

FRONTEX

Frontex International Cooperation Strategy

2021–2023





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FRONTEX

 **EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY**

Plac Europejski 6
00-844 Warsaw, Poland

T +48 22 205 95 00
F +48 22 205 95 01
frontex@frontex.europa.eu
www.frontex.europa.eu

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Foreword

As reiterated in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and the Security Union Strategy,¹ the European Union (EU) is facing rapidly evolving migration and security challenges, exacerbated by a global pandemic that is significantly affecting our response capabilities. With its enhanced mandate, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency has an important role to play, including outside the EU.

The renewed Frontex International Cooperation Strategy for the 2021-2023 period will be implemented at this pivotal time, with the aim of ensuring the implementation of European integrated border management (IBM). Internal and external dimensions of security are two sides of the same coin as security threats are not contained by the borders of the EU. The Strategy does precisely that: it bridges both dimensions by ensuring a coherent vision in the external dimension that complements Frontex' activities at the external borders of the EU.

We have come a long way

Over the past three years, Frontex has substantially increased its engagement with third countries and international organisations. In 2019, the Agency launched its very first joint operation with executive powers on the territory of a third country, in Albania, followed by the second joint operation in Montenegro in 2020. Return operations are now being carried out to 80 third countries, compared with 14 in 2015. The wider network of Frontex Liaison Officers (FLOs) as well as increased capacity building

activities continue to promote trust with third countries in the EU's neighbourhood and beyond.

Recalibration of priorities

The renewed Strategy offers an opportunity to re-shape where the Agency wants to go next while taking into account the priorities and interests of its partners. When revisiting our thematic and geographical priorities, the underlying goal is to make the best use of the enhanced possibilities and available tools provided for in the revised European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) Regulation. In the end, what we are aiming for is an evolution rather than a revolution.

Enhanced operational possibilities

The implementation of the renewed International Cooperation Strategy will coincide with the launch of the first European law enforcement standing corps on 1 January 2021. This is the start of a new operational concept for Frontex that will enable the Agency to better meet the growing needs and challenges at the EU's external borders. The standing corps will also be available to support operational cooperation with third countries, bringing our joint activities to a new level.

Volatility at the EU's external border

As outlined in the Frontex Strategic Risk analysis, global trends and developments are certain to have an impact on the EU's external borders. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that today's challenges require a collective response at regional as

¹ Migration and Asylum Package: New Pact on Migration and Asylum, European Commission, 23 September 2020



well as global levels. Some of the effects of the pandemic will continue to shape the border management environment for the years to come. Health and safety measures will have to be strengthened and streamlined, and preparedness ensured, with ever more effective crisis management and contingency planning. To accomplish that, we will need close partnerships.

Strategic direction for international cooperation

The renewed International Cooperation Strategy is an important part of the Agency's technical and operational strategy for European IBM and is also a strategic priority for Frontex' multi-annual programming. As an area of work that touches upon the entire mandate of the Agency, the Strategy should be seen as building upon and complementing other strategic documents of Frontex.

The document sets the strategic objectives for the 2021-2023 iteration of the Strategy. The Strategy also outlines the cooperation tools available, explains how fundamental rights and data protection safeguards are embedded into all of the Agency's cooperation in the external dimension and highlights the envisaged areas of collaboration with the external partners. It then sets the priority areas for cooperation with third countries and international organisations, and also highlights the need to ensure synergies with EU partners and the Member States. It then concludes with annual planning to implement the Strategy as well as the process to monitor and review it.

1. Overall direction

Vision

As an overarching vision, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, together with the Member States², strives for safe, secure and well-functioning external borders of the EU, thus supporting the European area of freedom, security and justice. Part of this vision is an increasingly connected global community, where border, coast guard, law enforcement and migration authorities live up to the highest standards for integrated border management. Members of this global border management community cooperate closely with each other, promoting an interdisciplinary approach in liaison with asylum, customs and health care authorities, and thereby can effectively address common challenges – from illegal immigration and cross-border crime to international mobility, including during global pandemics.

Guiding principles and values

Complementing the Agency's values of professionalism, respect, cooperation, accountability and service, Frontex develops international cooperation based on the following core principles.

COHERENT with EU laws and policies

Frontex' international cooperation is grounded in the EU's legal and policy framework. The overall impact of the EU's foreign

Strategic objectives

The Agency works towards its vision in the external dimension by pursuing one overarching goal and four strategic objectives (see table to the right). It pursues these objectives by making the best use of the tools and instruments provided for in the enhanced EBCG Regulation³ and based on the principles of European IBM. The Agency's objectives are set within the framework of the external action policy of the Union, including with regard to the protection of fundamental rights, personal data and the principle of *non-refoulement*.

In line with Article 102 of the EBCG Regulation, the Strategy sets the direction for the Frontex relations with third countries and international organisations as part of the Agency's multiannual programming within the Single Programming Document 2021-2023. In the future, this Strategy will be aligned with the multiannual strategic policy cycle for European IBM, once this process is established, and as such it will complement the technical and operational European IBM Strategy prepared by the Agency.

and security policy, as well as bilateral relations between the EU Member States and third countries, is the pre-condition for the success of the Agency's cooperation at operational and structural levels. The Agency,

² In this document the term Member States includes the Member States of the European Union as well as Schengen Associated Countries within their scope of the involvement in the EBCG Regulation

³ Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard (OJ L 295, 14.11.2019, p. 1).

The overarching goal of Frontex' cooperation in the external dimension is to enhance border security, facilitate legitimate travel and contribute to effective migration management in the EU, while saving lives.



Strategic Objective

1

Enhance trust and mutual understanding through regular dialogue and structured cooperation frameworks.

Strategic Objective

2

Engage in mutually beneficial technical and operational cooperation across all areas of Frontex' mandate.

Strategic Objective

3

Strengthen the capacities of priority third countries to implement border management and return in line with best practices and standards of European IBM, and promote mutual learning and exchange.

Strategic Objective

4

Effectively contribute to the EU's external action policy and promote European IBM standards through EU and Member States' initiatives.

in turn, supports the delivery and impact of the EU's objectives in the external dimension. A wide number of policies guide and enable the Agency's priorities in the external dimension.⁴ The Agency also takes into account relevant Council Conclusions, European Parliament resolutions and reports, the EU's international agreements as well as strategies defining policy direction in relation to specific regions.

IN PARTNERSHIP with the wider EU family

Frontex implements its international cooperation with the support of, and in coordination with other EU and international

partners. This way the Agency seeks to ensure mutual reinforcement and complementarity of actions, bringing unique added value and avoiding duplication of efforts. In third countries, Frontex works together with the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS), including through the Union Delegations and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, and coordinates external activities with EU agencies. As part of the shared responsibility, the Agency develops cooperation with external partners in support of and in close coordination with the Member States, thereby increasing the impact of the EBCG.

⁴ Examples include: the New Pact on Migration and Asylum; the Commission proposal to recast the Return Directive, the new European Security Union; the European Neighbourhood Policy; the European Development Policy, such as the European Consensus on Development; the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM); the European Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and the Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy for the EU; as well as region specific strategies, such as the Commission Strategy on the Western Balkans complemented by the Zagreb Declaration, the joint Council and the EEAS Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 and the EU Strategy with Africa.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS based

Fundamental rights and core principles of international protection, including the principle of *non-refoulement*, are an essential pre-condition for all Frontex international cooperation activities. In cooperation with the Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer and the Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights, the Agency engages closely with relevant EU and international actors to ensure that these principles translate into practical safeguards to guarantee fundamental rights in all cooperation activities. The Fundamental Rights Monitors, alongside already existing tools such as the Complaints Mechanism and the Serious Incident Report, will play an important role in continuing to ensure compliance with fundamental rights during all stages of Frontex' operational activities in third countries.

PRIVACY and DATA PROTECTION conscious

The EU is a world leader in safeguarding privacy and in protecting personal data. Frontex aims to continue to ensure this, using a two-fold approach. First, the Agency commits to respect all privacy and data protection regulations throughout its activities with external partners. Specific and detailed provisions will be included in any newly concluded arrangement with third parties, allowing the safe transfer of personal data, if necessary. Second, the Agency will build its international cooperation activities in careful consideration of data protection and will use capacity-building programmes to promote European standards in this area.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS driven

In an increasingly dynamic world, international cooperation requires clear direction, but also constant vigilance and readiness to adapt to a permanently changing environment. The Agency therefore develops and regularly reviews its cooperation priorities based on situational monitoring and risk analysis. Risk analysis allows the Agency to remain open for new partnership opportunities while enhancing the already developed ones, and to pursue cooperation initiatives that help respond to emerging threats, mitigate risks and develop action along the key migratory routes to the EU.

CONSIDERATE of mutual interests

Frontex' cooperation with external partners is based on clear priorities as well as full respect for the partners' strategic interests and needs. The Agency will strive for win-win solutions that create mutually beneficial cooperation. This will help to build open dialogue, develop trust and ensure lasting relationships.

COMMITTED to sustainable solutions

The Agency aims for sustainable solutions in countries outside of the EU, supporting the development of their institutional capacities and practices. It promotes European standards and best practices for IBM, thereby contributing to the further harmonisation of working methods and enhanced interoperability in the global community of border, coast guard, law enforcement, return and other relevant authorities.

Methodology

In elaborating this Strategy, the Agency followed a comprehensive methodology, including research and participatory stakeholder engagement. Devising the second Strategy was also a good opportunity to take on board the lessons learnt from the implementation of the Strategy for 2018-20. Over the past years, the Agency has witnessed a number

of success stories that may develop into long-lasting partnerships. At the same time, some of the challenges present three years ago are still pertinent today, calling for a more strategic, targeted and measured approach in the external dimension that would make full use of the enhanced Frontex mandate and synergies with other Union policies and stakeholders.

1

Internal Evaluation

- Taking stock of the achievements
- Drawing lessons learnt
- Identifying new opportunities and operational needs

2

Risk Analysis

- Assessing the latest trends and developments in the identified key countries
- Conducting desk research

3

Stakeholder consultations

- Extensive internal consultations across Frontex' business areas
- Thorough consultations with the Commission (DG HOME, DG NEAR and DG INTPA), EEAS, the MSs/SACs and the Frontex Consultative Forum on fundamental rights

4

Endorsement

- Formal consultations with the Commission as part of the SPD 2021-23
- Adoption by the Frontex Management Board

2. Dialogue and cooperation frameworks

As the basis for operational cooperation, Frontex seeks to develop mutually beneficial and structured partnerships, underpinned by working arrangements and Status Agreements. Such structured cooperation is achieved through gradual familiarisation, trust-building and dialogue with partners in the external dimension.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Enhance trust and mutual understanding through regular dialogue and structured cooperation frameworks.

2.1. Structured engagement

The enhanced EBCG Regulation has brought about new opportunities to strengthen cooperation with external partners, including further opportunities to exchange information (i.a. through EUROSUR), support the return of third country nationals and contribute to effective border control through a broader geographical reach of Frontex' operational activities outside of the EU. This will require the Agency to update and further develop robust cooperation frameworks and create new platforms for dialogue and exchange.

Status Agreements

The Agency can assist third countries in border management and, subject to their agreement, organise joint operations with executive powers on their territory, including by deploying border guards at the border of two third countries in line with the enhanced mandate of the Agency. The EU must conclude a Status Agreement with the country concerned as a pre-condition

for a joint operation with executive powers to take place. The Status Agreements include the scope and timeframe of the operation, the tasks and powers of the members of the teams and practical measures related to the respect for fundamental rights and the protection of data. The joint operational actions can then be carried out based on an operational plan agreed between Frontex and the third country concerned. Initiated and negotiated by the European Commission, Status Agreements require authorisation of the Council of the EU and consent of the European Parliament.

Working arrangements

Working arrangements express the highest level of commitment for long-term technical and operational cooperation across various areas within the Agency's remit. They specify the scope, nature and purpose of the cooperation and the requirement to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and the protection of data as set by Union and international law. Additionally, working arrangements may include provisions concerning the exchange of classified information and cooperation in the framework of EUROSUR. In line with its enhanced mandate, Frontex will embark on a process to revise existing working arrangements and, where available, explore new possibilities for structured cooperation, based on the priorities identified in this Strategy.

Cooperation plans

Cooperation plans can translate bilateral commitments into concrete actions. These are concluded for a period of two to three years, with benchmarks systematically reviewed in the course of the activities.



Frontex Liaison Officers to third countries

The Agency continues to expand its network of FLOs in third countries. The FLOs facilitate cooperation with those third countries across various areas of Frontex' mandate, such as collection and exchange of information with the third countries' authorities, thus effectively contributing to the European situational picture. Where appropriate, the FLOs have regional mandates to ensure a wider geographical reach or may have a dedicated profile (e.g. return), reflecting the Agency's interests towards the third country.

Part of the local and regional cooperation networks of immigration liaison officers and security experts, the FLOs closely coordinate their activities with European Migration Liaison Officers, European Return Liaison Officers (EURLOs) and other immigration liaison officers deployed by the EU and its Member States. The FLOs also enjoy a privileged relationship with EU Delegations where they are collocated.

Further deployments of FLOs will continue to follow the priorities set by the Management Board, subject to the prior opinion of the Commission. The overall objective is to cover key priority regions as identified in this Strategy, taking into account the feasibility and value added of each deployment.

European Return Liaison Officers

Frontex supports the deployment of EURLOs, aiming to facilitate cooperation between Member States and third countries as well as to support the Agency's activities in the field of return. EURLOs are national immigration liaison officers funded by the Agency and deployed by the national return authorities of Member States as part of the immigration liaison officers' networks in third countries. As a rule, they are based in their national embassies, but support return-related cooperation for all Member States. The Agency may support a Member State in deploying a EURLO in third countries where Frontex has not deployed a liaison officer with a specific return profile.

Frontex Liaison Officers to EU Member States

The Agency has deployed its network of FLOs in the EU Member States. Tasked to foster cooperation and dialogue with the national authorities, they act as the interface of the Agency with national counterparts. Among other tasks, they aim to increase synergies between the international cooperation activities of Frontex and those of the EU Member States. The future deployment of liaison officers from EU Member States or EU entities will further support the coordination of the EBCC's activities in the external dimension.

Frontex Liaison Officers to other entities

Based on operational needs, Frontex also deploys liaison officers and experts to other EU and international entities. The Agency will utilise this channel to enhance support to CSDP missions and operations, such as EUNAVFOR MED, and support cooperation with its EU partners, such as Europol.

Liaison Officers to the Agency

On a reciprocal basis, Frontex also welcomes partner liaison officers in Warsaw. The enhanced EBCG Regulation provides for Member States' liaison officers to be collocated in the Agency's Headquarters. As part of bilateral cooperation, Frontex will continue to host liaison officers from key EU partners, such as the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and soon with Europol. Third country authorities also deploy liaison officers associated with Frontex in their bilateral embassies in Warsaw, whereas some international organisations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and soon the International Organization for Migration (IOM), have dedicated LOs in their Warsaw offices. The Agency will continue to associate them in Frontex activities.

SO 1 Output 1.1

Frontex has appropriate frameworks to enable structured dialogue and cooperation with all its key priority partners.

2.2. Platforms for familiarisation and dialogue

Familiarisation visits

Frontex regularly welcomes international delegations in the Agency's Headquarters in Warsaw and its key operational areas, particularly Greece and Italy. Through on-site visits and direct conversations with the

Agency's experts, participants can learn about the Agency's mandate, its working methods and the core principles of European IBM. Such familiarisation visits are an opportunity to get to know the Agency and to explore potential areas for fostering dialogue and cooperation.

Staff exchange and study visits

To foster good practice exchange and a better understanding of each other's working methods, the Agency hosts staff exchange programmes in various areas of its work, including within the framework of its operational activities. Such programmes include visits to land, air and sea border crossings, situation monitoring centres and other operational locations.

Regular exchanges to implement structured cooperation frameworks

Frontex strives to foster deeper dialogue with its key partners at the strategic and operational levels, with the aim to systematically take stock of cooperation and explore new areas of mutual interest. Frontex regularly presents its planned operational activities to partners, who are then invited to assess their operational needs and to express their interest in being involved in Frontex training, operations and other activities.

EU and global multilateral fora

Frontex contributes to the implementation of bilateral and regional cooperation frameworks on migration, and fosters dialogue with third countries by contributing to multilateral fora. The Agency supports the work under GAMM, Rabat-, Budapest- and Prague Processes, the Valletta Summit follow-up and other Commission-led initiatives, offering its expertise, and contributing to ensuring sustainability of these platforms. The Agency also contributes to other regional and global fora, including those linked to coast guard functions. Frontex will also continue to foster dialogue at operational

level through Frontex-led initiatives, such as European Border and Coast Guard Day, the International Border Police Conference and participation in international events.

SO 1 Output 1.2

Enhanced awareness about the EBCG, the Agency's mandate and key principles of IBM in priority third countries and multilateral fora.

2.3. Fundamental rights and data protection

Fundamental rights

Frontex places the respect and the promotion of fundamental rights at the heart of its activities, as set forth in the EBCG Regulation:

Article 73: In cooperation with third countries, the Agency [...] shall act within the framework of the external action policy of the Union, including with regard to the protection of fundamental rights and personal data, the principle of non-refoulement, the prohibition of arbitrary detention and the prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The Agency achieves this goal through the strengthening of the frameworks for structured cooperation as well as by mainstreaming fundamental rights in its daily activities, in line with the Frontex Fundamental Rights Strategy.

Frontex ensures that it also carries out an effective fundamental rights impact assessment prior to engaging with a third country. If the assessment identifies risks of serious fundamental rights violations or ones that are likely to persist, the Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO) can advise the Executive Director to reconsider the engagement.

The Agency ensures that all of its working arrangements contain fundamental rights provisions and that the FRO is consulted at various stages of negotiations and can inform the Management Board before decisions are taken. The FRO is also regularly consulted on the other activities of the Agency in the external dimension, including on the conclusion of cooperation plans and capacity building initiatives such as technical assistance or pilot projects. Additionally, the FRO contributes to familiarisation visits by third country authorities to Frontex, with the aim of raising their awareness of fundamental rights, relevant EU standards and international protection obligations.

Respect for fundamental rights is also at the centre of Frontex' capacity building support. The Agency will therefore continue to mainstream fundamental rights principles in learning outcomes as well as the execution of its trainings and will carry out dedicated educational activities to promote the protection of vulnerable groups. Trainings based on existing tools, such as the Frontex VEGA Children handbooks, will continue to be an important part of capacity building support.

On an operational level, the Agency will continue to ensure that all participants in Frontex activities, including team members and observers of third country authorities, follow its Codes of Conduct as well as receiving, among others, fundamental rights briefings by the FRO at the start of every deployment. To ensure accountability for potential fundamental rights violations, the Agency will honour and follow up on the complaints received through its fundamental rights complaints mechanism and, where executive powers are foreseen, will conclude specific working arrangements with the competent authorities of third countries to ensure complementarity between the Agency's complaints mechanism and national ones. Wherever possible, the Agency

aims to better define the tasks, responsibilities and powers of third country observers and liaison officers, such as at the level of an Operational Plan.

Already now, Frontex has set up monitoring systems to detect serious or persisting violations of fundamental rights or international protection obligations. In line with the enhanced EBCG Regulation, Frontex undertakes to withdraw the financing of, suspend or terminate any activity where verified serious or persisting violations are committed, and not to launch an activity where such violations are present at the planning stage. The identification of the latter will be ensured by means of fundamental rights impact assessments prior to engaging with a third country, conducted by the FRO, with the support of other Frontex entities.

To continue ensuring respect for fundamental rights throughout all of its activities, Frontex has set up the function of Fundamental Rights Monitors, tasked to assess compliance with fundamental rights and assist in the preparation, conduct and evaluation of Frontex operational activities from a fundamental rights perspective. The Monitors can also act as forced return monitors, ensuring that no fundamental rights violations are committed during the Agency's return operations.

Since the establishment of the Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights, Frontex has actively engaged with it and strived to implement relevant opinions and recommendations put forward by the Forum. A case in point is the continual improvement of the Agency's reporting on cooperation with third countries, which, among others, now

includes detailed information on the participation of third countries in Frontex activities. Frontex also provides information on its external relations on the Agency's website, accessible to the public.

EU partners and international organisations also play a role in this regard. The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) will continue to be a key partner on all matters related to fundamental rights. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) also plays a central part, as a fellow JHA agency, in the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming when cooperating with non-EU partners. Frontex will also continue to benefit from the expertise of its international partners, such as the Council of Europe, the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, IOM, UNHCR and the OSCE Office for Democracy and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Finally, Frontex also commits to continue following the highest standards for border management that allow for transparency and public scrutiny, including on fundamental rights complaints.

Data protection

Reflecting the general EU policy, Frontex strives to ensure the highest possible data protection standards. The Agency processes personal data only for the specific purposes defined in Article 87 of the EBCG Regulation, in line with the current Data Protection Regulation⁵ that applies to Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies as well as respect for fundamental rights and international protection obligations. Furthermore, non-operational personal data will only be exchanged in line

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data.

with the provisions of the EBCG Regulation and only when it is strictly necessary.

The cooperation of the Agency with its partners, including through working arrangements, will reflect the EU's comprehensive data protection obligations. The Frontex Data Protection Officer will be consulted and, where required, prior authorisation of the European Data Protection Supervisor will be sought. Additionally, a dedicated redress mechanism will also be foreseen in working arrangements.

In order to ensure a uniformly high level of protection of personal data, Frontex will also insist on the inclusion of standard data protection provisions in all new working arrangements, based on the model prepared by the Commission. Where needed and as a pre-condition for personal data exchange, the Agency will initiate an update of working arrangements to strengthen data protection safeguards. Where the regulatory requirements cannot be met, the Agency will seek to complement the tools for providing safeguards for lawful data transfers via supplementary measures. If no equivalent level of data protection can be assured, the Agency will consider cessation of any international data transfer of personal data in line with Chapter V of the Data Protection Regulation.

Beyond structured cooperation, Frontex will also ensure that data protection obligations are respected in practice. This applies to all Frontex activities but also to all other forms of cooperation with third countries and international organisations, such as through the FLOs deployed in third countries.

SO 1 Output 1.3

Fundamental rights and data protection safeguards are ensured across all cooperation activities.

3. Technical and operational cooperation

Frontex' external cooperation spans across all operational areas of its mandate. These differ in terms of objectives and working methods, and hence require a tailored approach to the partnerships that are developed. To ensure that cooperation is effective, the Agency identifies ways of cooperation and individual priorities, depending on the areas of engagement.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Engage in mutually beneficial technical and operational cooperation across all areas of Frontex' mandate.

3.1. Situational awareness and monitoring

Well-functioning situational awareness and monitoring is a prerequisite to ensuring internal security within the Union. Among its core operational objectives, the Agency aims to maintain and further develop a comprehensive situational picture that in turn helps to ensure preparedness and effective operational response at the EU's external borders. This can only be achieved if all relevant authorities exchange accurate information in a timely and secure manner. Frontex will therefore continue to foster cooperation with a wide range of partners within as well as outside the EU. Building on our good cooperation with the Member States and EU entities, including INTCEN, SatCen, Europol and EASO, the Agency will further invest into cooperation with third countries and international organisations.

The enhanced Regulation offers the legal basis for various types of operational activities together with the Member States and third countries – among others, to support situational awareness. The Agency will therefore explore the possibilities to deploy the standing corps for situational awareness purposes, including for situational monitoring, surveillance as well as risk analysis. This would further expand the scope and extent of the Agency's capabilities to collect, share and exchange information with a number of stakeholders.

Situational monitoring and surveillance

At the centre of the Agency's situational monitoring capabilities is the EUROSUR framework, enabling (close to) real time exchange of information and operational cooperation within the EBCG. With the enhanced mandate, Frontex is developing EUROSUR further, which in the future will include border surveillance and checks at border crossing points across the EU and the Schengen Area, along with an extensive list of EUROSUR Fusion Services provided by Frontex. The aim is to ensure an effective, accurate and timely European situational picture, including trends and movements in third countries.

Through the so-called specific situational pictures, the Agency and the Member States may provide third-country National Coordination Centres with access to some of the products of the EUROSUR Fusion Services. To enable such cooperation, the Agency will work towards establishing mutually agreed information exchange arrangements with third country authorities. Particular priority will



be given to partners in the Western Balkans, where effective information exchange is essential for joint operational activities under the Status Agreements. Partnerships with Turkey, as well as in the Eastern Partnership region and the Southern Neighbourhood will also be explored.

Similar specific situational pictures can also be exchanged with relevant international organisations. The Agency will further explore the possibility of establishing such pictures with relevant law enforcement organisations, such as INTERPOL, MAOC-N and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), but also CSDP missions and operations.

Risk analysis

Through regional risk analysis networks and communities in third countries, Frontex will continue to support the analytical capacities of its partner countries and facilitate information exchange among them and with the Agency. The Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network, the Eastern Partnership Risk Analysis Network, the Turkey-Frontex Risk Analysis Network and the Africa Frontex Intelligence Community will continue to bring together expertise from over 36 different countries. Additionally, temporary and tailored risk analysis networks may be

implemented to support operational activities in third countries or to support the pre-warning mechanism in line with the EBCC Regulation.

These networks play a crucial role in facilitating information and knowledge sharing, as well as joint analysis between the EU and the participating third countries. Cooperation through these networks is also instrumental when establishing new partnerships and testing new areas of cooperation. Participation of third countries in the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT activities provides an additional platform to enhance analytical capacities in relation to cross-border crime.

For risk analysis purposes, apart from information obtained through situational awareness, specific situational pictures and risk analysis networks, the Agency also aims to further enhance the exchange of information and knowledge products prepared by UNHCR, IOM and other strategic partners.

SO 2 Output 2.1

Enhanced information exchange, including with external partners, contributes to an accurate real-time and close to real-time European situational picture.

FIRST JOINT OPERATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS



ETIAS - European Travel Information and Authorisation System

The European Commission, the Member States and three EU agencies (eu-LISA, Europol and Frontex) are preparing to launch the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) by the end of 2022. The same year, the EU will be introducing the Entry-Exit System⁶ that will enhance control at the EU's external borders. Experiences and lessons learnt from third countries with similar systems have already been instrumental in the preparatory process. Tasked to develop and run the ETIAS Central Unit, Frontex will continue to rely on advice, practical experience and expertise from several partners, particularly Canada, the United States of America and Australia.

To ensure the successful implementation of the system, Frontex will work with the third countries concerned to ensure that their citizens are properly informed so that they may fully benefit from ETIAS to expedite their journeys. The Commission, in collaboration with EU Delegations, Frontex and the Member States, including their consulates, will define a communication strategy and will be leading information campaigns earmarked for the target third countries. The Agency will

support these efforts through its Liaison Officers and the global networks of the border management community. The immigration liaison officers' networks in third countries, which FLOs are part of, will also play an important role in sharing relevant information and providing advice on the ground. Close cooperation with the private sector, such as air carriers and the tourism industry, will be essential to facilitate the process.

SO 2 Output 2.2

Enhanced awareness of new carrier and traveller obligations linked to ETIAS and the Entry-Exit System in relevant third countries.

3.2. Border control

Soon to be equipped with a 10,000 strong European standing corps, the Agency provides technical and operational support at land, air and sea borders within as well as outside of the EU. While Frontex' main responsibility remains to protect the EU's external borders, the Agency recognises the importance of joint operational activities with third countries as an integral part of

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 of 30 November 2017 establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) to register entry and exit data and refusal of entry data of third-country nationals crossing the external borders of the Member States and determining the conditions for access to the EES for law enforcement purposes

mutual efforts to tackle illegal immigration and cross-border crime. The Agency can engage third countries in joint operational activities at three levels:

Operational level A: Fully-fledged joint operations

The Agency can carry out operational activities with executive powers on the territory of third countries, provided the EU has concluded a Status Agreement with the third country. Building on the first such joint operations in Albania and Montenegro, Frontex will further develop its operational presence outside the EU, making use of the 10,000 strong European standing corps, including through deployments at the border of two third countries in line with the enhanced mandate of the Agency. As the EU's primary tool for operational cooperation on border management, Frontex' joint operations intend to complement the role of CSDP actors, which act in difficult security environments. For the next three years, this will be the key priority for cooperation with the Western Balkans, where Status Agreements are to be concluded with three further countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia.

Operational level B: Operational actions without executive powers

Where Status Agreements do not exist, operational cooperation can take place without executive powers. In the framework of joint operational activities, Frontex can deploy observers from EBCG teams to dedicated operational locations, temporarily activated in the course of the year, depending on operational needs. In cooperation with authorities in the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership countries and other priority third countries, joint operational activities will continue to provide a platform to exchange information for early detection of illegal immigration and cross-border crime, facilitate cooperation on coast guard functions and promote European standards and mutual learning.

Operational level C: Deployment of third country observers

In agreement with the host Member State or the participating third country, Frontex will continue to invite observers from relevant third countries to take part in the Agency's operational activities. Participation of observers facilitates good practice exchange, but also leads to better operational results. Observers provide an important liaison function to their national authorities, assist with their language skills and professional expertise, as well as exchanging information on migration routes and modus operandi of organised crime groups.

In the spirit of transparency, the Agency will also continue to invite representatives of EU entities and international organisations to observe operational activities on the ground. In return, Frontex will seek to benefit from the fundamental rights and protection-driven expertise of FRA, UNHCR, IOM and other external partners via their tailored advice and contribution in operational briefings.

Joint operational activities are set to tackle illegal immigration flows, address cross-border crime and enhance European cooperation on coast guard functions. This requires close cooperation with a variety of organisations and authorities in charge of law enforcement and coast guard functions.

Tackling cross-border crime

The enhanced mandate and operational capabilities of the Agency render it uniquely well placed to support the Member States in the prevention and detection of cross-border crime at the EU's external borders, complementing the work of other EU partners, such as Europol, and the Member States' national authorities.



Frontex will therefore continue to develop its capacities to detect, prevent and combat cross-border crime through its operational activities, including in third countries. The Agency will further contribute to the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle/ European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) priorities, where increasing engagement of third countries provides an additional avenue for operational cooperation, particularly through Joint Actions Days.

In this area, the Agency will enhance operational cooperation with partners in the EU's neighbourhood, namely the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership countries and the Southern Neighbourhood. Frontex will also continue to build operational contacts and exchange with authorities in West Africa and Latin America that are important partners in tackling cross-border crime along the cocaine route to the EU. Operational activities will continue in close cooperation with several international organisations, such as INTERPOL and MAOC-N, and will build on synergies with key regional law enforcement organisations, such as SELEC.

Coast guard cooperation

The implementation of coast guard functions at EU level is a joint effort between three EU agencies: the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), the European Maritime

Safety Agency (EMSA) and Frontex,⁷ which work together to support the Member States across the various coast guard functions. Within this framework, Frontex will continue to engage relevant third countries, striving to coordinate multi-purpose maritime operations, exchange information, support their capacity building efforts and work together to save lives at sea.

Contributing to the implementation of the European Maritime Security Strategy and its action plan, the Agency will work closely with the Commission, CSDP missions and operations, and will develop further cooperation with relevant EU and international agencies, such as the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

Frontex will also enhance operational interaction with various regional coast guard cooperation platforms, among them the European Coast Guard Functions Forum, the Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation, the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum and the Mediterranean Coast Guard Functions Forum. The Agency will also explore synergies with the Black Sea Forum, continue contributing to the Coast Guard Global Summit and engage with relevant organisations that bring together the riparian states of the Gulf of Guinea.

⁷ A Tripartite Working Arrangement has been signed in 2017 between EFCA/EMSA/Frontex to strengthen European cooperation on coast guard functions.

Fighting document fraud

Frontex will continue to seek partnerships with third countries in document and identity control as well as in the detection of false and fraudulent documents, in line with the EU Action Plan to strengthen the European response to travel document fraud⁸ and the ICAO Traveller Identification Programme Strategy.⁹

The Agency will further invest into information systems that facilitate operational decision-making in relation to document checks. From 2022, the FIELDS System, managed together with INTERPOL, will be devoted to front-line document checks, whereas the FADO System¹⁰ will mainly contribute to second and third level document checks and provide forensic labs as a reference and training tool. The FADO System will also provide dedicated information on travel, identity, maritime, vehicle or any other documents of interest to several types of users, including third countries, international organisations and the general public. Through the Forgery Desk, the Agency will promote EU standards and expertise in the field, thereby facilitating cooperation between Member States' authorities, third countries and international organisations.

SO 2 Output 2.3

Enhanced cooperation on border control and coast guard functions contributes to better operational results within and outside the EU.

3.3. Return

Effective implementation of returns requires operational cooperation with the competent authorities of third countries in each phase of the process: pre-return, return and post-return. Third country authorities are essential partners in the identification and documentation (acquisition of travel documents) of third country nationals subject to return, as well as in the implementation of return operations. With an expanded mandate, the Agency will also develop cooperation on post-arrival and post-return as well as on voluntary returns, aiming to provide a comprehensive approach to the return process and thereby increase mutually beneficial engagement with third countries.

Frontex will further develop this work by building on the already established four step approach: (1) Cultivating trust and developing synergies with third countries; (2) Providing operational support to EU Member States; (3) Pooling and sharing information and best practices; and (4) Delivering technical and operational assistance to third countries.

- **Cultivating trust and developing synergies with third countries**

Recognising challenges to develop cooperation on return, the Agency will further invest into trust building measures, such as familiarisation visits, which aim to introduce relevant third country authorities to the mandate and tasks of the Agency in the field of return (see Chapter 2 on dialogue and cooperation frameworks).

8 COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL Action plan to strengthen the European response to travel document fraud, COM(2016) 790final of 8 December 2016.

9 ICAO Security and Facilitation Programme, ICAO TRIP strategy: <https://www.icao.int/security/FAL/TRIP/Pages/default.aspx>.

10 REGULATION (EU) 2020/493 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 30 March 2020 on the False and Authentic Documents Online (FADO) system and repealing Council Joint Action 98/700/JHA, art. 3(1).

- ♦ **Providing operational support to EU Member States**

The Agency will further expand its support for Member States and third countries, facilitating the fulfilment of their return and readmission obligations. Upon Member States' request, Frontex will continue to invest into identification activities. Through dedicated visits or video conferencing solutions, the Agency will further facilitate the efforts of consular and other third country authorities to conduct the identification and documentation of their nationals subject to return.

The Agency will also aim to further develop Collecting Return Operations, where third country authorities actively participate in Frontex-managed return operations. To that end, Frontex will invest into training third country authorities on EU standards in the field of return – a precondition for Collecting Return Operations to take place. Operational cooperation will further expand into the fields of post-arrival and post-return, once the Agency is ready to operationalise its support in these areas.

- ♦ **Pooling and sharing information and best practices**

The Agency will continue to offer its expertise in the field of return and to invest into tailored support in the implementation of the EU's return and readmission agreements and arrangements, thereby contributing to the operational implementation of the Union's external policy. Through a variety of workshops, visits and other activities, Frontex will continue to provide opportunities to Member States and third country authorities to share experiences, best practices and information as well as to identify challenges and opportunities for cooperation in different stages of the return process. Third countries' representatives will also be offered

to participate as observers in return-related fora and activities, upon the agreement of the participating Member States.

- ♦ **Delivering technical and operational assistance to third countries**

Supporting the capacities of third countries to readmit their own nationals is one of the key elements of efficient implementation of return and readmission. The Agency will continue to support activities that enable third countries to enhance their knowledge and expertise on efficient return systems based on EU standards (see chapter 4 on capacity building).

Implementing these activities, the Agency will draw on the support of the European Return Liaison Officers as well as Frontex Liaison Officers, and will coordinate its activities closely with the EU Delegations.

While ensuring flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, Frontex will strive to align its return activities with the Agency's broader cooperation priorities with each individual third country. Recognising that cooperation on return can often be more effective when balanced through support and partnerships in other areas, the Agency will draw on the overall leverage of the EU, but will also ensure that its technical assistance and operational support can be used as a positive reinforcement for improving cooperation on return.

Priority will be given to the main countries of destination of return operations and countries with which the EU has concluded readmission agreements or similar arrangements on return and readmission.

As in all Frontex operational activities, the Agency will ensure that its work on return is carried out with respect for fundamental rights and includes specific measures for vulnerable groups, among them safeguards

to ensure the best interests of the child throughout the process and dignified conduct towards all returnees.

SO 2 Output 2.4

Enhanced partnerships lead to effective return.

3.4. Capability development

The revised Frontex mandate requires the Agency to develop robust and sustainable EBCG capabilities. To achieve that, together with the Member States, the Agency invests into capability planning, developing and procuring state-of-the-art technologies for border management, seeking complementarity, interoperability and interconnectivity with the EBCG, as well as with key partners outside of the EU.

In the area of research and innovation, Frontex seeks mutually beneficial partnerships to jointly develop and test new products, processes, methods and services that can contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of border control. In these and other areas, the Agency will strive to develop a solid partnership with countries that share a similar technological level and have effective solutions in place, among them the US, Canada, Australia, Singapore and Israel. Cooperation will further develop with the aim of exploring effective partnerships for joint pilot projects, such as on aerial surveillance or the use of biometrics, and exchange technological updates through industry events and fairs.

Seeking complementarity, interoperability and increasing harmonisation of standards at global level, the Agency also contributes to the development of international standards for border security, particularly through international standard setting organisations, such as ICAO, ISO and others.

Cooperation will also cover research projects that focus on the development and use of technology for improving border security, including for the detection of explosives, cybersecurity and foresight. The new large-scale EU information systems, such as the Entry-Exit System, will soon fundamentally re-shape processes during EU border checks, offering another area for the exchange of best practices and lessons learnt.

In the area of document and identity checks, the Agency will continue to support technical and operational capabilities in the regions most relevant to the implementation of European IBM. To that end, Frontex will engage with credible international and regional partners, such as IOM and the OSCE, to provide coherent and well-coordinated support to third country authorities.

SO 2 Output 2.5

Enhanced cooperation in the field of research and innovation in order to generate new products, processes and services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of border control.

SO 2 Output 2.6

EBCG technical standards and solutions are widely recognised by the international border management community, and contribute to the development of global standards for border management.

4. Capacity building

The very nature of border management and return mean global interconnectivity. The security of the EU's external borders is closely linked to the effectiveness of border and migration management outside the EU. It is therefore in our common interest to strengthen resilience in the EU's neighbourhood and other countries of origin and transit. The Agency will remain committed to supporting third countries in developing their IBM capacities, and will continue to promote European standards for IBM and the exchange of good practices.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Strengthen the capacities of priority third countries to implement border management and return in line with best practices and standards of European IBM, and promote mutual learning and exchange.

4.1. Technical assistance and training

Technical assistance and capacity building projects in third countries are an important part of Frontex' international cooperation. Through a tailored set of activities, the Agency aims to support the development of sustainable border and migration management solutions in priority third countries. Technical assistance projects serve as "door openers" to initiate dialogue and pave the way for future cooperation or provide the necessary support to develop existing partnerships further. The projects can also be a valuable testing ground for new fields of

engagement, such as in the area of health and safety in response to COVID-19.

The Agency will continue to develop its technical assistance work on three levels:

- a. through EU-funded projects in priority third countries;
- b. through its own funded technical assistance activities; and
- c. by providing advice and support to the programming, steering, implementation and evaluation of EU-funded programmes in the external dimension (as further detailed under Strategic Objective 4).

This work will build on the rich experience gained through technical assistance projects in the Western Balkans and Turkey, the Southern Neighbourhood, the Eastern Partnership countries, as well as supporting the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community. The Agency will continue to carefully select the technical interventions it implements, to ensure that they are complementary to the Agency's operational priorities and that Frontex can ensure their sustainability as part of the Agency's core business. Frontex' engagement will therefore focus on the following areas:

- **Assistance on pre-return, return and re-integration:** As part of Frontex' enhanced mandate, the Agency is establishing the Frontex Reintegration Programme that in the coming years will fully integrate the main activities of the EU-funded European Return and Reintegration Programme).¹¹ This Programme will include a number of capacity building projects, implemented in close cooperation

¹¹ The integration is foreseen to be finalised by the end of June 2022.



with the Member States and built on synergies with the ongoing work of relevant international organisations such as UNHCR and IOM. The Agency will also continue to support third countries' capacities in the identification and acquisition of documents as well as in the readmission of their own nationals. Part of these efforts will be dedicated to the sharing of good practices and expertise in support of the national return objectives of third countries.

- **Situational monitoring and risk analysis:** The Agency will continue to invest in the capacities of third country authorities to collect, process and analyse information that can support operational response. Frontex will further contribute to the capacities of authorities participating in its risk analysis communities and networks, including through training, joint operational guidelines, as well as supporting the establishment of Risk Analysis Cells, such as those developed under Africa Frontex Intelligence Community. As a priority for cooperation in the Western Balkans, the Agency

will also support the capabilities of the National Coordination Centres, with the aim of increasing their interoperability with EUROSUR.

- In the area of **border control**, Frontex will continue providing comprehensive support to third country partners on document and identity checks, identification and registration of mixed migration flows, biometrics, advance passenger information and traveller intelligence, in detecting, preventing and combating cross-border crime and in other areas. Protecting and saving lives at the external borders, particularly through search and rescue operations, is an integral part of Frontex' surveillance operations at the external sea borders and is another important area for engagement with third countries. The Agency will continue to support capacities and operational readiness of third countries to conduct search and rescue in a timely and effective way, including through training and practical exercises.

- **IBM planning and quality control:** Drawing on the lessons learnt from the multi-annual strategic policy cycle on European IBM, the Agency will make relevant IBM tools and processes available for the benefit of third countries. Among priority areas, Frontex will offer EU practices and lessons learnt in the area of planning and quality control, including methodologies for contingency planning and capability development. In particular, the Agency will offer its expertise in supporting the establishment of national quality control mechanisms by sharing its lessons learnt in terms of methodological approach, tools and benchmarks developed in the framework of vulnerability assessment activities.

SO 3 Output 3.1

Strengthened resilience and enhanced capacities of third countries to ensure security of their borders, facilitate mobility, combat cross-border crime, deliver efficient search and rescue response at sea and manage migration and return.

Effective cooperation on border control and on return at operational level require that both sides share a similar understanding of IBM, deploy interoperable systems and equipment and have sufficient capacity to carry out their tasks. The Agency therefore promotes its best practices and standards outside of the EU and, where relevant, is ready to equip partner authorities with knowledge and expertise that will support common operational goals. An important priority will remain to promote and further develop common core curricula. Promoting harmonised training standards, the Agency will continue to invite interested partner authorities to be part of this process, based on the implementation of the common core curricula in their respective countries.

To better understand the needs of third country authorities and ensure the sustainability of the trainings, the Agency aims to develop structured cooperation with third country training institutions. The network of Frontex Partnership Academies, primarily bringing together training institutions of the EU Member States, also provides a valuable platform for dialogue and good practice exchange. The network already includes training institutions from Albania, Ukraine and Georgia and is ready to expand further to other interested third countries.

SO 3 Output 3.2

Enhanced capacities of priority third countries to engage in operational cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard.

4.2. Research, innovation and good practice exchange

Research and innovation is also an essential part of the capacity building process. In the external dimension, and in close synergy with the EU Innovation Hub, the Agency seeks to promote EU-wide knowledge and experience globally, with a particular focus on the following areas:

- **Biometrics and identity management,** aiming to position the Agency at the centre of the global debate, including through the *International Conference on Biometrics for Borders*. The Agency will further develop the conference as a platform for the global border management community, researchers and the industry to discuss the key challenges and opportunities for biometric solutions at the borders;
- **Advance passenger information and traveller intelligence,** building on the



EU's experience with the implementation of the PNR¹² and API¹³ Directives, and the Agency's role as the future Central Unit for ETIAS;

- **Border surveillance and monitoring**, including the application of RPAS, aerostats and other tools;
- **Cross-border crime**, including reinforced tools for screening, surveillance and detection of criminal activities, especially in relation to drugs, firearms, stolen vehicles and their parts, stolen boats and the smuggling of excise goods;

- **Quality control for border management**: particularly for learning and exchanging good practices with third countries that have well-developed quality control systems, methodologies and tools to assess border control performance.

SO 3 Output 3.3

Frontex contributes to enhanced capacities of partner third countries through the exchange of good practices and the latest technological solutions applied by the Agency.

¹² Directive (EU) 2016/681 on the use of passenger name record (PNR) data for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and serious crime

¹³ Council Directive 2004/82/EC on the obligation of carriers to communicate passenger data

5. Cooperation partners and priority direction

All forms of cooperation are specifically tailored to the priority third countries and regions, and international organisations that have been identified in the Strategy. Cooperation objectives and the intensity of engagement vary, depending on the areas of mutual interest and agreed cooperation frameworks.

Long-lasting and successful relationships can only thrive if both sides recognise their respective interests, needs and possibilities. At the same time, careful prioritisation, while leaving enough flexibility to adjust and embrace new opportunities, is an essential element of any strategy. This section therefore outlines Frontex' perspective on the key directions for cooperation with third countries and international organisations. It attempts to match the Agency's operational interests (described in chapters 3 and 4) with the mandates and priorities of its key partners.

5.1. Strengthening cooperation with third countries

When setting priorities for cooperation with third countries, the Agency will consider a number of criteria, such as their geographic proximity, migration and border management threats identified by Frontex risk analysis, technical and operational capacities, border management practices and their adherence to human rights standards. The broader EU policy goals and shared interests in working together, including EU agreements or arrangements on readmission, will also play an important role. Considering the current level of cooperation and identified

mutual interests, the Agency will adapt the nature and intensity of cooperation based on one of the following objectives:

- **Strive for closer structured cooperation** with priority third countries that are important for the EU's effective response to migration and security challenges.
- **Build mutual trust and awareness as a basis for future cooperation** with those priority third countries where there is no or limited structured cooperation.
- **Maintain regular dialogue and cooperation** with those third countries where the Agency has already established ongoing and mutually beneficial partnerships.
- **Develop targeted cooperation activities** with a select group of third countries in areas of mutual interest, such as return or tackling cross-border crime.
- **Further develop strategic partnerships with third countries** that share similar challenges and capacities, to exchange best practices and expertise.

Striving for closer structured cooperation

5.1.1. Western Balkans

The Western Balkans remain a top priority for Frontex, as already reflected in the close cooperation of the Agency with the region. Considering the strategic importance of the Western Balkans to the EU and the process towards EU accession, Frontex will continue to promote European IBM standards and best practices, with a view to enhancing

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interoperability and gradually bringing the region closer to the EBCG family.

For the coming years, the key priority will be to develop fully-fledged operational cooperation, thus establishing the EBCG as the main EU interlocutor for operational cooperation on European IBM in the region. Building on the lessons learnt from the first such joint operations, launched in Albania in 2019 and in Montenegro in 2020, the Agency will roll out operational activities across the Western Balkans including in the Adriatic Sea, as soon as respective Status Agreements enter into force. Cooperation under Coordination Points and joint operational activities under the EU Policy Cycle will complement this effort.

To achieve better operational results, Frontex will continue to support joint situational monitoring and information exchange in the region, including through the Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network and EUROSUR Fusion Services. Tailored support will be provided for the National Coordination Centres, with a view to establishing specific situational pictures in the region under the EUROSUR framework.

The Agency will also continue to support capacities of the Western Balkan countries to

deal with migratory pressures, as well as to prevent and counter cross-border crime. Striving for better technical interoperability of border management and information exchange systems, Frontex will remain a key contributor in assisting partners from the Western Balkan region in their efforts to establish and develop an effective identification and registration process for mixed migration flows, in line with EU best practices. In cooperation with DG NEAR, Frontex will continue providing technical assistance in support of protection-sensitive migration management, and will further expand this work to other areas, such as strategic IBM planning, quality control, information exchange, contingency planning and crisis response. Dedicated training and capacity building activities will support the capacities of the Western Balkan countries' authorities to engage in joint operational activities under Status Agreements.

The FLOs deployed in Belgrade and Tirana will continue strengthening the cooperation, in close coordination with relevant international organisations and regional programmes, such as MARRI, SELEC, DCAF, the Western Balkans Internal Security Initiative, as well as the regional offices of UNHCR, IOM and UNODC.

5.1.2. Turkey

Turkey is located at a pivotal part of the Eastern Mediterranean migratory route and is consequently one of the main countries of transit for illegal immigration, hosting a large number of migrants and refugees on its territory. Based on the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding and a cooperation plan covering 2020-2022, the Agency will aim to enhance cooperation with the Turkish border and migration management authorities in various areas of mutual interest, among them combatting document fraud, information exchange, and return. Further developing joint analytical work under the Turkey-Frontex Risk Analysis Network will be among the key priorities. Frontex will also enhance its efforts to share European IBM standards and good practices through joint capacity building activities as well as providing advice and expertise to other EU-funded initiatives implemented by other partners.

Building mutual trust and awareness as a basis for future cooperation

5.1.3. Southern Neighbourhood (North Africa and the Levant)

At the crossroads of the European, African and Asian continents, the Southern Mediterranean region is geo-strategically positioned to connect Europe with Africa and the Middle East. Facing political and economic challenges, Euro-Mediterranean stability is threatened by conflicts and insecurity, which further feed serious cross-border crimes, the smuggling of migrants and the trafficking of human beings as well as terrorism.

Sustainable dialogue and partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood remains of key importance for the Agency. With the aim of continuing to develop a mutually beneficial and structured operational and technical cooperation in line with IBM, the Agency will

continue to engage and support the countries of North Africa and the Levant, either bilaterally or at a regional level, particularly through the EU4BorderSecurity technical assistance project. Best practices will be identified, such as the enhanced cooperation developed with Morocco based on a common understanding and shared interests, with the aim of being replicated by launching new partnerships with other priority countries in the region. In this regard, close cooperation with DG NEAR is essential.

Additionally, the Agency will seek to strengthen the multilateral approach in different areas of IBM and put efforts into establishing a lasting relationship based on mutual trust with regional entities, particularly with the Arab Interior Ministers' Council within the League of Arab States. The Euro-Arab Border Security Conference, which will be organised in 2021 in close cooperation with the Arab Interior Ministers' Council, is expected to reinforce cooperation with the Southern Neighbourhood countries during the implementation period of the Strategy.

5.1.4. West Africa, sub-Saharan countries and the Horn of Africa

Africa is an important partner for the EU and consequently for the Agency. The continent faces a number of challenges related to the regulation of mobility of its people and goods. Illegal migration and cross-border crime present a significant threat to the security and stability of many African countries; they also have an effect on the external borders of the EU.

The Agency's objective is to develop a sustainable partnership and technical and operational cooperation with African countries, in particular in West Africa, with the sub-Saharan countries and the Horn of Africa, through the conclusion of new working arrangements mainly targeting West African

countries and the expansion of the FLO and EURLO networks. The Agency will strive to develop a joint European-African platform on border management and to strengthen inter-continental cooperation on risk analysis. Frontex will also provide tailored technical assistance and capacity-building support in the broader domain of IBM, including on return and reintegration. Cooperation on countering smuggling and trafficking is also envisaged in those third countries where a FLO has been deployed in and where an Africa Frontex Intelligence Community risk analysis cell has been established.

In the framework of the EU Strategy with Africa, the EU-AU continent-to-continent dialogue and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, the Agency will continue to support EU and Member States' initiatives and projects and to promote EU good practices. It will also explore closer ties and develop partnerships with continental and regional multilateral organisations and networks targeting the fight against the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings, and the fight against cross-border crime such as with the African Police Cooperation Organisation, the African Union Border Programme and others.

Maintaining regular dialogue and cooperation

5.1.5. Eastern Partnership

The Eastern Partnership represents a priority region for the EU and the Agency, and is key to security and predictability at the EU's Eastern external borders. The Eastern Partnership countries have some of the longest track record of structured collaboration with Frontex, with working arrangements concluded with all the countries in the region. While the rate of illegal immigration through the common border is generally low and stable, mutual interests in combating

cross-border crime offer ample areas for operational cooperation.

Based on the Joint Communication on the Eastern Partnership Policy Beyond 2020, the Agency will maintain and further develop regular dialogue and cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries across various subsets of European IBM, with a particular focus on cooperation with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Collaboration will continue to cover most areas of the Agency's mandate, including situational awareness and monitoring, risk analysis within the Eastern Partnership Risk Analysis Network, quality control for border management, participation in joint operational activities under Coordination Points, cooperation on research and innovation, and technical assistance. The Eastern Partnership countries will also remain important partners for the EU in the area of return. Readmission agreements and arrangements are in force with all the countries in the region, which collaborate with Frontex and the Member States on return matters in a constructive manner.

Within the remit of its mandate, the Agency will continue to coordinate efforts and strengthen the already well-established synergies with other EU actors present in the region, in particular with the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine, and the EU Advisory Mission Ukraine. The implementation of capacity building initiatives by the Agency will be significantly facilitated by the fact that the region is home to two Frontex-associated Partnership Academies.

The Agency will further strengthen its presence in the region by deploying a FLO, based in Kyiv, Ukraine.

While not part of the Eastern Partnership countries, the Agency recognises the strategic importance of Russia at the EU's Eastern

border. It will also continue dialogue and engagement with the Russian authorities at the operational and technical level, in particular, through coast guard cooperation platforms in the Baltic and the Black Sea.

Developing targeted cooperation activities in areas of mutual interest

5.1.6. Silk Route countries

When referring to the Silk Route countries, the Agency's focus will particularly be on Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as the main countries of origin and/or transit of illegal immigration to the EU. There is also cooperation potential in other important areas of mutual concern with these countries, among them in mitigating security risks related to combating organised cross-border crime activities, including drug trafficking, mainly along the heroin route into Europe, as well as on preparedness and terrorism prevention.

Where the political and security context permits, Frontex will seek to build sustainable ties on matters of common interest, such as risk analysis and the detection of cross-border crime, especially in relation to drug smuggling, document fraud and trafficking in human beings. Engagement with these countries on return-related activities, particularly those aimed at reinforcing the implementation of the EU's return and readmission agreements, will remain a priority.

To facilitate communication with partner countries, and based on the existing Management Board mandate, Frontex will step up its efforts to deploy a FLO in the region. The Agency will also strive to maintain regular contact with key EU entities present in the Silk Route countries, such as the EU Advisory Mission to Iraq, and support the implementation of EU policy frameworks within the remit of the Agency's

mandate, including the EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan.

From the broader perspective of this priority region, the Agency will also look to support the Member States in cooperation with Central Asian countries, particularly on combatting cross-border crime, including migrant and drug smuggling, as well as to promote cooperation on return and reintegration. The same applies to countries in Southeast Asia, where cooperation on return and reintegration, among other areas, will be explored.

5.1.7. Latin America

With deep-rooted cultural and commercial relations, connectivity between Europe and Latin America is facilitated by the fact that the majority of Latin American countries enjoy a visa exemption for their citizens to enter any member country of the Schengen Area for tourism and business purposes. The EU and Latin America share the challenge and a mutual commitment to tackling drug trafficking on a global level. In this regard, the *EU Drug Markets Report 2019* estimated cocaine production to have reached historically high levels, with larger amounts now smuggled into Europe. The all-time high volumes seized at major EU ports reflect this trend.

In this context, Frontex will develop tailored operational cooperation activities with Latin American partners, with particular emphasis on preventing, detecting and combating the trafficking of illicit commodities and the proliferation of cross-border crime. Engagement with the region will complement existing bilateral cooperation with EU Member States, INTERPOL and MAOC-N, and will take place in close coordination with relevant EU Agencies such as Europol and EU-funded initiatives such as the Global Illicit Flows Programme.



Developing strategic partnerships

5.1.8. Transatlantic cooperation and other strategic partnerships

Responding to the rapidly evolving global environment and its impact on border management, Frontex will work to strengthen strategic partnerships, in particular with the relevant authorities of the US, Canada and Australia. Deeply interconnected with the EU in a wide range of areas, including in response to global threats to security and peace at the borders, such as terrorism and transnational crime, these countries and the EU share common challenges and similar capacities. Engagement with strategic partners is therefore a key component of the Agency's international cooperation.

The focus will continue to be on the sharing of information, expertise and best practices in areas of mutual interest, based on existing working arrangements and other cooperation instruments. In particular, the Agency will seek to continue and further expand exchanges on research and innovation, combating document fraud and cross-border crime, returns, quality control for

border management and technological solutions and systems, including those related to travel authorisation and advance passenger information. In this regard, a particular emphasis will be placed on expertise and best practice exchange relevant to ETIAS, with the aim of facilitating the successful rollout and implementation of the system that will ultimately ensure the movement of *bona fide* travellers and trade while guaranteeing border security.

In the context of broader EU external policy, Frontex will also look into expanding its cooperation with other countries and seek synergies based on shared interests, including with partners in the Asia-Pacific region.

5.2. Cooperation with international organisations

In an increasingly connected world, the complexity of border management requires effective multilateral partnerships. Whether to facilitate legitimate travel of people and goods, or to address migratory challenges and to tackle cross-border crime, the Agency aims to work together with international

organisations, benefiting from their global presence, in-depth understanding of regional contexts and unique expertise.

Building structured cooperation

The Agency values its long-standing structured cooperation with a number of international organisations, among them UNHCR, IOM, UNODC, INTERPOL and OSCE. In light of its enhanced mandate, Frontex will review and strengthen existing partnership frameworks and explore new avenues for cooperation.

- ♦ In its efforts to prevent cross-border crime, the Agency will strengthen operational cooperation with international law enforcement actors, such as INTERPOL, UNODC and MAOC-N.¹⁴

Most importantly, the Agency will aim to develop appropriate channels for information exchange with INTERPOL in line with the future EU-INTERPOL Cooperation Agreement, enabling Frontex access to relevant INTERPOL databases such as Stolen and Lost Travel Documents, Travel Documents Associated with Notices and Stolen Motor Vehicle. These are particularly important for the functioning of the standing corps and the smooth running of the ETIAS Central Unit.

- ♦ In cooperation with IOM, UNHCR, OSCE ODIHR, the Council of Europe and other international organisations, Frontex will strive to ensure that its work meets the highest standards of international protection, respects human rights and contributes to the broader objectives of migration management and return.

- ♦ As part of the European coast guard cooperation, Frontex will seek closer partnership with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), including preventing unlawful practices associated with the fraudulent registration and fraudulent registries of ships and seafarer's maritime certification. Cooperation will be developed in coordination with DG MARE, as well as EMSA and EFCA within the remit of the Tripartite Working Arrangement.
- ♦ Aiming to strengthen health and safety measures at the border, Frontex will explore cooperation with the World Health Organisation, in close coordination with DG SANTE.

In line with Article 68 of the EBCG Regulation, Frontex will seek to develop solid cooperation with international organisations through working arrangements. Where possible, the Agency will negotiate such working arrangements on the foundation of agreements done at the EU level, such as the EU-ICAO Cooperation Agreement or the upcoming EU-INTERPOL Cooperation Agreement, with the aim of supporting the Commission as the institution representing the Union towards international organisations.

Greater coordination for maximum benefit

The inter-disciplinary nature of migration and security matters brings together a wide variety of international and regional organisations that tackle similar challenges from different perspectives. This in turn requires careful coordination, aiming to avoid overlaps, create synergies and, where relevant, mobilise resources for common efforts.

¹⁴ The Maritime Analysis and Operation Centre – Narcotics (MAOC (N))

In addition to structured cooperation through working arrangements, Frontex will promote dialogue and coordination with a wide range of international organisations that are relevant for the implementation of its mandate. Examples include:

- ♦ the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and its Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices, particularly for risk analysis purposes and countering cross-border crime;
- ♦ the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) - in the area of capacity building outside of the EU;
- ♦ the Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM) of NATO for operational coordination within common maritime operational areas of interest;
- ♦ The International Labour Organization (ILO), in particular on seafarers' documents.

Contributing to global standards and innovation

International organisations play an important role in setting standards for technology and processes that support innovation. The Agency aims to benefit from these fora by steering and actively contributing to the development of standards in border security that represent the needs and challenges of the European Border and Coast Guard community. Important partners in this area include the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), as well as INTERPOL and its Innovation Centre. The Agency will aim to increase Frontex' contribution to various technical bodies and working groups of these organisations and others as appropriate, learning from best practices and promoting European standards and technologies for border management.

Synergies in the external dimension

International organisations are essential partners in the external dimension, where the Agency often relies on their global networks as well as local knowledge. Recognising their complementary roles, the Agency will continue to cooperate with various UN family organisations, among them IOM, UNODC, the United Nations Development Programme, UNHCR, and where relevant, join forces in technical assistance activities. Synergies with international organisations will also be sought through various EU funding instruments, where Frontex supports EU implementing partners with guidance and expertise on European IBM standards.

Regional organisations

The Agency will also strengthen coordination with relevant regional organisations that provide important platforms to build trust and mutual understanding with third country authorities. For example, in North Africa and the Middle East, Frontex will invest in cooperation with the Arab Interior Ministers' Council and the African Police Cooperation Organisation, whereas in the Western Balkans the Agency will seek synergies with MARRI, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance and the Integrative Internal Security Governance and its Western Balkans Border Security Initiative.

6. Synergies with EU partners in the external dimension

Strategic Objective 4

Effectively contribute to the EU's external action policy and promote European IBM standards through EU and Member States' initiatives.

6.1. EU institutions, offices, bodies and agencies

Cooperation with EU partners will remain an integral part of Frontex' activities, not only within the EU but also in the external dimension. The EU institutions steer, guide and support Frontex' international cooperation, whereas close inter-agency cooperation forms an important component of European IBM. The Agency will continue to explore synergies with these partners outside the EU, aiming to effectively support relevant EU policies and programmes and contribute to a better use of political leverage and resources.

European Commission

Close coordination with the European Commission is fundamental across all areas of Frontex' work. In relation to third countries, the Commission defines the core parameters for Frontex' international cooperation. It negotiates Status Agreements on operational cooperation, draws up the model working arrangement with third countries, sets the provisions for the exchange of information in the framework of EUROSUR, grants prior approval for Frontex working arrangements and delivers prior opinions on the deployments of FLOs to third countries.

In turn, Frontex supports the Commission in programming and in the evaluation of EU funding instruments for third countries,

offering its technical expertise and available tools. In cooperation with DG NEAR, DG DEVCO and DG HOME, the Agency will further strengthen its contribution to the programming, selection and implementation of EU-funded technical assistance programmes, aiming to promote European IBM standards and synergies with the EBCG. The Agency will enhance its advisory role through project Steering Committees and, where relevant, support the project implementation. Synergies in the external dimension will also be sought through the EU Framework Programme on Research, where Frontex supports the Commission in assessing, evaluating, monitoring and implementing EU financed Horizon research projects in the field of border security.

The Agency engages with a number of Commission entities across a variety of topics. DG MARE and DG MOVE are important interlocutors for the European cooperation on coast guard functions, DG TAXUD and OLAF are key for customs cooperation, whereas the Joint Research Centre and DG RTD are key in the area of research and innovation. The Agency will also continue cooperation with DG DEFIS in relation to the Copernicus programme and will seek closer partnership with DG JUST in the areas of child protection, fundamental rights and data protection.

European Parliament

Timely reporting to the European Parliament and availability for parliamentary hearings and committee meetings will remain key elements of Frontex' transparency and democratic accountability efforts, enabling effective parliamentary scrutiny



of the Agency's work. Frontex will continue to regularly inform the Parliament of its international cooperation, including working arrangements, operational activities, and the deployment of FLOs among others. The Agency also continues to support Parliamentary deliberations with the Agency's risk analysis, reporting and technical expertise, and will participate upon invitation in hearings of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and its Schengen Scrutiny Group. Where relevant, the Agency will continue to reach out to the Committee on Development, the Committee on Foreign Affairs and its Sub-Committee on Security.

Council of the EU

On request of the Council Presidencies, the Agency will continue to inform the Council deliberations at the relevant preparatory bodies and, when appropriate, at ministerial meetings. The Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum, the Committee on Operational Cooperation for Internal Security, the Working Parties on Frontiers, False Documents, Integration, Migration and Expulsions, Customs Cooperation, Law Enforcement, JHA Information Exchange, JHA external relations, Friends of EUMSS Action Plan

implementation and other preparatory bodies are informed of the Agency's relevant external activities. The Agency supports strategic justice and home affairs dialogues between the EU and other third countries, particularly through senior officials and ministerial meetings.

European External Action Service

The Agency's activities in the external dimension are fully embedded in the EU's external policies and closely coordinated with the EEAS and relevant EU Delegations, based on a bilateral working arrangement. At strategic level, Frontex aims to enhance support for the EU's high-level dialogues, migration compacts and other initiatives. Overall coordination is performed through staff-to-staff talks and exchange at the executive management level.

At operational level, the Agency aims to deepen channels for information exchange and enhance coordination and reciprocal support in the field. Collocated in the EU Delegations in third countries, Frontex Liaison Officers rely on the wider EEAS network. In turn, Frontex stands ready to provide EUROSUR Fusion Services as well as real-time and close to real-time situation monitoring products and services to CSDP

missions and operations, as appropriate. The Agency will also continue close cooperation with the EU INTCEN and EU SatCen, as important partners for contributing to accurate situational awareness, as well as feeding Frontex risk analysis.

Frontex will maintain and further develop the established constructive relations with CSDP missions and operations, such as with EUNAVFOR MED Operation IRINI, EUBAM Libya or EUCAP Sahel Mali, seeking to increase synergies and complementarity as well as to facilitate information sharing. The scope of Frontex' interaction with CSDP actors is explicitly defined by the enhanced EBCG Regulation, which foresees that cooperation will be undertaken with a view to ensuring the promotion of European IBM standards, and for the purposes of situational awareness and risk analysis. The Agency will therefore contribute to strategic planning, review and evaluation of CSDP missions and operations, and support their capacity building activities, ensuring CSDP actors can rely on Frontex for IBM expertise and advice.

EU agencies

Cooperation with the EU family - its various agencies and bodies - is important within as well as outside the EU. The tight network of EU decentralised agencies work together to ensure exchange of information, make the best use of the capabilities already available at EU level and to pool resources for joint action.

- ♦ In the area of freedom, security and justice, the Agency will continue to foster long-standing cooperation with Europol, EASO, eu-LISA, CEPOL, FRA, Eurojust and other JHA agencies, both bilaterally as well as within the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies Network. As the Chair of the justice and home affairs agencies network in 2021, Frontex will take the lead to facilitate inter-agency dialogue

on international cooperation, encouraging good practice exchange and mutual support.

- ♦ The implementation of European cooperation on coast guard functions relies on joint action with the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). Frontex will use this cooperation framework to engage relevant third countries, particularly in the Western Balkans and the Southern Neighbourhood, and work together with international organisations, such as IMO.
- ♦ With an increasing role of migration and border management issues in the EU's external policy, the Agency will also explore synergies with EU CFSP agencies, such as the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), predominantly focusing on information and technical exchange.
- ♦ Deepened cooperation with the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), EU SatCen, Eurocontrol and the Network Manager of the European Air Traffic Management Network (EATMN) will further improve Frontex capabilities and performance in monitoring and surveillance of the air space, including cooperation in the area of research and innovation, and will contribute to the implementation of EUROSUR.
- ♦ Mutual interests in research, innovation, technology foresight and standards will continue to generate inter-agency initiatives with JHA partners, as well as EU SatCen, EUISS, EDA, EASA and many others.
- ♦ Health security risks represented not by pandemics such as COVID-19, Ebola, SARS and other contagious diseases require

inter-disciplinary effort to design robust procedures for border checks, early warning mechanisms and appropriate measures to protect officers and travellers alike. In cooperation with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), Frontex is gathering EU wide experiences and will be developing new support measures in the EU's neighbourhood, facilitating exchange of practices and together exploring new solutions.

6.2. EU Member States

Together with the Member States, the Agency shares responsibility for the implementation of the European IBM. Among other areas, this also requires close dialogue and coordination on cooperation with third countries, to ensure that the Agency's engagement in the external dimension effectively contributes to the operational objectives of the EBCG as a whole. The Agency will therefore aim to strengthen mutual exchange in the external dimension.

While the Article 7(5) Reporting mechanism provides a good basis, Frontex recognises the added value of closer dialogue with the Member States on concrete priority third countries and regions. To that end, the Agency will invite interested Member States to exchange views on operational cooperation in the priority regions identified in this Strategy. Round tables on the Western Balkans, the Southern Neighbourhood and Africa, Silk Route countries as well as the Eastern Partnership region will be set up as platforms to inform each other on bilateral engagement and to explore opportunities for further synergies and mutual support.

The Agency recognises the long tradition of bilateral cooperation that exists among the

Member States and their neighbours and other priority countries outside the EU, and will build Frontex' international cooperation in support of those relations. Where possible, the Agency will continue to support bilateral initiatives and closely coordinate its cooperation activities with the bilateral priorities of the Member States, particularly those neighbouring the third country in question. Frontex Liaison Officers in third countries will continue to coordinate their activities as part of the local and regional immigration liaison officers' networks.

In fact, a number of Frontex activities in the external dimension would be difficult to achieve without cooperation frameworks and close bilateral relations that the Member States enjoy towards their third country partners. The EURLOs located in the embassies of the deploying Member States in third countries are an illustrative example in this regard.

SO 4 Output 4.1

Frontex' engagement continues to effectively contribute to the broader objectives of the EU's external actions and EU Member States' bilateral agreements and activities.

SO 4 Output 4.2

Regular dialogue and coordination on cooperation with third countries take place within the European Border and Coast Guard.

SO 4 Output 4.3

European IBM standards are systematically promoted and included in the development and implementation of related EU policies and EU-funded technical assistance interventions in third countries.

SO 4 Output 4.4

Internal coherence: Frontex speaks to external partners with one voice.

7. The way forward

An effective Strategy must translate into concrete actions, followed by measurable results. This requires detailed annual planning, evaluation and regular review. The practical steps of this Strategy will be fleshed out in the Annual Programme of Work. Where relevant, detailed Cooperation plans will be agreed with individual partner organisations and countries. However, a good Strategy is also a living document, anchored in the institutional mind-set and practices, and integrated into the shared tasks and individual targets of everyone involved. For that to materialise, the Agency is putting a number of steps in place.

Multi-annual programming

The Strategy is an integral part of the Agency's strategic planning and one of the pillars of the technical and operational strategy for the European IBM. It is developed for a period of three years, as part of Frontex' multi-annual programme of work.

Annual planning

More detailed priorities and concrete actions linked with the Strategy, as well as the means the Agency intends to use for that purpose, will be developed each year and included in the Annual Programme of Work.

Resources

The ability to implement these strategic objectives will depend on the availability of financial and human resources at the Agency's disposal, especially in light of the reduction in the budget of the Agency for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) compared to the initial proposal by the Commission. The implementation of the Strategy will follow the Agency's multi-annual programme of work and its allocated financial and human resources. Cooperation

activities will be continuously adjusted considering the estimated impact of ongoing crises at the time, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the Agency's operational activities. The Strategy will also draw on the available EU financial instruments, including Commission grants for technical assistance and capacity building projects.

Teamwork

External cooperation work cuts across all entities and teams within the Agency. Day-to-day actions require smooth cross-divisional teamwork, including regular information exchange, coordination and a shared understanding of the Agency's priorities. Frontex' International and European Cooperation Division will facilitate the implementation of the core objectives of this Strategy, while also ensuring coherence across the different business units and functions, and support the business entities to achieve their operational objectives in the external dimension. A cross-divisional round table will be set-up as a platform for regular dialogue and coordination and will bring together representatives from all the relevant business areas.

Stakeholder dialogue

The implementation of the Strategy will equally depend on the shared ownership and interests of the Agency's partners. Frontex is therefore involving those concerned with the development and the implementation of the Strategy. This will be done through regular cooperation dialogues, Cooperation Plans, consultations on the Agency's annual programme of work and numerous opportunities for informal dialogue. Annual staff-to-staff dialogues with the Commission services and the EEAS as well as roundtable discussions with the Member States will continue to guide and steer Frontex' approach.



Transparency and accountability

The Agency will continue to report regularly on its international cooperation activities, including through its website. This will be done through the Consolidated Annual Activity Report, the Annual Report to the EU Institutions on cooperation with third countries and other ad hoc information provided to the EU institutions, such as on new working arrangements, on intentions to deploy Frontex Liaison Officers, on new technical assistance or pilot projects. The Agency will also keep the Consultative Forum informed through its meetings and dedicated briefings.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Strategy will be regularly monitored and reviewed in the International and European Cooperation Round Table. A set of indicators, alongside measurable targets, will be developed to support the process. While the strategic priorities will be updated annually, the Agency intends to carry out external evaluation of its international cooperation work at five-year intervals, with the first evaluation planned for 2023. Mid-term internal evaluations may take place in between external evaluations. Observations, opinions and annual reports of the Fundamental Rights Officer, as well as the annual reports of the Consultative Forum, will feed into this process. A separate stakeholder review process is envisaged as part of the Frontex multi-annual planning and evaluation.



FRONTEX

 **EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY**

Plac Europejski 6
00-844 Warsaw, Poland

T +48 22 205 95 00
F +48 22 205 95 01
frontex@frontex.europa.eu
www.frontex.europa.eu

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