Deployment of the IT infrastructure for liaison officers in remote offices in Sofia (Bulgaria), Budapest (Hungary), Stockholm (Sweden) and Bratislava (Slovakia).
- Support for the AFIC projects: proposal and assessment of the IT equipment purchased from grants as well as the support of the external AFIC training.
- Support of the internet connection for the CIC project on vessels.

ICT has successfully completed the upgrade and migration of the email communication solution (Microsoft exchange server).

Further development of myFX, with the release of HowTo and HydePark.

Legal affairs

Highlights: Legal affairs in 2018

2018 was a busy year for the legal services sector (LEG), which merged with the procurement team (previously part of BFCS unit) on 1.1.2018 and together now form the legal and procurement unit (LPU). LEG continued to be involved in an increasing amount of legal issues connected to procurement procedures and contract management issues.

However, LEG also became increasingly busy in its support to core business practitioners (e.g. regarding border management/justice and home affairs/the Schengen body of law ('*acquis*')). For instance, in light of increasing numbers of requests for legal support, LEG has further developed its dedicated internal team providing legal support to the various Frontex operational divisions/units, and entities (LEG.OPS). As such, LEG continued to be highly active in reviewing and contributing to the drafting and signature of various operational plans, memoranda of understanding on the deployment of Frontex Liaison Officers to Member States and to third countries, status agreements with multiple third countries (e.g. Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia), supporting the establishment of the ETIAS central unit, revising the code of conduct for return operations and return interventions coordinated or organised by Frontex, and more.

Furthermore, again in light of continuously increasing number of requests for legal support, LEG further developed its dedicated internal team providing legal support to the non-operational Frontex divisions/units, and entities (LEG.GOV). As such, LEG continued to be highly active in carrying out quality control reviews of internal decision-making processes (e.g. legally reviewing draft Executive Director's and Management Board decisions), other MB-related work, reviewing detailed amendments to the existing lease for office space in the Warsaw Spire building, assisting with the extension of the free loan agreement for the EURTF premises in Catania (Italy), supporting the implementation of the headquarters agreement between Poland and Frontex, taking over the IRMA platform from the European Commission, concluding lightweight arrangements for the exchange of classified information with Schengen-associated countries, and more.

Moreover, in 2018 LEG organised a LEGNET meeting for national border-management officers/lawyers and for 6 months successfully chaired the inter-agency legal network (IALN) for EU agency and joint undertaking lawyers.

In addition, LEG continued to be responsible for the handling of complaints lodged against Frontex at the European Ombudsman (with no findings of maladministration), and the increasing amount of applications for public access to documents (thereby also managing sensitive operational data). Furthermore, it continued to successfully represent Frontex in court cases both before the EU general court and national courts. In this sense, LEG has achieved a 100 % success rate with all court cases won between 2017 and 2018, and also recovered costs incurred in litigation proceedings.

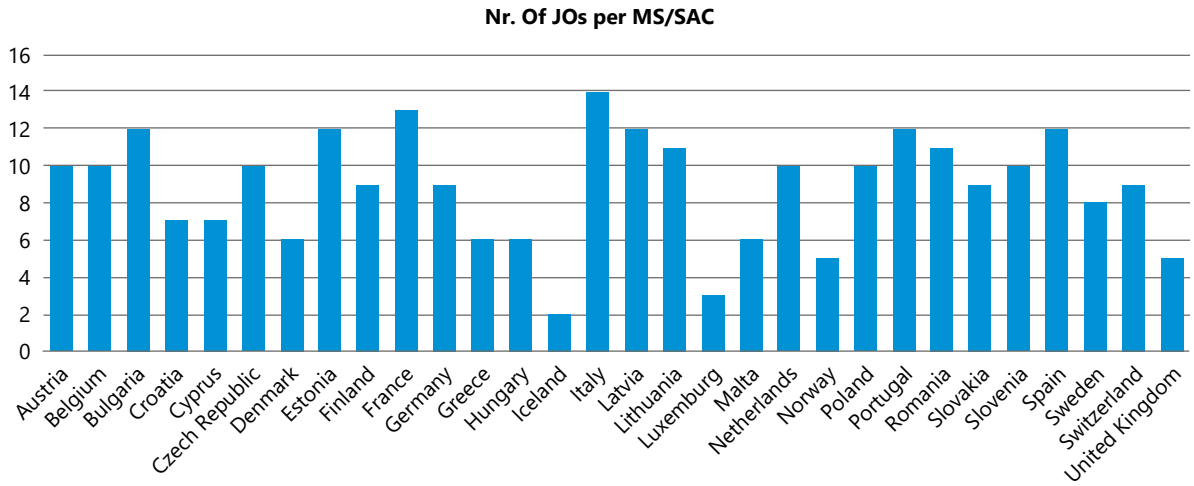
Procurement sector (PROC) achievements in 2018 are included at Section 4.4. Procurement procedures.

3. Frontex key results and progress towards the achievement of objectives

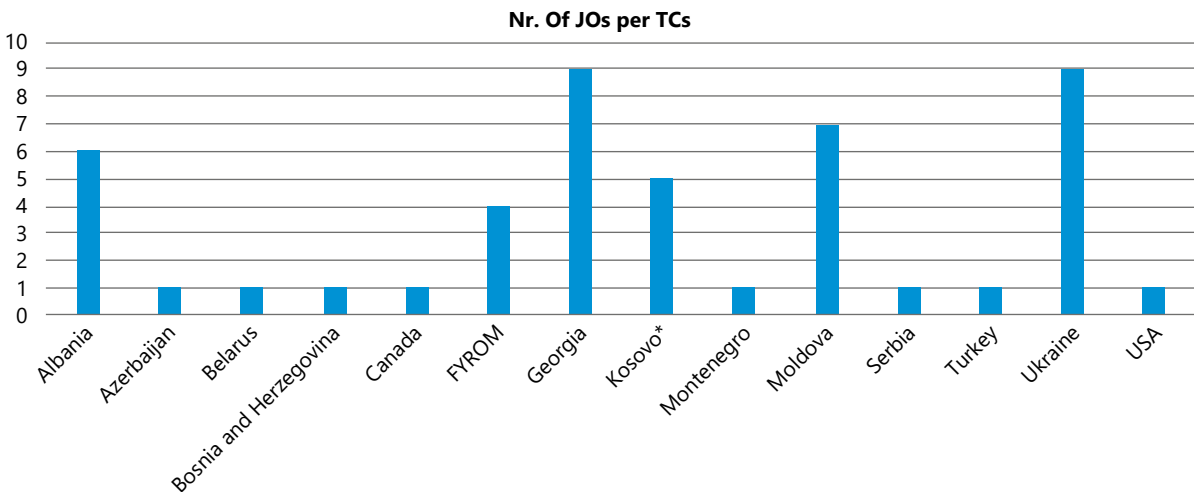
3.1. Key performance indicators (KPI)

The most relevant operation key performance indicators.

Description of indicator	In 2018, the number of Member States participating in operational activities is to remain at the same level as in 2017.
Target	A total of 30 Member States and Schengen associated countries participated in operational activities in 2018.

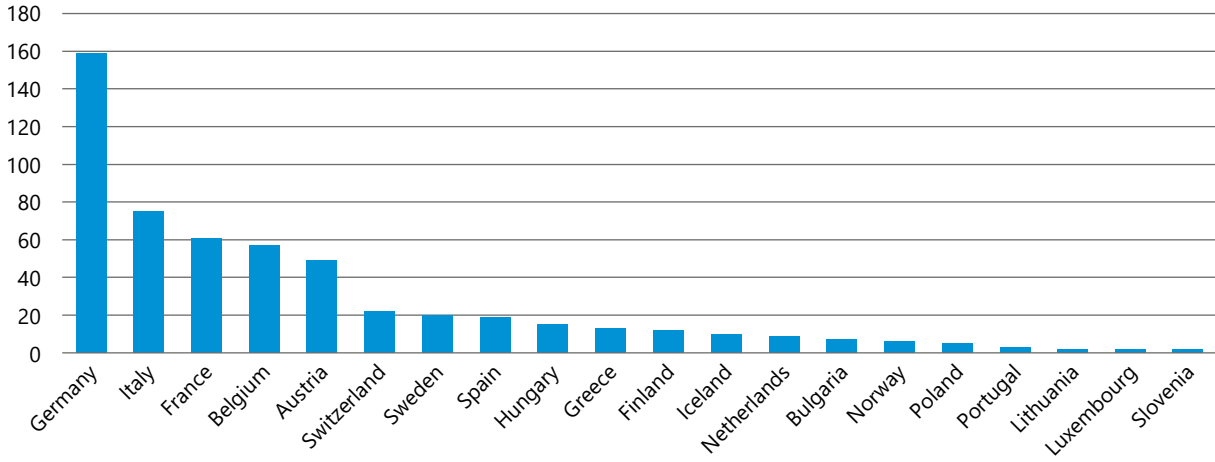


The overview shows that during 2018, all Member States and Schengen associated countries participated in at least one joint operation. In that respect the target set was reached.



In 2018, a total of 14 third countries at least once participated in Frontex operations. Ukraine and Georgia were the most active third countries and participated in nine operations, followed by Moldova (seven), Albania (six) and Kosovo ⁽²³⁾ (five).

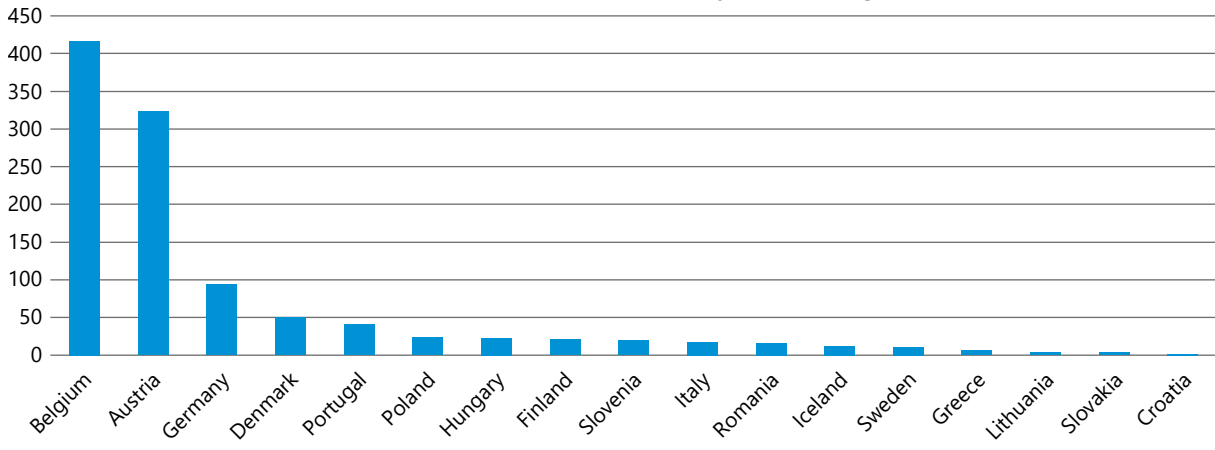
Participation(*) of MS/SAC in return operations by charter — 2018



(*) Both as organising as well as participating Member States.

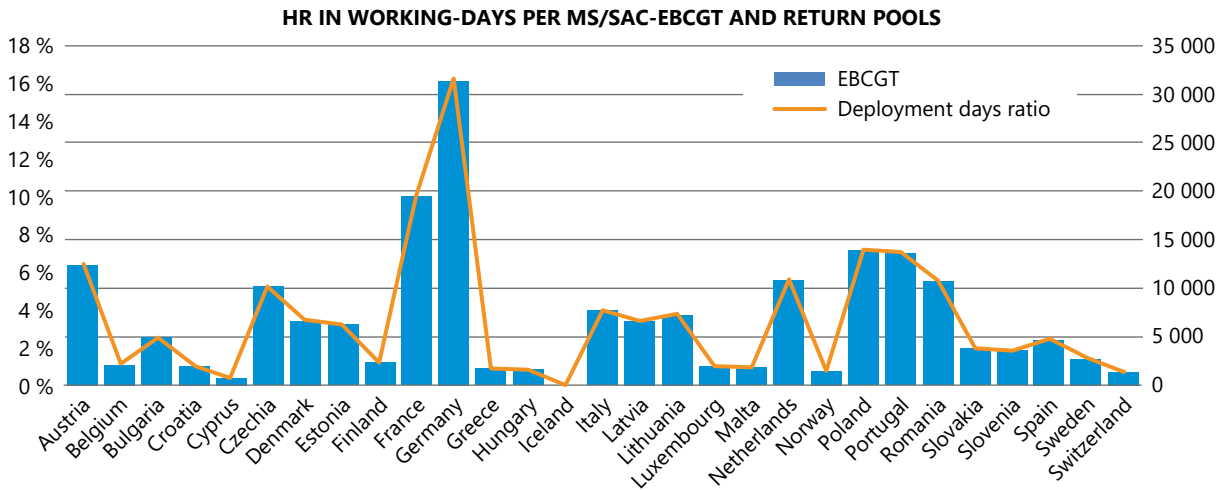
In 2018, 20 Member States took part as an organiser or a participant in return operations coordinated and co-financed by Frontex. Overall, in 2018, Member States handed over 12,245 returnees and reached 38 third countries of return. While the number of return operations organised by Member States remained almost unchanged compared with 2017, the figures show a significant decrease in the number of third-country nationals returned in 2018 (almost – 14 %).

Participation of MS/SAC in return operations by scheduled flight — 2018

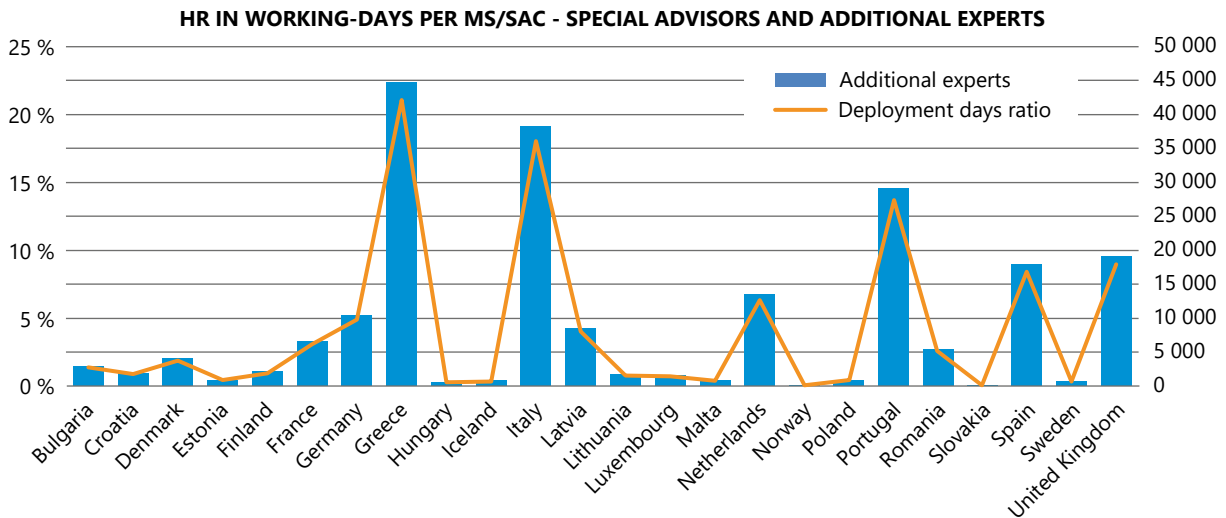


Throughout 2018 the pilot project for returns by scheduled flight made a substantial contribution to the continuous efforts to assist Member States in the implementation of returns and exceeded performance goals. Seventeen Member States performed return operations by scheduled flight reaching 49 destinations. In 1 083 operations, a total of 1 477 third country nationals were taken to their respective countries.

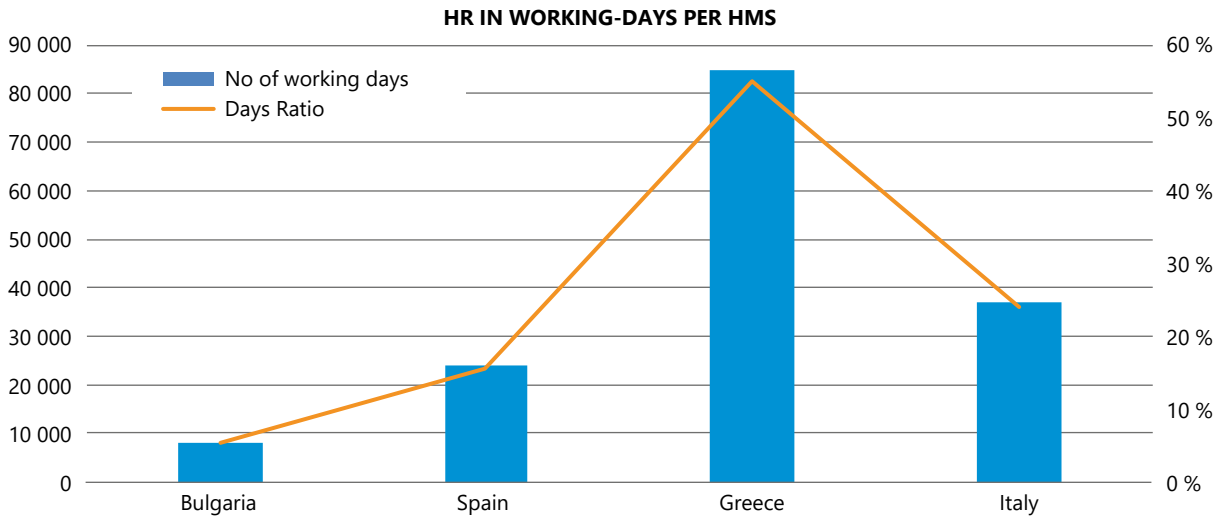
⁽²³⁾ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



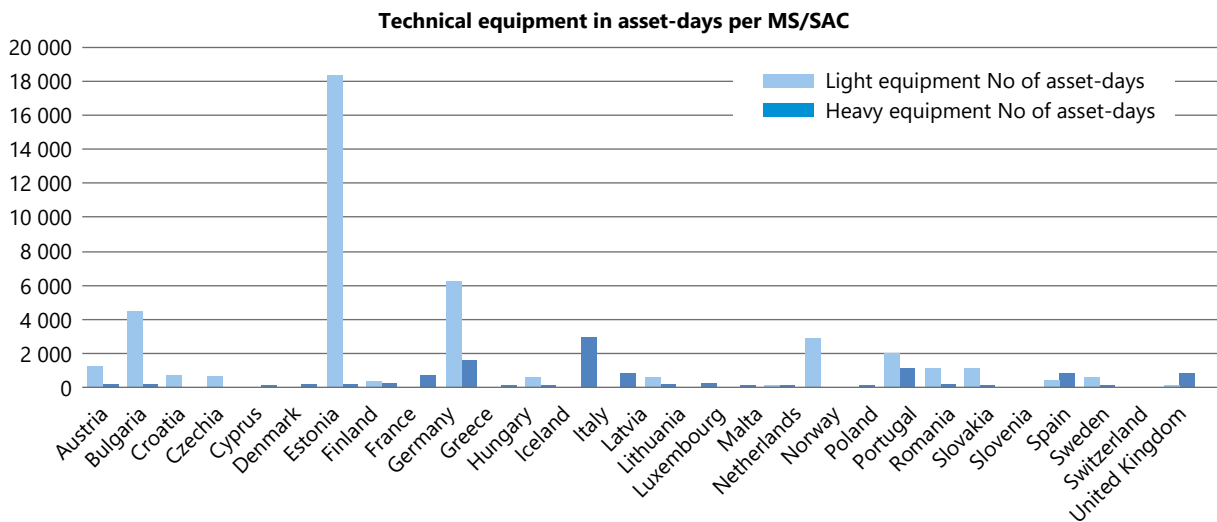
In terms of deployment of the European Border and Coast Guard team members and return pool experts, the top three MS contributing with the highest number of working days were Germany, France and Poland. The host Member States (Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Spain) contributed to almost 10 % to the overall number of EBCGT and return pool working days of experts deployed in Frontex operations. Out of 29 MS/SAC countries, eight contributed to more than 10 000 working days in this category of deployments profiles. The total contribution in this category amounted to 193 039 working days.



The above chart on special advisers and additional experts deployed in operational activities (joint operations) needs to be read together with the one below as this shows that two hosting Member States (Greece and Italy) are still the main providers of human resources in joint operations. In terms of special advisers and additional experts, Greece and Italy were followed by Portugal, the United Kingdom and Spain. In comparison to 2017, there was a significant increase in the contribution provided in working days in operational areas by the top five countries. However, due to this increase the contributions from other hosting Member States are no longer as balanced as in 2017. Out of 24 MS/SAC countries, the top five countries' contribution amounts to over 70 % of the overall number of working days in this category.



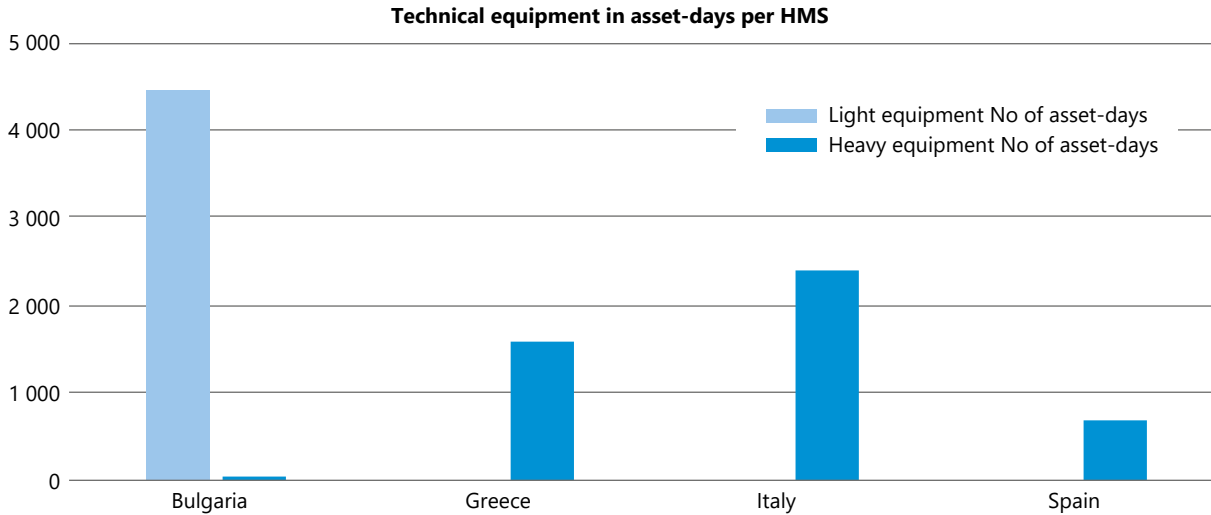
The high level of contribution from host Member States can also be seen in the internal deployments of human resources (in working days) deployed in Frontex operations. Overall, the internal deployments of host Member States amount to more than 33 % of overall number of working days of human resources deployed in 2018.



As regards the deployment of technical equipment, the same tendency from 2017 can be identified. In 2018, the contributions from participating Member States have started to outpace the level of contributions from hosting Member States. At the current stage and based on the tools at the full disposal of Frontex (own equipment) but also considering the level of resource utilisation in the participating Member States a full replacement of resources provided by the hosting Member State is not achievable.

The contribution of Estonia – almost 96 % of asset-day contribution in terms of providing portable light technical equipment (CO₂ detectors, heartbeat detectors and other small equipment) – was particularly remarkable when compared with other MS/SAC ⁽²⁴⁾. On the other hand, Italy provided the highest contribution in terms of heavy technical equipment.

⁽²⁴⁾ This number is excluding Frontex's own portable technical equipment deployments in 2018.



Bulgaria remains the biggest contributor in respect of providing patrol equipment.

Financial indicators

Description of indicator	Provision of budget-related and financial services. Provision of miscellaneous corporate services including travel services. Development and implementation of the new premises project.
Target	Prepared and submitted in a timely manner; monitoring provided; compliance with the regulatory framework; high level of staff satisfaction.

Budget, planning, monitoring, coordinating and reporting on provisional and voted budget was efficiently performed. With regard to the discharge procedure ⁽²⁵⁾, support was provided to external auditors and all replies to the external auditors were submitted in a timely manner. The discharge procedure was properly prepared, all mandatory and additionally requested documents were submitted to the discharge authorities on time.

Regarding provision of financial services, the compliance with the regulatory framework was ensured. All transactions were introduced in a timely manner into accrual based accounting (ABAC) large financial-management system and the revenue was collected in a timely manner. The decentralised financial initiation was supported by the unit in complex areas. For the part of financial initiation centralised in BFCS, over 400 payments from multiple budget items and compensation payments were executed, and over 80 recovery orders initiated. All commitment transactions as well as all payment transactions exceeding EUR 5 000 threshold were verified.

The end-of-year procedure was steered and implemented under the guidance of the financial verifiers without any delays.

The unit also provided tailor-made training on ABAC and the expenditure life cycle (ELC).

- Three 2-day ABAC training sessions for financial initiators were provided, the level of satisfaction was at 84 %.
- Six iterations of the ELC training were conducted.
- TRU held 22 individual sessions for newly appointed authorising officers by delegation or sub-delegation. Based on the feedback received the satisfaction level is satisfactory.

⁽²⁵⁾ Members of the European Parliament scrutinise how money has been spent by the European Commission and the other EU institutions and agencies in a procedure known as discharge. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20150427STO46470/discharge-procedure-how-parliament-scrutinises-the-eu-budget>

Facility management enabled five fully furnished new office floors (5 000 m², 23 % of the Frontex office space total) with 325 new workstations, more than 800 workstations managed at year's end.

Administrative support for meetings and conferences allowed for the organisation of 5 809 meetings.

Reception registered 24 028 visitors and handled 5 683 parcels.

Expatriate services provided assistance in 1 492 cases and sent 75 info mailings for the use of all staff; a satisfaction survey revealed a highly appreciative evaluation of expatriate services with more than 90 % of responses positive.

The library was continuously available, office supplies were provided in a timely manner to all staff, administrative ad hoc support was safeguarded.

Efficient management of corporate travel including the financial aspects of planning, managing and reimbursement of business travel ('mission') costs to staff members and STMs was ensured with close to 4 000 mission orders processed, followed by a similar amount of claims.

Booking of missions and reimbursements was done in a timely manner. A survey conducted in December 2018 showed a satisfaction level of 93 %. Thanks to the efficient management of bonus programmes, the negotiated discounts for flight tickets in 2018 were between 5-25 % depending on the bonus programmes with airlines.

The preparation of the plot of land for the new premises took place. Under the headquarters agreement of 9 March 2017, the Polish ministry of interior ensured cleaning and clearing of the site, in cooperation with Frontex. Works included demolition of several old buildings and remnants of old structures and were accomplished before the end of 2018.

The head of permanent premises task force to manage the project was recruited and took up duties at the beginning of 2019.

3.2. Key conclusions on management and internal control

Frontex conducts its operations in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, working in an open and transparent manner and meeting the expected high level of professional and ethical standards.

Frontex adopted a set of internal control standards, based on international good practice, to ensure the achievement of its objectives. The financial regulation requires that the organisational structure and the internal control systems used for the implementation of the budget are set up under these standards.

In 2018, an ongoing review of the internal control system and organisational performance provided reasonable assurance to Frontex management as to the level of compliance with all internal controls, on the correct functioning of the systems in place and on organisational performance. The review highlighted the main strengths and the potential weaknesses of the systems in place and supported the establishment of an improvement action plan.

In 2018, Frontex took measures to improve the efficiency of its internal control systems. Such measures need to be put in perspective with the ongoing implementation of the new and extended mandate, the significant increase in staff and the resulting overhaul of the organisational structure. Those undertakings are certainly challenging the steadfast implementation of control measures due to an extended 'learning curve'. Nevertheless the items listed below remained at a high level of efficiency.

- Risk management and processes (ICS 8 processes and procedures, ICS 11 document management and ICS 12 information and communication).
- Leadership (ICS 9 management supervision, ICS 15 assessment of the internal control system).

People management (ICS 3 staff allocation and mobility) and ICS 7 operational structure were assessed (2018) as requiring major improvements. Following reorganisation of the Frontex structure adopted by the Management Board in (June 2017), both areas were covered by development projects to increase the effectiveness of the controls. Results have been obtained on these areas, particularly regarding ICS 7. The new Frontex internal structure has solidified and further improved through the development of a comprehensive internal working framework, Executive Director Decision R-2018-191 on the Frontex internal structure and rules of procedure (FISRoP).

In October 2018 an updated methodology to register exceptions and non-compliance events in line with ICP-12 complementary guidance on management and non-compliance events was introduced through ED Decision R-2018-102.

In addition, Frontex has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, including those aimed at the supervising entities to which it has entrusted budget-implementation tasks, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the Internal Audit Service and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on the management assurance as regards the achievement of control objectives.

In conclusion, Frontex management has reasonable assurance that Frontex has continued to implement a comprehensive system of internal controls, performance and results-oriented management embedding risk management and ensuring a proportional approach to compliance and effectiveness of internal procedures and systems. The necessary improvements and reinforcements have been implemented and the Executive Director, in the capacity of authorising officer, signed the declaration of assurance.

Nevertheless, Frontex recognises that given the substantial increase in Frontex resources (human and financial) and the implementation of the extended tasks and responsibilities that are assigned to Frontex, the internal control system must be further strengthened and improved in 2019.

4. Budgetary and financial management

All expenditure is implemented in the form of centralised management. As a general rule, Frontex uses the financial circuit model 3 'decentralised circuit with central counterweight', where the operational initiation and verification functions, as well as the financial initiation function, are executed within each division. The *ex ante* financial verification is centrally performed by the financial services within the financial and corporate services unit under corporate governance.

Four different circuits have been identified in Frontex: a standard circuit, a simplified circuit for commitments, a simplified circuit for payments and a mission circuit as explained below.

- For commitments below EUR 5 000, a simplified circuit is followed, where the operational-verification function is performed by the authorising officer (by delegation or by sub-delegation).
- For payments below EUR 5 000, a simplified circuit is followed, where both operational and financial-verification functions are performed by the authorising officer (by delegation or by sub-delegation).
- For missions, the operational and financial initiation function is performed centrally by the staff in the corporate travel services within budget, financial and corporate services unit; the operational and financial verification functions are performed by the relevant authorising officer (by delegation or sub-delegation).
- For all remaining transactions a standard circuit is followed where the functions of operational verification, financial verification and the functions of the authorising officer (or authorising officer by delegation or sub-delegation) are separated.

The system of delegations and deputising in Frontex applies the following principles.

- The Executive Director and deputy Executive Director are authorised to sign all transactions for all amounts and all budget lines.
- Delegations are granted by the Executive Director to division directors and heads of entities outside divisions. The delegated authorising officers may propose to further sub-delegate to the heads of units, heads of sectors and other selected staff. The sub-delegation is in force when countersigned by the Executive Director. For commitment transactions different financial thresholds apply to these delegations and sub-delegations depending on the level of responsibility of the delegated or sub-delegated authorising officer (AO) (as a general rule: director EUR 1 000 000, HoUs EUR 500 000, heads of sector EUR 200 000 and team leaders EUR 50 000). There is no financial threshold set for payments. In 2018, the total number of delegations of authorising officers' powers was 11, while 52 sub-delegations were in place.
- Deputising ('*Suppléances*'): As a general rule, deputising is performed downwards. This means that heads of units replace directors and that heads of sectors replace heads of units. When heads of sector are absent, they are replaced by team leaders. In all cases when deputising for an AO by delegation or sub-delegated, the rights of the person absent are given to the 'acting' AO by delegation or sub-delegation.

4.1. Implementation of appropriations

Summary overview of 2018 implementation per fund source

Fund source	Budget	Total commitments (¹)		Total payments(¹)	
C1 Regular budget	288 663 520	283 972 546	98%	201 167 729	70%
C4 Internal assigned revenue	2 917 023	1 339 393	46%	898 989	31%
C5 Internal assigned revenue carry over	371 234	335 434	90%	215 239	58%
C8 Automatic carry over	88 416 033	77 809 146	88%	77 809 146	88%
Sub-total:	380 367 810	363 456 519	96%	280 091 103	74%
R0 Earmarked expenditure	25 926 099	20 239 754	78%	13 225 167	51%
Total:	406 293 909	383 696 273		293 316 270	

The initial adopted budget of EUR 320.2 million was amended twice, resulting in the final budget of EUR 288.7 million. (See Section 4.2. Information on transfers and amending budgets for more information.)

In 2018, 98 % of the C1 appropriations were committed and 70 % were paid. Final implementation of the 2018 budget led to a cancellation of EUR 4.7 million out of which 81 % (EUR 3.8 million) comes from staff expenditure. This amount was kept until the end of the year considering the pending decision on the social measures. Committed but not yet paid appropriations of EUR 83.4 million from 2018 budget were carried forward to 2019 (29 %). These commitments will be paid during 2019 with the final delivery of the goods or services or the completion of operational activities. The funds automatically carried over from 2017 amounted to EUR 88.4 million (32 %). A significant part of the funds carried forward (EUR 69.1 million (83 %)) was related to Title 3 of the budget: operational expenditure with EUR 38.9 million for joint operations, and EUR 15.5 million for return operations. EUR 13.5 million (16 %) of the funds carried forward concern Title 2: administrative expenditure, out of which EUR 6.5 million was related to ICT contracts and EUR 5.5 million related to the rental costs of the building and associated expenditure. At the end of December 2018, the payment level reached 88 %. As much as EUR 10.6 million was not paid and had to be cancelled. In total, 93 % of the cancellations come from Title 3: EUR 4.5 million from joint operations, EUR 2 million from return operations, EUR 1.8 million from research and innovation, EUR 0.6 million from training and EUR 0.5 million from pooled resources.

Internal assigned revenue (the amounts reimbursed from the funds used from Frontex regular budget (C1) voted by the budgetary authority) amounted to EUR 2.9 million (C4), 46 % was committed and the rest was carried over as C5 funds. Recovery orders which were carried over from 2017 (C5) amounted to EUR 0.4 million, 90 % of which was committed and the rest was cancelled.

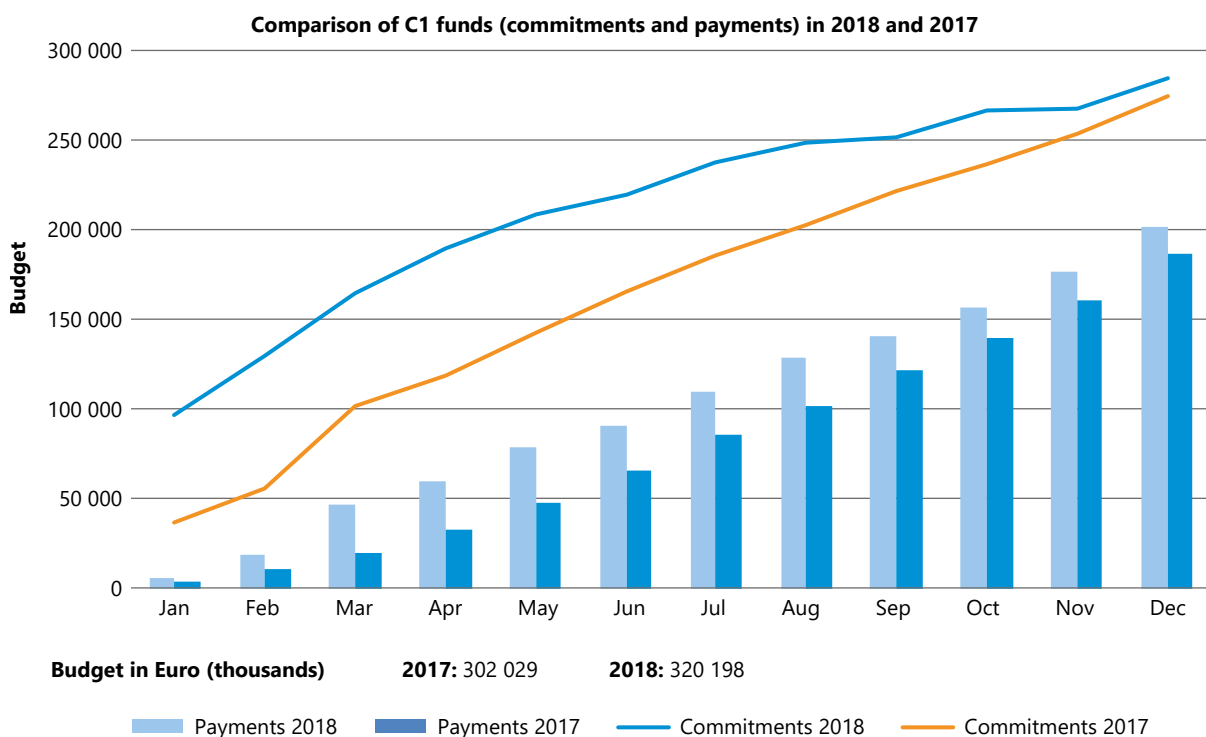
Regular budget (C1) implementation per budgetary title

Title	Budget		Total committed		Total payments	
	A	B	C=B/A	D	E=D/A	
A-1 Staff	44 369 000	40 560 809	91%	39 803 616	90%	
A-2 Other administrative expenditure	29 902 352	29 602 092	99%	16 147 540	54%	
A-3 Operational activities	214 392 168	213 809 644	100%	145 216 574	68%	
	288 663 520	283 972 545	98%	201 167 730	70%	

Performance comparison of the budget year 2018 versus 2017

	2018	2017
Commitments C1	98%	98%
Payments C1	70%	66%
Funds carried forward to the following year	29%	32%
Funds cancelled	1.6%	2.4%

The budget implementation was stable throughout 2018, the same observation as for the previous year. The overall percentage level of commitments remained the same as last year (98 %), and for payments it increased to 70 %. The percentage of funds carried forward from 2018 to 2019 was 29 %, and 2 % of the budget appropriations had to be cancelled.



4.2. Information on transfers and amending budgets

In the course of 2018 the Management Board approved two amending budgets decreasing the Frontex initial budget by EUR 31.5 million. On 12 October 2018, the Management Board adopted the third amendment to the programming document 2018-2020 along with amending budget number 1 which decreased the Frontex budget by EUR 28.9 million. In agreement with the European Commission, EUR 27 million were returned to the EU budget and entered into the global transfer within the Commission.

The main reasons behind this decrease in the budget were as follows.

- EUR 10.5 million from staff-related expenditure due to the difficulties in reaching the full occupancy of the establishment plan. The low correction coefficient applicable to the Frontex seat/HQ (Warsaw) is a crucial factor for speeding up staff recruitment and retention.
- In agreement with the European Commission, 75 % of the financial operational reserve (Articles 75-13 of the Frontex regulation) amounting to EUR 7.1 million was released.
- EUR 5 million of savings in return and operational response. Moderate flows of migrants in several border sections in 2018 and substantial cancellations of technical equipment and human resource deployments resulted in a lower overall level of deployments and consequently lower costs. As regards return operations, the initial budget proved to be over-estimated for some Member States. Overall the increasing budget of Frontex proves to be sufficient to cover operational activities.
- EUR 2.5 million from administrative expenditures as the budget for the building project and supporting activities for the development of the new Frontex HQ was not needed in 2018. Such an important construction project required first to recruit a head of task force and specialised staff in charge of the definition of the architectural terms and reference and preparation of the public procurement.

On 12 December 2018, the Management Board adopted the fifth amendment to the programming document 2018-2020, along with the amending budget number 2, which decreased Frontex's budget by EUR 2.5 million. In agreement with the European Commission, EUR 2.37 million were returned to the EU budget.

In line with the agreement with the Commission, the purpose of this amending budget was to return the remaining 25 % of the financial operational reserve amounting to EUR 2.37 million, following the assessment of the current operational situation which indicated a very low likelihood of an event that would trigger the use of those resources before the end of the year.

Following the budget-implementation reviews performed on a quarterly basis, eight budget transfers were approved by the Executive Director in 2018. In addition, during the end-of-the-year financial processes, three transfers were approved in December in order to ensure the best allocation and use of the resources. In total, transfers amounted to EUR 34 million. Only eight budget transfers were approved during the year following the implementation of quarterly budget reviews, compared to 17 transfers in 2017 (EUR 37.3 million) and 19 in 2016 (EUR 17 million).

The transfers in Title 1 (staff expenditure) amounted to EUR 6.5 million where redistribution of funds was needed due to an increase in other external services, supplementary clerical services, other recruitment costs and the fact that the initially envisaged appropriations for family, expatriation, installation and daily allowances were insufficient.

The transfers in Title 2 (other administrative expenditure) amounted to EUR 4.4 million, where redistribution of funds was necessary mainly due to the increased ICT needs (purchase of new ICT equipment for newcomers, new software licences, purchase of consultancy service for the development of tools in SharePoint for the field-deployment unit, intranet and document-management system), additional unforeseen meetings, rent and miscellaneous facility management costs and additional security equipment.

The transfers in Title 3 (operational expenditure) amounted to EUR 23.2 million, covering mainly the following needs.

- The shift of escort-officer management costs from return operations to joint operations.
- Additional funding for joint operations to cover increased heavy technical equipment deployments from Member States in the third quarter.
- Acquisition of additional aerial surveillance services within the FASS framework contract, mobile office deployment, bus and ferry transportation for readmissions.
- Additional training provided to Member States following a higher-than-expected involvement in some topics.
- Amendment of FX/OP/800/2017/JL Lot 2, prolongation of the contract duration, due to the delay in the implementation of the trial of the small MALE Remotely Piloted Aircraft System.
- Funding for emerging projects and pilot projects such as biometric on the move, maritime analysis tool, and others.
- Additional meetings and workshops.

Budget transfers in 2018

Description	Transaction number	Date	Title 1 - Staff expenditure	Title 2 - Other Administrative expenditure	Title 3 - Operational expenditure
1 Transfer Decision N1	FR0.22345	27-04-18	5 688 000	824 000	6 261 170
2 Transfer Decision N2	FR0.22394	14-06-18	660 000	313 150	11 505 000
3 Transfer Decision N3	FR0.22445	20-08-18		250 000	500 000
4 Transfer Decision N4	FR0.22488	02-10-18	164 000	907 920	1 579 338
5 Transfer Decision N5	FR0.22563	04-12-18		1 778 480	60 000
6 Transfer Decision N6	FR0.22614	17-12-18		258 794	
7 Transfer Decision N7	FR0.22644	17-12-18			1 545 000
8 Transfer Decision N8	FR0.22673	19-12-18		26 100	1 775 599

4.3. Implementation of appropriations from 2017 carried forward to 2018

The amount carried forward from 2017 to 2018 (C8 funds) amounted to EUR 88.4 million of which 88 % was paid. The remaining 12 % (EUR 10.6 million) had to be cancelled. As displayed by Table 6, in administrative matters where Frontex can have better control of the level of activities with less external-factor interference (e.g. correction coefficient, overestimation of operational expenditures by MS/SAC), the rate of implementation of C8 funds reached 95 %.

Implementation of appropriations carried from 2017 to 2018

Title	Carried forward	Total payments	To be returned
	A	D	E=D/A
A-1 Staff	399 389	225 796	57%
A-2 Other administrative expenditure	10 926 265	10 406 672	95%
A-3 Operational activities	77 090 380	67 176 680	87%
	88 416 034	77 809 148	88%
			10 606 886

4.4. Procurement procedures

2018 was a busy year for the procurement sector (PROC) of the LPU: the procurement team (previously part of BFCS unit) merged with the (ex-) legal affairs unit on 1.1.2018 and together now form LPU. As such, PROC also became also more involved in legal questions which had a procurement and/or contract management element to it.

However, PROC also became increasingly busy in its more 'classic remit'. For instance, the number of procurement procedures processed reached an all-time high level (1 581), leading to even more signed contracts with a total worth of over EUR 147 million.

Furthermore, PROC handled a number of particularly complex procedures requiring particular scrutiny/complex solutions, such as the first Frontex-led interinstitutional tender procedure (with EFCA) regarding the aerial surveillance framework contract.

At the same time, PROC has been working on improving related internal procedures, mainly by means of preparing for the partial automation of procurement workflows, and e-procurement (aimed at working paperless). For this reason, PROC conducted a study visit to the European Maritime Safety Agency in Lisbon

LPU studied how to prepare for the concept of joint procurement with Member States, in good cooperation with PRU. Even though the concept is complicated and was still at a very preliminary phase of exploration, LPU examined how this could potentially take place and a relevant briefing note was prepared. To this end, it conducted a study visit to DG Budget (Brussels), and is contemplating the potential creation of a dedicated back office in PROC.

Furthermore, the Brexit implications in the procurement context were thoroughly assessed and analysed by PROC, which resulted in a briefing note for the executive management.

Finally, PROC processed a significant number of applications from (potential) external experts, resulting in a high number of contracts concluded (125).

4.5. Late payments — interest paid to suppliers

The overall interest due to late payments (> 30 days) amounted to EUR 966 in 2018. The amount included just the late payment charged by suppliers as according to the financial rules, interest for late payment is not due to Member States.

4.5(Bis). Negotiated procedures — Point 11 — Annex I to the Financial Regulation

List of contracts awarded by Frontex in 2018 on the basis of Point 11 of Annex I to the Financial Regulation — exceptional negotiated procedures						
Contract number	Subject	Supplies/services	Budget line	Contractor	Signature date	Value in EUR
420/2018	Purchase and installation of programming stations	services	2350	Ghelamco Warsaw Spire Spółka z ograniczoną odpowiedzialnością Sp.k. ul. Wołoska 22 02-675 Warsaw, Poland	21.5.2018	17 925.50
673/2018	Litigation assistance for case T-212-18	services	2330	JULIAN RICHARD CURRALL 1000 Brussels, Belgium	25.6.2018	10 125.00
674/2018	Litigation assistance and possible representation at oral hearing for case T-212-18	services	2330	RO RADWAN-ROHRENSCHEF, PETRUCZENKO, PIECHOTA SPOLKA KOMANDYTOWA ul. Nowogrodzka 11, 00-513 Warsaw, Poland	20.6.2018	12 600.00
794/2018	LinkedIn subscription	services	1203	LinkedIn Ireland Unlimited Company Gardner House Wilton Place Dublin 2, Ireland	11.7.2018	18 000.00
928/2018	One year subscription to Military and security assessments intelligence centre	services	3100	IHS GLOBAL SA 24 Chemin de la Mairie PO Box 152, 1258 Perly-Geneva, Switzerland	24.8.2018	114 709.00

4.6. Ad hoc grants and delegation agreements

External assigned revenue concerns funds that do not originate in voted EU appropriations for Frontex, but that are received for the execution of specific contracts or agreements from external financing parties or from the European Commission DGs. According to the Financial Regulation, these appropriations cannot be mixed with others, therefore they are shown separately under Title 4 'Earmarked expenditure' of Frontex's budget.

The appropriations corresponding to assigned revenue are made available automatically, both as commitment appropriations and as payment appropriations, once the revenue has been received by Frontex. Externally assigned revenue is carried over automatically and must be fully used by the time all the operations relating to the programme or action to which it is assigned have been carried out.

Frontex is currently running three grant agreements and one delegation agreement, all funded by the European Commission, as listed below.

- IPA II grant agreement 'Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey'. Grant signed on the 22 December 2015. Total budget EUR 5.5 million, implementation period of 42 months from 1 January 2016 following extension.
- IPA II Phase II grant agreement 'Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey' was signed on 10 December 2018 with a budget of 3.4 million to be implemented in 24 months from 1 July 2019.
- Grant agreement 'Strengthening of Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC) in the fight against organised crime and the smuggling of migrants' signed with the European Commission (DG International Cooperation and Development) 10 August 2017; budget of up to EUR 4.0 million for 3 years starting September 2017.
- Delegation agreement on 'Copernicus 2015-2020' with the European Commission, represented by DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, signed 10 November 2015, entrusting Frontex with the service component implementation tasks, in line with Regulation (EU) No 377/2014 establish-

ing the Copernicus programme. The indicative budget amounts to EUR 47.6 million, implemented until 31 December 2020.

- Grant agreement 'Eastern Partnership IBM' (regional capacity-building project), signed with the European Commission (DG International Cooperation and Development) on 20 June 2014 and terminated on 31 December 2018, with a budget of up to EUR 4.5 million.
- Grant agreement EU4Border Security signed on 7 November 2018 with the European Commission (DG Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations) (project for enhanced border security in the Southern Neighbourhood); budget of up to 4 million for 36 months from 1 December 2018.

4.7. Human resources management

4.7.1. Human resources developments

2018 was the third year in the 5 years of Frontex's growth, following the adoption of the new EBCG Regulation (1624/2016) that significantly increased resources in the area of budget and staff. To this end, Frontex continued to recruit additional personnel at higher rates (compared to the 'cruising levels' of previous years). In the recruitment sphere, as a consequence of the implementation of the new organisational chart adopted by the Management Board and the change-management policy conducted within Frontex, in 2018 many managerial positions were published and filled.

In a nutshell, during 2018, 187 new recruitments were concluded (newcomers who took up duties after the selection procedure and after medical check-up). However, due to high internal and external turnover, the net increase in staff compared to the previous year was +117, which led to the overall number of 643 posts filled (temporary agents, contract agents and seconded national experts). HR is also managing the traineeship programme that allowed 30 new trainees to join Frontex.

About 50 % of all Frontex staff are newcomers who joined Frontex during the last two years. This growth requires additional workload for all HR services, pre and post recruitment, provided by the three HR teams of recruitment, personnel administration and learning and development. In order to handle this change and growth all HR services have been strengthened and will further develop in the future.

The Frontex HR services also looked into the possibilities of increased efficiency of recruitment processes. A new e-recruitment system which facilitates registration of applications and management of recruitment procedures became operational late summer 2017. The visibility of published job vacancies increased making extensive use of new diversified communication channels, such as LinkedIn and Twitter. Efforts were also made to further strengthen the Frontex employer branding in order to identify Frontex as a preferred employer among potential candidates.

In view of the Frontex objective to reach 1 000 staff by 2020 (without prejudices to new political agreements on the European standing corps reached in spring 2019), the project for the introduction of the European Commission HR and management information system for managing employee data, staff rights and obligations, time management and other features for career management and organisation charts, Sysper, is ongoing.

In the course of 2018, Frontex continued to implement new or revised HR policies, namely on:

- the establishment and use of reserve lists;
- the establishment of shift work;
- a new offer for language courses.

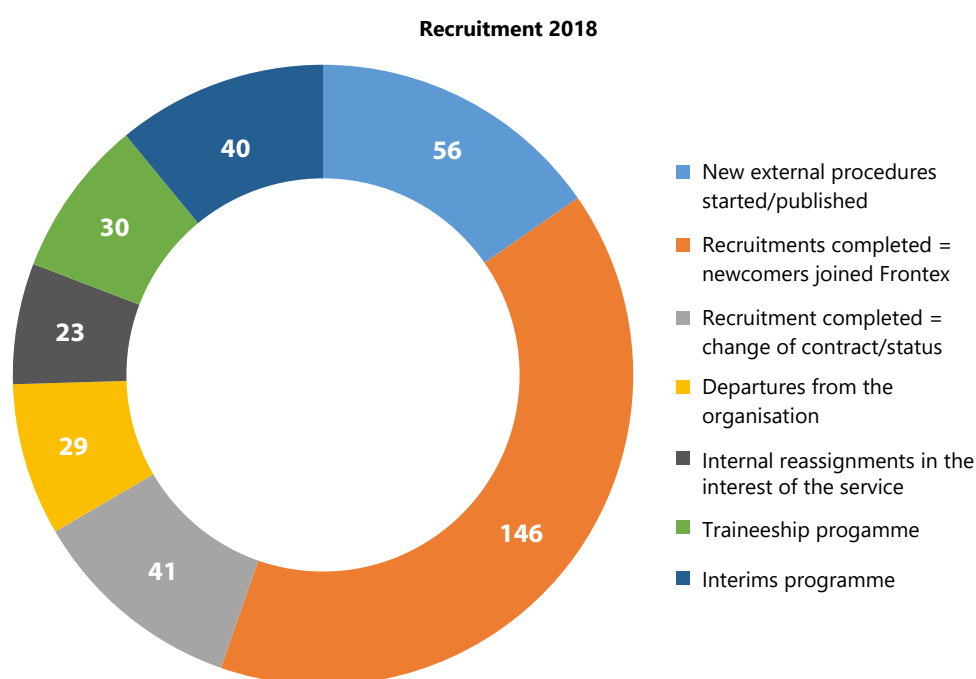
Other aspects of HR developments for implementation in 2019 are:

- a working-time registration system;
- a competency framework;
- procurement of medical services;
- a social policy for staff.

4.7.2. Recruitment

Missing implementing rules to *Staff regulations* ⁽²⁶⁾ are to be adopted in the course of 2019.

Process	Volume/quantity	Additional comments
New external procedures started/published in 2018	56	Several procedures covered more than one post to be filled.
Recruitments completed — newcomers joined Frontex in 2018 (A)	146	Figure refers to new staff members without former employment contract with Frontex.
Recruitment completed — change of contract and/or status in 2018 (B)	41	Figure refers to staff members appointed to a new position after having successfully participated in a completed external recruitment process.
Total recruitment completed (A + B)	187	
Departures	29	Figure refers to staff members that left Frontex.
Internal reassignments	23	Figure refers to staff members that have been reassigned in the interest of the service.
Traineeship programme	30	Positions filled during spring and autumn intake.
Interims programme	40	Positions filled during the year (on a rotation basis).

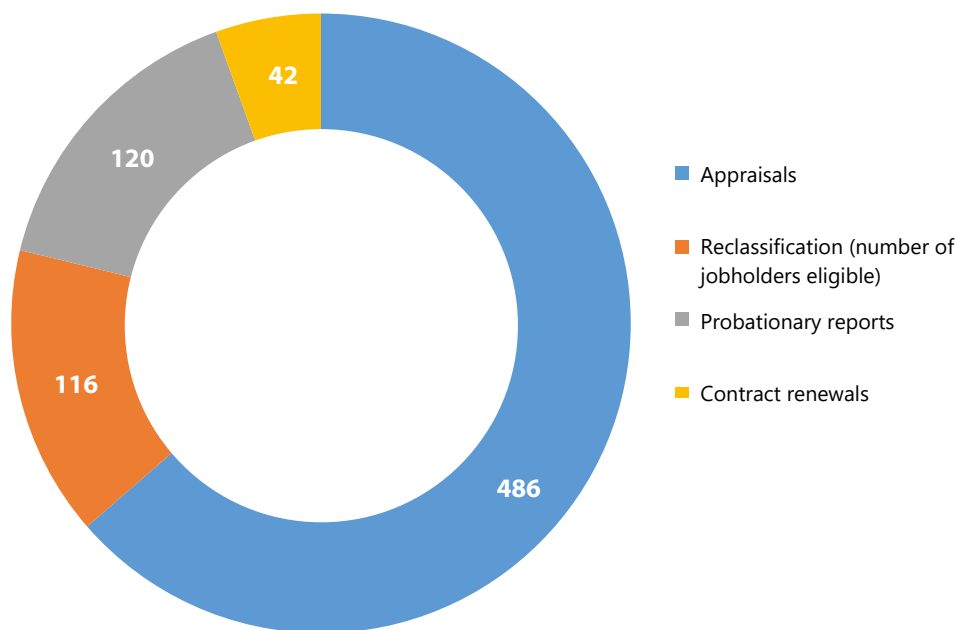


⁽²⁶⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A01962R0031-20140501>

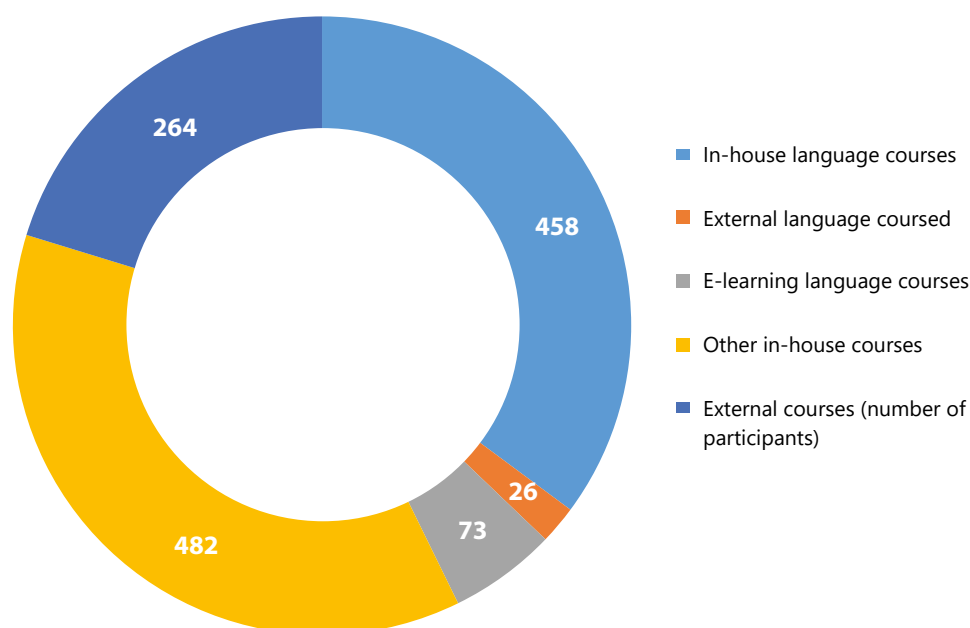
4.7.3. Staff development and training

Process	Volume/quantity	Additional comments
Appraisal	486 appraisals processed (27 % increase in 1 year).	92 % of appraisals were finalised by 31 December. No complaints under Article 90 (2). There was one appeal filed to the appeal assessor within the appraisal procedure as per Article 7 of the appraisal rules for contract staff.
Reclassification	116 jobholders eligible (51 TAs and 65 CAs).	The process for 2018 is ongoing.
Probation	120 probationary periods started in 2018.	So far two contracts have not been confirmed after the probationary period as the result of the unsatisfactory performance during the probationary period (some probationary periods are to be finalised in 2019).
Contract renewal	42 renewal procedures started in 2018 (for contracts ending in 2019, 25 of which leading to an indefinite contract).	41 contracts were renewed in 2018 (and one contract renewed in January 2019). No complaints under Article 90 (2).
Training	In-house language courses: 31 groups in the spring semester (6 languages: English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish and 200 participants). 30 groups in the autumn semester (6 languages: English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish and 258 participants). E-learning language courses: 73 participants. External language courses: 26 requests. Other in-house courses (482 participants). External courses (264 participants).	Apart from language courses (newly including the option of an e-learning and the reimbursement of external language courses), other in-house courses as well as external courses, newcomers' induction programme (involving 243 newcomers) and leadership and management development programme (involving 21 managers) were successfully continued during 2018.

Staff Development 2018



Training in 2018 (number of participants)

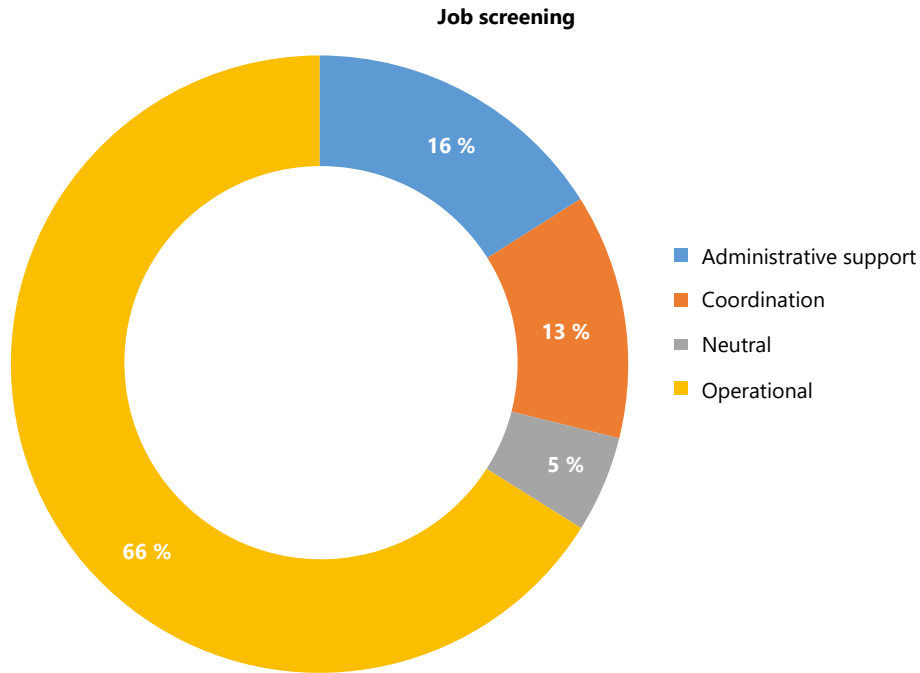


4.7.4. Job screening

The standardised job-screening exercise (classifications of posts into the roles of administrative support, coordination, neutral and operational) ⁽²⁷⁾ was done according to the guidelines defined by the EU agencies network and based on staff figures including temporary and contract staff as well as seconded national experts and existing posts with open replacement on 31 December 2018.

Type/role	Number	As a percentage of all staff	CATEGORY	Number	As a percentage of all staff
Administrative support	105	16.33	Document management	3	0.47
			HR management	27	4.20
			Information and communication technology	20	3.11
			Internal audit and control	3	0.47
			Logistics	48	7.47
			Head of resources	4	0.62
Coordination	84	13.06	Legal advice	29	4.51
			Communication/information	13	2.02
Neutral	33	5.13	General coordination	42	6.53
			Finance, non-operational procurement and quality management	33	5.13
			Linguistic	0	0.00
Operational	421	65.47	Top level operational coordination	13	2.02
			Programme management implementation	104	16.17
			Evaluation and impact assessment	83	12.91
			General operational	221	34.37
Totals	643	100		643	100

⁽²⁷⁾ In line with the European Commission methodology for agency job screening.



4.8. Assessment by management

4.8.1. *Ex ante* controls

Frontex conducts *ex ante* controls in accordance with its policy of *ex-ante* control which complements the provisions of the Financial Regulation. In accordance with this policy, each transaction is subject to *ex ante* control. In addition, as grants to Member States constitute the major part of the Frontex budget, additional *ex ante* requirements exist as concerns submission of supporting documents proving the costs incurred.

Consequently, during 2018 Frontex continued the efforts to strengthen the *ex ante* control framework, in particular in the case of joint operations, pilot projects and return operations due to their high value. The total amount paid in 2018 in the form of grants to Member States for their participation in operational activities equalled EUR 115 631 488. Out of this amount, Frontex verified supporting documents substantiating the request for final payment for the amount of EUR EUR 69 041 105 giving the coverage of 59.71 % of the total amount paid.

As a result of introducing a new financing scheme in 2018, characterised by an increased use of unit costs, Frontex amended its policy on *ex ante* controls in 2018 to include controls on unit costs claimed. Due to the life cycle of the operational activities, the first controls of unit costs are to take place in 2019, when the claims will be submitted by the MS authorities.

4.8.2. *Ex post* controls

Since 2014, Frontex has an Service Level Agreement (SLA) with European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), on the bilateral exchange of experts in order to mutually perform *ex post* controls. As a result, in 2018, Frontex carried out an *ex post* control exercise in EIGE, checking whether the internal control system ensures the compliance of the transactions with the financial rules and with internal procedures. In return, EIGE supported Frontex in performing the control on the validation of user-access rights granted in ABAC. This control resulted in a short report indicating small shortcomings in the rights encoded in

ABAC. All detected inconsistencies were corrected by Frontex and led subsequently to the strengthening of the internal controls.

The *ex post* control activities implemented by the inspection and control office kicked off with the recruitment of one staff member who joined mid-July 2018. *Ex post* control were carried out in Spain, Italy and Greece and they focused on the following.

- Spain (Guardia Civil and Policia Nacional): Management and control system and implementation of a new financing scheme/methodology used for the calculation of unit costs.
- Italy (all beneficiaries such as Polizia di Stato, GdF, Guardia Costiera): Management and control system and implementation of a new financing scheme/methodology used for the calculation of unit costs.
- Greece (Hellenic Police and Hellenic Coast Guard): Management and control system and implementation of a new financing scheme/methodology used for the calculation of unit costs.

Additionally, one performance evaluation of the TRU ICT platform in-house was done (*ex post* project evaluation) and an *ex post* control policy (ED decision) was revised and approved in December.

5. Management and internal control

The internal control is a process that helps an organisation to achieve its objectives and sustain operational and financial performance, complying with rules and regulations. It supports sound decision-making, taking into account risks to the achievement of objectives and reducing them to acceptable levels through cost-effective controls. Internal control applies to all activities, irrespective of whether they are financial or non-financial.

Following the expanded mandate and responsibilities of Frontex under the new European border and coast guard regulation as well as the introduction of changes to the European Commission's internal control framework on 19 April 2017, the Frontex internal control framework (ICF) was updated accordingly. The **revised Frontex internal control framework (revised ICF)** was adopted by the Management Board on 22 November 2017.

To appropriately and effectively address the objectives of the revision, Frontex decided to change the approach from **compliance-based** to **risk-based**. This approach made it possible to act according to strategic directions ensured by internal control processes and mechanisms that provide the Executive Director with reasonable assurance that Frontex delivers effectively even in cases where business-continuity measures are activated.

The Frontex revised ICF defines five major components (i.e. **building blocks that underpin the framework's structure** and support Frontex in its efforts to achieve its objectives) namely: (1) the control environment, (2) risk assessment, (3) the control activities, (4) information and communication, and (5) monitoring activities. These five components are **interlinked and must be present and effective at all levels of Frontex**, in order for the internal control over Frontex's operations to be considered effective.

Each of the five components consists of several principles (17 in total). This layout facilitated the implementation of the revised ICF during 2018 and served as a guidance for management when assessing whether each abovementioned component is present and effectively functioning in harmony. A holistic approach of assessing the framework from 17 perspectives contributes to providing reasonable assurance that Frontex's objectives are met, as they specify the actions required for effective internal control.

Following the adoption of the Management Board decision on the **revised ICF**, the Executive Director was mandated to implement the framework, and to conduct an overall assessment of the presence and functioning of all internal control components at least annually (for the first time at the latest in the context of the consolidated annual activity report for year 2019), and in particular to do the following.

- Establish and/or streamline the processes, structures and functions to accommodate changes resulting from the revision of the Frontex internal control framework, and in particular the processes of risk management, control, planning and evaluating, reporting, and communicating.
- Ensure the appropriate resources for an efficient and consistent implementation, and effective assessment of the internal control system;
- With support of the inspection and control office to take appropriate actions to establish and manage the revised internal control framework implementation plan; the internal control coordinator is to facilitate the process and support the managers in specifying the baselines and targets for internal control indicators, taking into account their specificities and risks, and to improve the awareness and understanding of internal control framework by all staff, in particular through training, information and support activities.

Since the adoption of the **revised ICF** in November 2017, the activities and status of the internal control system in Frontex have been gradually adapted to the new framework. Although the ultimate implementation of all the improvements is not yet complete, during 2018 major elements of the revised ICF

were finalised, enabling an assessment to be performed fully against the established **revised ICF**. Final completion of the implementing measures for the revised ICF is to be achieved during 2019.

The changes impact the first stage the process of assessment (carried out by management) to monitor the functioning of the internal control system on a continuous basis. The status of the internal control system is summarised through internal control periodical reports, and discussed during the regular internal control management meetings (ICMM). During 2018, three ICMM sessions took place where assessments were made on the corporate risk status and quarterly reports on exceptions and non-compliant events were validated. In addition, an annual assessment of the effectiveness of the ICF was performed by the managers and consolidated in the ICF annual assessment report.

The conclusions were drafted on the basis of the following dedicated reports.

- The internal control regular reports are based on the evaluation of the Frontex corporate risk log and the exceptions register. The reports contribute to the quarterly assessments of effectiveness of the internal control system.
- The opinion of the internal auditor (IAS) as expressed in the audit reports and in its assessment of the implementation of post-audit recommendations.
- The opinion and observations of the external auditor of Frontex (European Court of Auditors) as well as the Frontex actions proposed in response to the observations or recommendations received.

These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. This approach provides 'reasonable assurance' ⁽²⁸⁾ as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported. The control results and other elements that support management assurance are detailed below as follows: control results, audit observations and recommendations and assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system. The inputs are used to provide the conclusions as regards the assurance.

All directors of division (and, where appropriate, their subordinated staff) were requested to issue individual declarations of assurance which were presented to the Executive Director as input and supporting evidence for the ED to produce an ED declaration of assurance as the authorising officer ⁽²⁹⁾.

5.1. Control results

Frontex has an internal control system (ICS) in place which specifies the necessary requirements, actions and expectations in order to build an effective system of internal control that can provide reasonable assurance on the achievement of the Frontex objectives.

The internal control system also includes a number of internal procedures, for example, guidance on conflicts of interest, a code of good administrative behaviour, and the procurement procedures. New internal procedures are introduced when necessary and existing procedures are revised at regular intervals.

Under the revised Internal Control Framework and the 12 internal control principle adopted as part of this, Frontex revised the procedure ensuring that any overriding of controls or deviations from the established processes and procedures are documented, duly approved, and logged centrally; the ED Decision R-2018-102 applying to the management of exceptions and non-compliance events entered into force 1 October 2018 and was implemented in the course of Quarter 4.

The control assessment results are presented here: they cover the following areas: internal control assessment report (Section 5.1.1. Internal control assessments), report on exceptions and non-compliant

⁽²⁸⁾ An internal control system, no matter how well designed and operated, cannot provide an absolute guarantee regarding achievement of an entity's objectives. This is because of inherent limitations of any control system and the possibility of deliberate human intervention to circumnavigate controls.

⁽²⁹⁾ Following the Management Board decision dated 22 November 2017 adopting the revised Frontex internal control framework, after the revised framework is fully operational, the declaration of assurance (1) by the executive director will be complemented by the statement (2) of the internal control coordinator, both attached to the consolidated annual activity report (for consolidated annual activity report of 2019 and onwards).

events (Section 5.1.2. Action plan for the improvement areas to be implemented in 2018); risk assessment report (Section 5.1.3. Register of exceptions and non-compliance events — overview of 2018); and audit reports (Section 3.2. Key conclusions on management and internal control).

5.1.1. Internal control assessments

In the course of the revised **ICF** implementation, a consolidation of the risks and issues logged within the Frontex improvement log was prepared enabling prioritisation of actions during the year. Out of this exercise a consolidated Frontex improvement log was established, serving as a source for the internal control monitoring and reporting concluded on a regular bases in the internal control coordinator reports. The log is based on multiple sources including: *Exceptions and non-compliance register report*, Frontex corporate risks log, Quarterly Internal Control Management Meetings' conclusions, IAS audit recommendations, external auditor findings and recommendations.

Other issues are identified ad hoc, at the Internal Control Management Meetings or during the annual evaluation of the internal control system.

The internal control assessment results presented below, summarise the regular assessments of the controls performed during the year, focusing on:

- the action plan for the full implementation of the Frontex ICF by the end of 2018,
- exceptions and non-compliances registered in 2018;
- risk assessment reports;
- audit reports and observations;
- results of the internal control system annual assessment of 2018.

5.1.2. Action plan for the improvement areas to be implemented in 2018

Milestone	Result	Status 31.12.2018
I. Internal control baseline setting		
1. Confirming descriptions of roles and responsibilities in Frontex (after conclusion of the restructuring project).	All roles and reporting lines included in the Frontex organigram, including the list of the processes, are defined and communicated, covering the whole organisation. <i>Document: updated the Frontex internal structure and rules of procedure (FISRoP)</i>	Included in the ED Decision 2018/159 on FISRoP (adopted).
2. Updating high-level business process map.	The map documented and agreed by the senior managers. <i>Document: updated the Frontex high-level business process map.</i>	Up-to-date version prepared for discussion at the ICMM.
3. The process of the internal governance documents categorising and endorsement rules is defined, and followed.	Procedure on internal governance documents management (e.g. existing strategies, policies, procedures, guidelines, working instructions and rules) adopted by the ED and followed <i>Document: updated the Frontex internal structure and rules of procedure (FISRoP)</i>	Included in the ED Decision 2018/159 on FISRoP (adopted).
4. Programming documents for the following periods indicating ownership (responsible manager) for each product or service confirmed according to the new structures.	Clarity on the responsibility of each manager for their delivery and controls applied to achieve the expected result. <i>Document: programming document 2018-2020, including annual work programme (AWP) 2018 and AWP 2019 updated according to the new organigram.</i>	Ongoing; the revised structure of activities in the single programming document introduced; updated delegations in place.
5. List of all Frontex projects and initiatives aligned with the adopted programming documents.	The <i>Frontex single programming document</i> will include a segment on the IT-enabled project portfolio. <i>Document: a revised multiannual IT strategy in place which is being drafted for endorsement.</i>	Progress in both areas was made and tasks are being completed within 2019.

Milestone	Result	Status 31.12.2018
II. Evaluating Internal Control System according to the baselines defined.		
6. The existing internal documents (strategies, policies, procedures, other) reviewed and cleared.	All internal governance-related documents, which are in force, reviewed and categorised according to the FISRoP. Document: Inventory of categorised, updated and valid documents established and maintained in MyFX.	Review done; to be repeated in course of 2019.
7. All Frontex entities reviewed against internal control principles defined in the revised ICF.	The Frontex improvement log updated. Document: List of the revised internal control Indicators.	Ongoing. Reports collected and bilateral meetings concluded with all HoUs; the updated list of the internal control indicators to be discussed at the ICMC.

5.1.3. Register of exceptions and non-compliance events — overview of 2018

Exceptions recorded in 2018 followed the process described in the procedure for recording and monitoring of exceptions (ED Decision 2015/88). As of 1 October 2018 a new procedure applying to the management of exceptions and non-compliance events was in force (ED Decision 2018/102): a requirement for both procedures was to set up a system to ensure that all instances of overriding controls and deviations from established processes and procedures are documented. For the purpose of this summary, the statistics were made following the ED Decision 2015/88, which applied to the recording process in three quarters of 2018.

Several control-strengthening actions were introduced by the inspection and control office based on the revised procedure followed by the review of the record of exceptions recorded in 2017, and performed in Q1 of 2018. Out of this review two more events related to 2017 were recorded in the 2018 register (the appropriate note was made in the 2017 consolidated annual activity report) ⁽³⁰⁾. To keep clarity and consistency of the reports, these two events are marked and explained below in the statistics of 2018.

In addition, to eliminate issues observed in the previous periods, the following corrective measures were applied to the exceptions and non-compliance recording process in the course of 2018.

1. The revision of the quality checks in the exceptions and non-compliance recording process ⁽³¹⁾.
2. A more comprehensive, regular review of the high-value procurement procedures executed since November 2015 (adoption of the procedure 2015/88) in the areas that impacted the statistics on exceptions and non-compliance events to the highest extent.
3. Update of the relevant processes including *ex ante* controls in the procurement and financial units to assure that all budget is committed with clear link to the approved programming document (annual work programme, including annexed procurement plan and budget), or a duly approved exception.
4. Assuring timely publication of all updates of the financial decision (e.g. procurement plans, budget) approved during the year.

The factual total number of events occurring in 2018 equals to 141 cases (Chart 1), covering EUR 11 063 743 (Chart 2). The average amount per exception is EUR 78 466 (Chart 3). The factual ratio % (amount of exceptions to the total payments in 2018) decreased to 3.77 % comparing with the factual 2017 figures.

⁽³⁰⁾ The total number of events registered in 2018 equals to 143 cases (Chart 1), covering EUR 18 119 156 (Chart 2). The average amount per exception is EUR 126 707 (Chart 3). The Ratio % (amount of exceptions to the total payments in 2018) reached 6.18 %.

⁽³¹⁾ Recording and reporting on 'Exceptions and Non-Compliance' is one of the management tools used to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of internal control and/or changes to the internal control system needed. A system must be in place to ensure that all instances of overriding controls or deviations from the established processes and procedures are documented. All instances must be justified and approved before action is taken, and logged centrally.

Chart 1 The growing tendency is noted when comparing the number of events during the last five years.

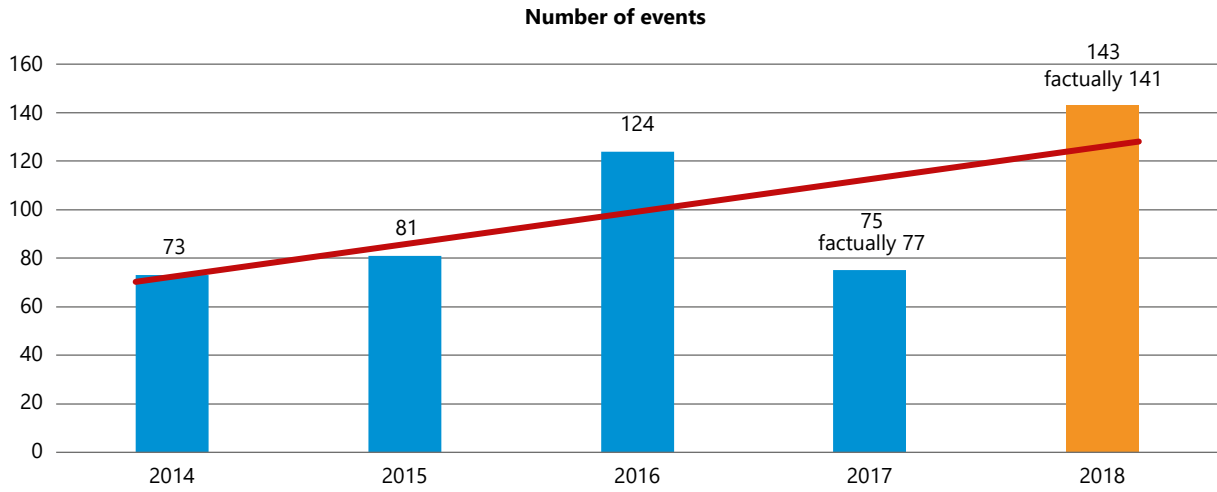
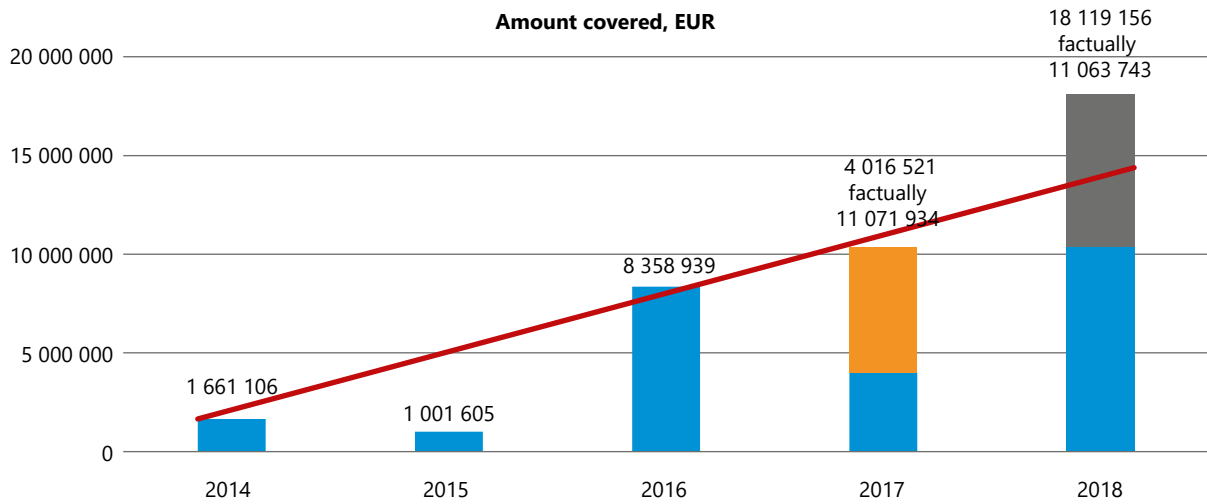


Chart 2 In relation to the increased Frontex budget the decreasing tendency is noted when comparing the data of the last five years.



Note: As mentioned in the *Consolidated annual activity report 2017* (CAAR), it must be highlighted that the 2018 statistics are impacted by two exceptions that were related to the events of 2017 (amount of around EUR 7 million) but had been registered in Q1 2018. It was identified through *ex post* control in 2018 resulting from strengthening of the control measures within the inspection and control office.

Chart 3 The decreasing tendency is noted when comparing the data of the last five years.

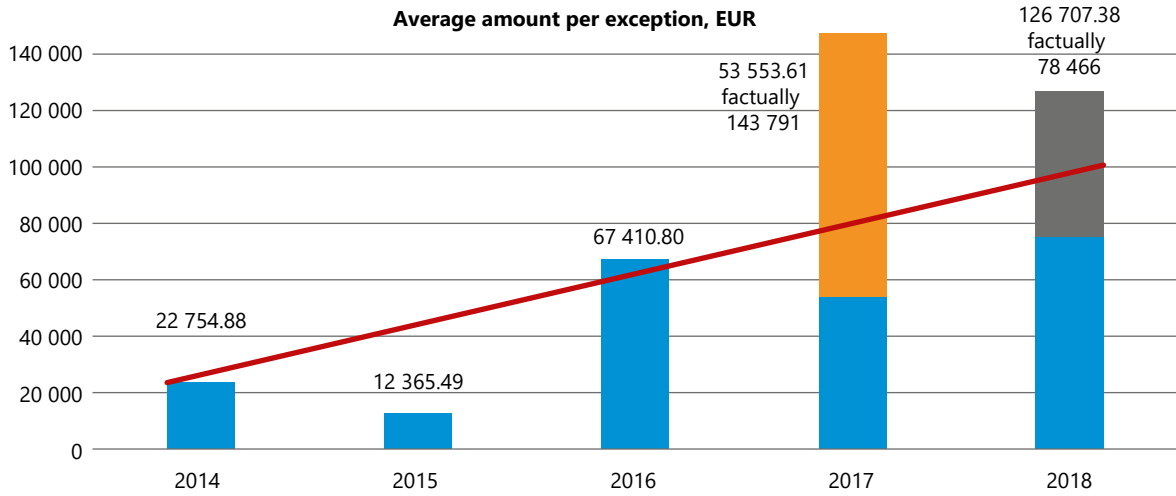
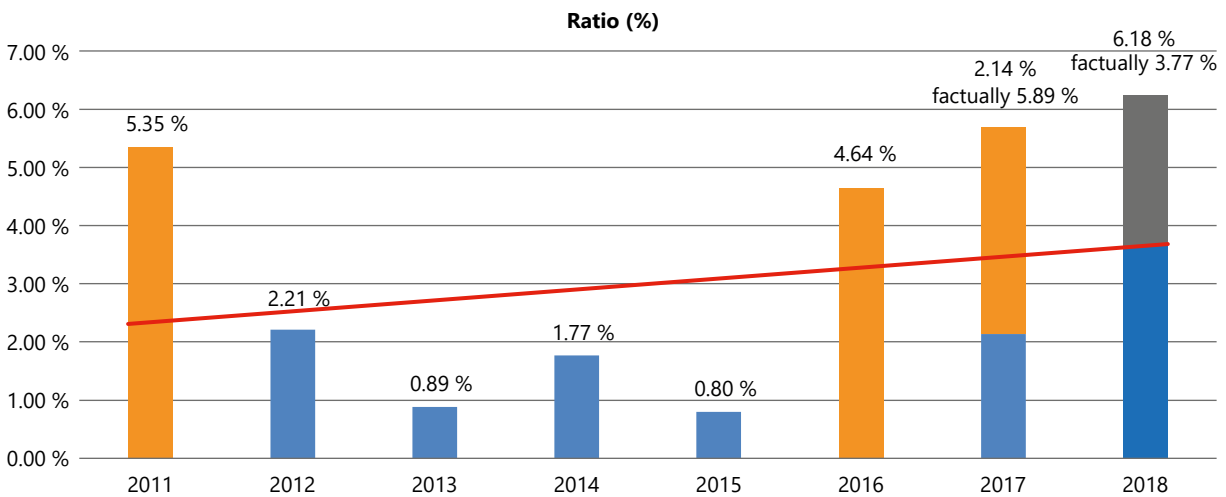


Chart 4 The control indicator ratio amounts to 6.18 %. However, by including two exception events of 2017 amounting to more than EUR 7 million, which were recorded in 2018 as a result of strengthening of control by the inspection and control office, the value of 2017 would need to be corrected to 5.89 % and the factual indicator for 2018 amounts to 3.77 %.



The highest amounts of exceptions relate to the following.

- Procurement procedures: 16 exceptions for the amount of EUR 14 811 002 which represents 81.7 % of the total amount recorded as exceptions; out of 16, five exceptions are above 1 000 000 each.
- Financial regulation and implementing rules: 95 exceptions for the amount of EUR 3 245 990 which represents 17.9 % of the total amount recorded as exceptions.

The highest amounts were recorded as exceptions or non-compliance events as follows.

- ECRet: 8 events for EUR 6 980 808 (38.5 %).
- BFCS: 1 event (of 2017) for EUR 5 215 413 (28.8 %).
- PRU: 1 event (of 2017) for EUR 1 840 000, and 1 EUR 42 130 (both 10.2 %).
- ICT: 8 events for EUR 1 249 149 (6.9 %).
- ODSO: 11 events for EUR 1 138 629 (6.3 %).

5.1.4. Risk assessments

The Frontex corporate risk management process builds on the continuous assessment of risks, developing and incorporating response plans and ongoing revision of the measures. During 2018 three internal control reports provided information on the actual status of risk exposure, assessing the likelihood and impact. Nine corporate risks with the highest risk exposure were identified at beginning of the year, for frequent monitoring and reporting to the executive management.

In the margins of the implementation of the AWP 2018 but also during the internal revision of the Internal Control Framework, those corporate risks were evaluated and assessed once again and updated in the course of the year.

At corporate level the following main groups of risks were identified as potentially negatively impacting delivery of the Frontex mandate.

- Competing new events and initiatives, together with not sufficient record of the baseline of the originally planned objectives, might not allow for effective control of Frontex delivery.
- Quality and efficiency of Frontex deliverables may be affected by insufficient centralised data governance.
- The low number of applications resulting in unsuccessful procedures, and the relatively high internal turnover of staff, driving unplanned recruitment and putting the recruitment plan at risk.

The Frontex corporate risk log was reviewed to introduce the controls on the response plan implementation (April 2018). The corporate risks were organised according to response plans, to effectively decrease the likelihood of risks. Out of this exercise, seven response areas were identified with three of them being followed with detailed response plans implemented in 2018.

Planning and change management

Process of internal control (based on the enhanced planning and evaluation) has been further redesigned by:

- providing regular internal control coordinator reports,
- organising the quarterly Internal Control Management Meetings (ICMM).

This internal control platform was used to update the plans and assess change initiatives recorded in between the regular planning cycles, integrating information on usage of the human, technical and financial resources.

During 2018 three quarterly Internal Control Management Meetings took place.

Corporate data management

The projects on data modelling and IT architecture of Frontex continued in 2018 (design phase) with follow-ups in the following years (implementation phase).

During 2018, a revised multiannual IT strategy for Frontex was developed and such document has been internally circulated for adoption by ED decision during the first quarter of 2019.

HR recruitment effectiveness

The risks related to recruitment continue to be an element to be addressed. Although the low correction coefficient was already highlighted as a factor outside of the Frontex internal controls impacting on the number of candidates applying for Frontex posts (a relevant statement was included in the IAS strategic

audit plan dated 5 September 2017 ⁽³²⁾); Frontex has taken measures to maximise publicity of the vacancies offered particularly through specialised websites such as LinkedIn. These measures already provided yield during 2018 where the number of applicants per announcement rose, however the high turnover of staff still remains an issue to be addressed.

Other internal or external developments concerning Frontex, relevant for the assessment of corporate risks.

Change of the organisational structure

The reorganisation of the Frontex structure was approved by the MB June 2017, impacting on the allocation of resources. The new organisational chart envisages the inclusion of mitigation measures in terms of control such as the placement of procurement and *ex post* control activities under hierarchical lines which are independent of finances, and the allocation of the internal control function to a fully-fledged inspection and control office independent of the division responsible for the management of resources. As indicated by the MB, an assessment of the appropriateness of the new structure was performed in 2018. This review resulted in particular in the confirmation of the creation of a new division for international and European cooperation taking into account the expansion of the mandate in international cooperation and the development of networks of liaison officers. The existence of the European centre for return under the umbrella of the Operational Response Division was also confirmed. The prolonging uncertainty would have contained the risk for the organisation, requiring appropriate measures and managerial controls.

Conclusion of the headquarters agreement

The headquarters agreement between Frontex and the Polish government had been ratified by the Polish parliament, and entered into force as of 1 November 2017. The headquarters agreement has an effect on several Frontex processes with major consequences on the working conditions and the management of facilities.

One of the resulting projects is the construction of the new HQ building on land offered by the Polish government. Due to the size of the financial and human resources required for the project within the next few years, this undertaking requires appropriate risk management, including establishing of appropriate controls. Presently the programme/project is in the inception phase under the responsibility of a dedicated task force directly reporting to the Executive director. The intention of the Executive director is to invite the MB to set up a dedicated advisory group.

According to the headquarters agreement, the Polish government is committed to facilitate the establishment of an accredited European school in Warsaw and to reimburse the schooling costs for non-Polish employees of Frontex until such an accredited European school is functional. This provision should serve as an important asset for advertising of Frontex jobs. However, these developments are out of the direct supervision of Frontex, the appropriate controls will be set following the headquarters agreement implementation plan to monitor the progress and impact on the recognised recruitment risk.

5.2. Audit observations and recommendations

5.2.1. The European Court of Auditors (ECA)

The ECA is required to provide its final opinion on the accounts of Frontex 'no later than 1 June of the following year'. Therefore, the ECA's opinion on Frontex accounts for 2018 was not available at the time the consolidated annual activity report 2018 was prepared. The opinion of the ECA on the Frontex ac-

⁽³²⁾ 'Given that the country correction coefficient calculation method is based on the *Staff regulations*, it is outside of the internal control powers of the Agency [Frontex]. As such, the risk that the Agency fails in its mission to recruit staff from across the EU rather than from a few countries remains high. The nature of the Agency's operations depends upon having staff from across the EU and therefore the associated risks of failure to implement the budget and achievement of objectives are also increased.'

counts for the year ending 2017 is provided below as this sheds some light on the appropriateness of the internal control system.

Opinion on the reliability of the accounts

In the ECA's opinion, the Frontex annual accounts present fairly, in all material respects, its financial position as at 31 December 2017 and the results of its operations, its cash flows and the changes in net assets for the year then ended, under the its financial regulation and the accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer.

Opinion on the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying the accounts

In the Court's opinion, the transactions underlying the annual accounts for the year ended 31 December 2017 are legal and regular in all material respects.

Comments on the legality and regularity of transactions

Frontex received four tenders for ferry services (call for open tender) to transport migrants within Greece and signed a EUR 2 million framework contract for a period of three years with the ferry company offering the lowest price. It turned out that the contractor transport capacity was seasonally limited. Therefore Frontex cancelled the contract by the end of 2017. A new framework contract amounting to EUR 1.8 million was signed with the second ranked tenderer in November 2017 who had offered the second lowest price. The direct award of the replacement contract was irregular, since the initial procurement procedure was closed and no negotiated procedure took place to agree the contract conditions that would apply until a new open procedure could have been completed.

The *Staff regulations* provide that in the case of an external selection procedure, temporary staff can only be recruited at grades secretary (SC) 1 to SC 2, assistant (AST) 1 to AST 4 or administrator (AD) 5 to AD 8. In 2017, Frontex recruited two staff at higher AST grades (14 in 2016). The recruitments at these grades were considered as being irregular by the ECA.

Comments on internal controls

Frontex financed support to Iceland's coast guard for the deployment of an aeroplane in Greece. Before reimbursing the expenditure claimed by Iceland, Frontex asked for invoices as evidence for one category of declared expenditure. Although the individual invoices were never provided, but a summary, Frontex reimbursed EUR 440 000. In this case, the *ex ante* verification was considered by ECA as ineffective.

Frontex co-financed the deployment of one aeroplane used by the Spanish Guardia Civil. In the absence of documentation supporting the cost claimed for inspections and maintenance, Frontex reimbursed EUR 430 000 on the basis of an average cost per flight hour, which was calculated in line with cost ceilings used in contracts between Spanish authorities and private contractors. The ECA assessed that there was a risk that the real cost incurred was lower than what was reimbursed.

Frontex still needs to have a comprehensive business continuity plan approved by its MB.

Comments on budgetary management

Frontex cancelled a high level of committed appropriations carried over from the previous year for reimbursements of operational expenditure with EUR 7.7 million, i.e. 16.5 % (2016: EUR 5.6 million, i.e. 17.6 %). The cooperating countries considerably over-estimated again the expenditure to be reimbursed by Frontex. The Agency transferred EUR 9.6 million from other budget items to JOs, contributing to a new carry-over amounting to EUR 40.5 million. The JOs account for 69 % of the total cancelled appropriations in 2017 (EUR 11.1 million) and 46 % of the total appropriations carried forward into 2018 (EUR 87.6 million).

The appropriations available for return operations amounted to EUR 66.5 million. Frontex returned EUR 13.5 million, i.e. 20.3% (2016: EUR 23 million, i.e. 37.5 %) to the European Commission. Moreover, it also returned EUR 4 million from budget Title I (staff expenditure) as the planned number of new employees could not be recruited in 2017.

The 2017 initial budget of Frontex included a EUR 8.8 million statutory financial operational reserve for financing the deployment of rapid border interventions and return interventions. In September and in October 2017, Frontex transferred EUR 1.9 million from the reserve to its operational budget to fund other activities. None of the two transfers are in compliance with the Frontex financial regulation.

The Frontex 2017 budget included a non-statutory reserve amounting to EUR 11.9 million for unpredictable operational needs. Following transfers from other budget lines and an amendment of the budget, the funds used under the reserve amounted to EUR 24.7 million, i.e. 8.1 % of the initial budget. The reserve was used mainly to fund standard operations (EUR 8.4 million) and to fund a project on remotely piloted aerial surveillance systems (i.e. drones, EUR 7 million) for which it had only budgeted EUR 1.1 million. The budgeting and use of non-statutory reserves does not comply with the principle of budget specification and impairs budget transparency.

Comments on financial management and performance

Frontex publishes vacancy notices on its own website and in other channels such as the inter-agency network, but not on the website of the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO), which would, according to the ECA, increase transparency, publicity and allow citizens to identify vacancies published by the different European institutions and agencies collectively.

According to their framework Financial Regulation, agencies should introduce a single solution for the electronic exchange and storage of information with third parties participating in public procurement procedures (e-procurement). The European Commission is developing a comprehensive IT solution covering all phases of public procurement procedures and launched tools for electronic invoicing in 2010 (e-invoicing), for the electronic publication of documents related to contract notices in the electronic version of the EU Official Journal in 2011 (e-tendering) and for the electronic submission of tenders in 2015 (e-submission). According to the Commission, by the end of 2017 Frontex had introduced e-invoicing and e-tendering for certain procedures, but not e-submission. However, it needs to be borne in mind that the development of the e-submission feature is delayed.

Frontex took note of the ECA comments and will make improvements where necessary.

5.2.2. The discharge authority (European Parliament) observations and measures taken by Frontex

The European Parliament granted discharge to Frontex in respect of the implementation of the Frontex budget for the financial year 2016⁽³³⁾. The main areas in which the European Parliament made comments are listed below:

- follow-up with the 2013, 2014 and 2015 discharge recommendations;
- revision and simplification of the entire financial scheme in 2017;
- high level of carry-overs for Title II (administrative) and Title III (operational);
- high level of cancelled carry-overs for Title III;
- need of additional office space due to the planned increase of staff;
- difficulties in finding staff with the required profile;
- preparation of draft internal rules on whistleblowing;
- minutes of MB meeting available to the public;
- no confirmation if the meetings with lobbyists were held, registered and made public;

⁽³³⁾ The discharge in respect of the implementation of Frontex's budget for 2017 has been granted (29 March 2019) and is pending publication in the Official Journal at the moment of preparing this report.

- refusals of public access to documents applications, one was sent to the European Ombudsman;
- improvements of the internal control system in 2017;
- recommendations of the Internal Audit Service (IAS) in 2016.

Frontex has taken the measures in the lights of the discharge authority recommendations. Summary points are provided below.

- Most of the outstanding issues are closed, only two are ongoing or partially implemented.
- A new simplified financing scheme entered into force as of 1 February 2018, with the result of reducing the number of grants from 1 700 to 300/400.
- Title II carry-overs were high due to the nature of the multiannual contracts for ICT services and carry-overs for Title III and they should decrease in 2019 due to the introduction of a new financing scheme, including unit costs.
- Carry-overs cancellations should decrease in 2019, due to the introduction of a new financing scheme, including unit costs.
- The additional office space has been leased since January 2018; the fit-out works are ongoing;
- negative impact of the low salary correction coefficient, many applicants declined the job offer. Frontex intends to propose to its MB a set of temporary social measures.
- The rules on whistleblowing are drafted, Frontex will also adopt the relevant model decision, as per the Commission's advice.
- With the launch of the new Frontex website in March 2018 all minutes are available there.
- Frontex only met with registered lobbyists who are registered in the EU transparency register and publish annually an overview of meetings on its website; no meetings were held in 2017.
- Frontex positively reacted to the European Ombudsman proposals for solutions and took actions to implement them. The European Ombudsman closed the case and reported no maladministration.
- Most significant improvements: establishment and streamlining the processes, structures and functions to accommodate changes, revision of the Frontex internal control framework (in particular processes of risk management, control, planning, evaluating, reporting and communicating). Process of internal control has been redesigned and used to update the plans and assess change initiatives recorded.
- The Frontex projects on data modelling and IT architecture continued, to bring results in 2018 and following years.

Despite the actions mentioned before, taking also into considerations the European Parliament recommendations, 2017 and 2018 were years Frontex underwent deep and radical internal changes as regards:

- its organisational structure,
- the introduction of the new internal rules of procedure,
- high speed recruitments of newcomers, and
- the development of a new managerial community and managerial culture.

New managers (directors, heads of units, heads of sectors) were recruited forming a very committed new managerial level capable to absorb any future developments. A leadership programme was completed to continue within the same spirit to address any future transformation.

The execution of an increased budget was at the same time accompanied by a permanent search for efficiency and effectiveness. The multipurpose patrolling of Frontex surveillance assets is a good example on how the deployment of one single piece of equipment could serve several law-enforcement communities and their respective objectives (illegal fishing, environmental crime, unlawful activities in the vicinity of Europe).

Reforming the Frontex internal governance was a further priority to include the reinforcement of internal reporting, *ex ante* and *ex post* audit and control capacities. As Frontex addresses a wider scope of more complex and numerous topics, the increase of additional financial and human resources were considered as opportunities for developing a modern administration and to look for efficiency gains. The revision of existing processes such as the adaptation of financial delegations and reporting duties should

contribute to a high level of transparency and accountability while ensuring conformity and compliance to the rules.

5.2.3. Audits — Internal Audit Service (IAS)

In the period of 2018, the Internal Audit Service, followed the *Strategic internal audit plan 2017-2019* ⁽³⁴⁾.

The IAS evaluated the field visit of the audit dedicated to the contract management performed in February 2017 in the course of 2018 and concluded with a final report received 18 January 2019.

Scope and purpose: The overall objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the governance, risk management and internal control processes that Frontex has put in place for the management of contracts resulting from procurement to ensure compliance with the applicable rules and best value for money.

Outcomes: Six recommendations were issued, four of them with the priority status 'very important' ⁽³⁵⁾ and two, with the status 'important'. At the moment of preparing of this report, an action plan for the implementation of the accepted recommendations was adopted and presented to the IAS.

At the end of 2018, there were 16 IAS recommendations (priority 'important') issued in conclusions of the audits performed in execution of the previous iterations of the strategic audit plans, and logged by Frontex with the status 'ready for review', and one with the status 'started' (deadline for implementation as of 31 December 2019).

On 26 January 2019, the IAS closed one of them and reopened eight; five remain with status 'ready for review', and one 'started'. On 26 April 2019 the Executive director met (upon his initiative) with the director general of the IAS in order to discuss the strategic development of internal audit in view of the implementation of the European standing corps of border and coast guards that was agreed politically by the Council and the Parliament in March/April 2019.

5.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system

For the assessment of the internal control system as of the end of 2018, structures of internal control namely, 'building blocks' were established that provide regular management reports ⁽³⁶⁾. For each internal control requirement, the level of control and the effectiveness of the control is assessed.

The level of control is mainly determined by the findings summarised in the regular reports of the internal control coordinator; these are discussed and validated by the heads of units, directors of divisions, deputy ED and ED at quarterly Internal Control Management Meetings. During the meetings the availability of evidence for the different internal control requirements (as identified in the *Guidelines on measuring the effectiveness of internal control standards*) is assessed.

The assessment of the effectiveness of control is based on the level of implementation of audit recommendations and improvement actions and the results of the ongoing risk assessment collected from all directors of divisions, heads of units and heads of office, and conclusions of the Internal Control Management Meetings conducted in 2018.

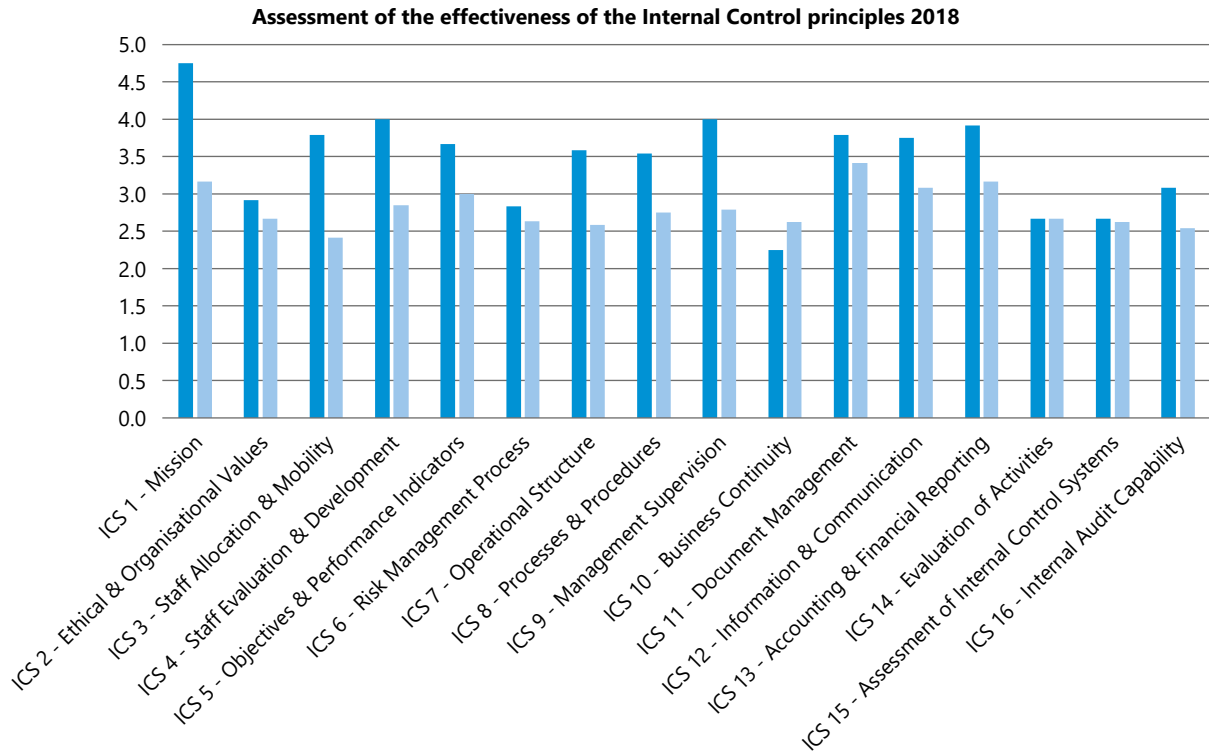
⁽³⁴⁾ IAS *Strategic internal audit plan 2017-2019* for Frontex — Ares(2017)4326621, 5 September 2017.

⁽³⁵⁾ Following conditions of the mutual expectations paper signed between IAS and Frontex, Frontex disagreed with the priority given by the IAS.

⁽³⁶⁾ The following reports were issued in course of 2018:

- *Implementation plan for the revised ICF for 2018*,
- Internal Control Service, *Strategic audit plan 2017-2019*,
- *Corporate risk assessment report* issued in May 2017.

The figure below provides a numerical summary of the results (a 1-5 scale is used where 1 is low and 5 is high) of the assessment of the internal controls as of the end of 2018.



5.4. Conclusions as regards assurance

Overall conclusion

Based on the internal control assessment process, the directors of divisions who were in charge of risk management and internal control of the activities performed by the division under their managerial remit, confirmed that the state of internal control in their division during 2018 was duly reported, and the information provided and represented in Section 2.3 of this report is to the best of their knowledge, accurate and complete.

Following these statements, and the outcome of the overall internal control assessment process for year 2018, it can be concluded that the internal control standards are functioning effectively. However, as described above there are areas where improvements are needed. This is especially important given that there will be a continued increase in both financial and human resources until 2020 and beyond. The significant changes in the mandate of Frontex will further impact its activities, the internal organisation and the way it interacts with the Member States and other external stakeholders. It is anticipated that these changes will put a major strain on the internal control system, thus placing the revised Internal Control Framework in focus.

The information reported above stems from the results of internal control assessment processes, audits and monitoring and is contained in the reports listed above. This approach provides sufficient guarantees on the completeness and reliability of the information reported and provides comprehensive coverage of the Frontex budget.

Reviewing the elements supporting the assurance as described and the evidence as presented in this *Consolidated annual activity report 2018* some areas for improvement were identified. However, they do not rise to the level of a 'reservations'.

6. Declaration of assurance

I, the undersigned,

Executive Director of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency,

in my capacity as an authorising officer, declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽³⁷⁾.

I state that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement, on the information at my disposal (including that provided by managers that reported to me) and on such work as the annual assessment of the internal control system, *ex ante* and *ex post* controls and the findings and observations of the Internal Audit Service and the European Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

I confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of Frontex.

Although I have not specified any 'reservations', the attachment to this declaration specifies areas where significant improvements can be made to the internal control system.

Warsaw, _____ June 2019

[signed]

Fabrice Leggeri

⁽³⁷⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in Frontex.



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