

FRONTEX EVALUATION REPORT 2017

Focal Points Concept Joint Operation Focal Points Sea 2017

Approved at Warsaw

[signed]
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1. Background Information

1.1. Brief Risk Assessment

The main goal of the JO Focal Points Sea (JO FPS) is to assist local authorities in conducting border checks and to foster the sharing of expertise and best practices on specific subjects related to border control. With this purpose, the JO FPS has been running since 2008, usually from April/May to October/November. For the first time since 2008, **19 maritime BCPs** were activated in 2017, and for the first time, one Member State activated five focal points at once. The Italian authorities increased the number of maritime BCPs from one to five active seaports, covering different areas from Palermo to Venice.

As in previous years, the decision to activate the maritime BCPs is mostly based on the Member States' willingness and feasibility to host Focal Points Sea. Additionally, at the beginning of the JO FP Sea 2017, it was recommended that the staff of the activated BCPs pay attention to incidents related to clandestine entry (in particular extra-Schengen movements) and refusals of entry (especially to those cases related to reasons of refusal 'B' and 'D'). Moreover, a request was made to pay particular attention to the dissemination of the common risk indicators for foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) amongst first-line officers.

With regard to the maritime BCPs activated in 2017, the main risk related to illegal border-crossing concerned the BCPs with **regular ferry connections with North African seaports and with Western Balkan countries.**

1.2. Operational Aim

The operational aim is to implement coordinated operational activities in the areas at the external sea borders, which are not covered by regular joint operations or complementing them in order to control irregular migration flows towards the territory of the MS of the EU and to tackle cross border crime.

1.3. Period of Implementation and Operational Areas¹

The JO was implemented between 1st of May and 30th of November 2017 - in total 214 days. The operational activities were applied in nineteen (19) different BCPs from 12 EU MSs (Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain) covering six geographical regions (Atlantic Ocean, Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Adriatic Sea, Central Mediterranean and Western Mediterranean) with external maritime borders. The focal points were introduced in major sea ports BCPs with passenger and/or cargo traffic to and from third countries. The activation period for each of the selected BCPs was based on a risk assessment and on the proposals coming from the Host MS which were also evaluated by the operational analysts.

1.4. Participants

JO FP Sea 2017 was hosted by 12 MS (Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain) in 19 different BCPs. One FP Sea Coordinator was appointed for each BCP of the host MS to coordinate the operational activities on the local level.

In some cases, because of the total lack of human resources offered by the MSs, the respective FPs were only in the stand-by mode or they just hosted third-country observers.

13 home MS (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) participated within the JO by deploying in total 28 First-line Officers from 14 different authorities to the activated Focal Points. (See table in Fact Sheet)

¹ Geographical area of the joint operation as indicated in Article 3a (1) (c) of the Frontex Regulation

Two Third-Countries deployed 4 experts (3 from UKR, 1 from GEO) during this year's JO FP Sea.

1.5. Financial Information

Initial budget allocated for JO FP Sea 2017 was 370,000 €. The amount for operational activities has been decreased due to lesser amount of activated Focal Points Sea in comparison with the year 2016, and it was finally set on 295,000 €.

By 27 November 2017, 111,306 € (38%) of the budget assigned to the activity was reimbursed to the MS. The amount of 182,907 € (62%) is still to be reimbursed to the MS for their completed deployments to the operation.

2. Achievement of Objectives

Objectives	Indicators	Level of achievement
Enhance border security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out border checks of all persons and their transportation means, support the national authorities in detecting smuggling of migrants, trafficking and other cross border crimes 	Partially achieved
Enhance operational cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High level of MS participation in operational activities Enhanced cooperation with other EU agencies and bodies or international organisations and multi-character operational concept to be applied Enhanced cooperation between national authorities of the host MS as well as on an international level Seeking involvement of Third countries in operational activities 	Achieved
Enhance exchange of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collection of operational information from all actors involved Distribution of operational information to operational actors through the respective authorized channels Implementation of fully automated online reporting system Seeking standardized format and quality of the reports and interviews Use of the "Guidelines for JORA Incident Template" and "Common Risks Indicators" 	Partially achieved
Identify possible risks and threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debriefing activities to support migration management and obtaining intelligence (N/A) Monitoring political, economic and social situation in the countries of origin and transit 	Partially achieved

Establish and exchange best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering and supporting workshops, meetings and other network events • Delivering and supporting operational briefings/debriefings including information on fundamental rights • To support targeted training 	Fully achieved
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3. Link to other Frontex Activities and Best Practices

Reference Manual - The latest updates within the domain of falsification techniques and types of documents and specific trainings on how to detect imposters.

VEGA Manual and THB Profiles - The latest updated version of the VEGA Manual and the interactive THB Profiles were distributed to all participants since the documents are considered applicable to first-line tasks at sea borders' BCPs.

JO Minerva - During the period 14.07 - 15.09.2017, the BCP from ESP suspended its activation, due to the implementation of the JO Minerva, as each year, which presumes strengthening the border checks in the same location, plus other 2 ESP BCPs

Rapid Border Intervention Exercise 2018 - During the period 4th of October to 8th of November 2017, the REX Exercise 2017 was organised in several border section in Bulgaria. Within this activity, 2 BGR BCPs participated by hosting 4 experts from Home MSs.

4. Assessment of joint operational activities

During the operational period (from May to November 2017), **1 002 incidents** were reported involving **1 264 persons**, which represents an increasing trend compared with last year (comparing active Focal Points and similar periods when possible).

Of the 1 002 incidents reported, **193** were related to **illegal border-crossing** involving the apprehension of **208 irregular migrants** and the arrest of six people smugglers. Other cases were linked to cross-border crime, refusals of entry, hits in databases, and administrative/minor offences (*see Fact Sheets - Statistics*).

The following types of incidents and modi operandi were identified in 2017:

- 111 incidents related to persons **hiding in transportation means**, involving 124 irregular migrants and 3 arrested people smugglers.
- 74 incidents related to **avoiding border controls**, involving 74 irregular migrants and 2 arrested people smugglers
- 5 incidents related to **falsification/document fraud**, involving 5 irregular migrants
- 2 incidents related to **illegal border-crossing**
- 1 incident involving 1 irregular migrant was related to a **smuggling case**.

In relation to **cross-border crime**, **16 cases** were reported and **20 smugglers** were arrested, which represents a stable trend compared with 2016:

- 4 incidents related to the **smuggling of hashish and marijuana**, involving 5 smugglers (drugs for personal use), and the seizure of 6 kg of hashish and small amounts of marijuana.
- 1 incident related to the **smuggling of cocaine**, involving 17 arrested smugglers and the seizure of 1.1 tonnes of cocaine found inside a cargo vessel.
- 2 incidents related to the **smuggling of cigarettes**, involving 3 crew members and the seizure of 368 cigarettes inside the cabin, which exceeded the declared quantity.
- 4 incidents related to the **smuggling of goods**, involving 5 smugglers and 580 items of counterfeit clothing and stolen electronic goods.
- 5 incidents related to **stolen vehicles**, involving 7 arrested smugglers and the seizure of 5 vehicles detected on exit.

In relation to **other types of incidents**, the following **747 cases** were reported:

- 243 incidents related to **persons refused entry**.
- 38 incidents related to **overstayers**.
- 510 persons were identified by positive **hits in databases** (national and international).
- 15 **other types of incidents** involved 15 persons (excluding 1 incident related to the detection of 1 smuggled irregular migrant).
- 5 incidents related to **administrative** or minor offences

EU added value of the operation

The main purpose of the activities developed within JO was to further develop a permanent and flexible cooperation framework enabling MS to tackle identified threats and risks affecting the EU external maritime borders. In this sense, Frontex provided sustainable operational presence and information exchange in the operational areas at external borders, as a result substantially contributing to the situational awareness.