

# Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2020

European Border and Coast Guard Agency



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# Glossary

ABAC	Accrual Based Accounting	ECGFF	European coast guard functions forum
ABB	Activity Based Budgeting	ECGFO	European coast guard functions officer
ABC	Automated Border Control	ECN	Eurosur Communication Network
ABF	Australian Border Force	ED	Executive Director
ABM	Activity Based Management	EDA	European Defence Agency
ABN	Annual Bilateral Negotiations	EDPS	European Data Protection Supervisor
AC	Air conditioner	EEAS	European External Action Service
AD	Administrative Grades	EES	Entry Exit System
AECGE	Annual European Coast Guard event	EFCA	European Fisheries Control Agency
AFIC	Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community	EFS	Eurosur Fusion Services
AFRIPOL	African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation	EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
AIMC	Arab Interior Ministers' Council	EG	Expert Groups
ALDO	Advanced Level Document Officer	EIBM	European Integrated Border Management
AMF	Asylum and Migration Fund	EJMSBM	European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management
AO	authorising officer	ELC	expenditure life cycle
API	advance passenger information	EMA	European Medicines Agency
AST	assistant (staff grade)	EMPACT	European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats
ATO	Authorisation to Operate	EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
AWP	Annual Work Programme	ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
BCP	Border Crossing Point	ENS	Entry Summary Declaration
BFCs	budget, finance, and corporate services	EO	European Ombudsman
BMVI	Border Management and Visa Instrument	EP	European Parliament
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method	EPSO	European Personnel Selection Office
BSO	Border Surveillance Officer	e-RCT	e-recruitment
BSRBCC	Baltic Sea region Border control Cooperation	ERRIN	European return and reintegration network
CA	Contract Agent	ESTA	Electronic system for travel authorisation (United States)
CAR	SYSPEP career module	ETD	Emergency Travel Documents
CBC	Cross-Border Crime	ETIAS	European Travel Information and Authorisation System
CBD	Capacity Building Division	ETIAS CU	ETIAS central unit
CCC	Common Core Curriculum	ETIAS TF	ETIAS Task Force
CCMT	Central Contract Management Team	EU	European Union
CCWP	Customs Cooperation Working Party	EU OSHA	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
CDP	Capability Development Planning	EUAN	EU Agencies Network
CEAS	Common European Asylum System	EUBAM	European Union Border Assistance Mission
CELBET	Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border Expert Team	EUCAP	European Union Capacity-Building - Civilian Mission
CEPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training	eu-LISA	European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice
CERT EU	Computer Emergency Response Team	EUMSS	European Union maritime security strategy
CF	Consultative Forum	EUNAVFOR	European Union Naval Force
CGF	Coast Guard Functions	EURINT	European Integrated Return Management Initiative
CGGS	Coast Guard Global Summit	EURODAC	European Dactyloscopy
CGO	Corporate Governance Division	EUROFRONT	European Frontiers
CIRAM	Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model	EUROPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
CIS	Communication and Information Systems	Eurosur	European Surveillance System
CLIMB	Classified Information Mandatory Briefing	EURTF	EU Regional Task Force
CLP	Contact Learning Phase	EUSA	European University Sports Association
CM	Complaints Mechanism	EVAL	Evaluation and impact assessment
COM	European Commission	EWM	Early Warning Mechanism
COMM	External communication & information	EXP-DOC	Expert Group on Document Control (EXP-DOC Group)
COP	Common Operational Partnership Project	FADO	False and Authentic Documents Online
COVID-19	SARS-Cov-2 Coronavirus	FAR	Frontex Application for Return
CPB	Coastal Patrol Boat	FIAPP	International Libero-America Foundation for Administration and Public Policies
CRO	Collecting Return Operation	FIELDS	Frontex Interpol Electronic Document System
CSAT	Customer Satisfaction	"FIN / CONT	Accounting, finance, non-operational procurement, contract management and quality management, internal audit and control"
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy	FLO	Frontex Liaison Officer
CT MENA	Counter Terrorism in Middle East & North Africa countries	FOSS	Frontex One Stop Shop
CVAM	Common Vulnerability Assessment Methodology	FR	Fundamental Rights
CWG	Country Working Group	FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
CZE	Czech Republic	FRAN	Frontex Risk Analysis Network
DA	Discharge Authority	FRO	Fundamental Rights Officer
DCP	direct contact points (in return matters)	FRS	Fundamental Rights Strategy
DED	Deputy Executive Director	FSA	Frontex Surveillance Aircraft
DG	Directorate-General	FSC	Frontex Situation Centre
DG BUDG	Directorate-General for Budget	FSO	Frontex Support Officer
DG DEFIS	Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space	FWA	Fixed Wing Aircraft
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development	FWC	Framework contracts
DG GROW	Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs	GEN COORD	General coordination
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs	GEN OPER	General operational activities
DG JRC	Directorate-General Joint Research Centre	GEOINT	Geospatial intelligence
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	GIS	Geographical Information System
DG Taxud	Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union	HCG	Hellenic Coast Guard
DGHR	Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security	HOA	Head of Administration
DIGIT	Directorate-General for Informatics	HoICT	Head of ICT
DIS	document inspection systems	HQ	Headquarter
DOC	SYSPEP Document management module	HR	Human Resource
DOT	SYSPEP Job Quota module	HRV	Republic of Croatia
DPO	Data protection Officer	IA	Internal auditing and control
DPR	Data Protection Regulation	IAP	interoperability assessment programme
EAC	Education, Youth, Sport and Culture	IAS	Internal Audit Service
EASA	European Aviation Safety Agency	IATO	Interim Authorisation to Operate
EASO	European Asylum Support Office	IBC	Illegal border crossing
EBCG	European Border and Coast Guard	IBM	Integrated Border Management
EBCGA	European Border and Coast Guard Agency	ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
EC	European Commission	ICC	International Coordination Centre
ECA	European Court of Auditors		
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control		

ICF	Internal Control Framework	SAS	Statistical analysis software
ICJ	International Court of Justice	SC	Standing corps
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development	SEACOP	Seaport Cooperation Project
ICO	Inspection and Control Office	SEC	Security
ICS	Internal control system	SEESAC	South-Eastern and Eastern Europe clearinghouse for the control of small arms and light weapons
ICT	Information and Communication Technology	SEM	Schengen Evaluation Mechanism
IEC	International and European Cooperation Division	SLA	Service level agreement
ILO	Immigration Liaison Officer	SLTD	Stolen Travel Documents
IM	Identification missions	SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
IMINT	Imagery Intelligence	SPD	Single Programming Document
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization	SQF	Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding
IOM	International Organization for Migration	SRA	Strategic Risk Analysis
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance	SSO	Shared Support Office
IRMA	integrated return management application	STM	Seconded team member
ISF	Internal Security Fund	SYSPER	Human Resource Management information system of the European Commission
IT	Information technologies	SYSTAL	Talent Acquisition and Sourcing platform
ITIL	Information Technology Infrastructure Library	TA	Temporary Agent
JAD	Joint-Action Day	TC	Third Country
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs	TCN	Third Country National
JIS	SYSPER identity management module	TE	Technical Equipment
JO	Joint Operation	TF	Task Force
JORA	Joint Operation Reporting Application	TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
JPA	Joint Procurement Agreement	THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
JRC	Joint Research Centre	TIM	SYSPER Time management module
JRCC	Joint Rescue Coordination Centre	TiMa	Time Management
KA	Key Activity	TIPSOM	Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants
KPI	Key Performance indicators	TM	Team member
LCCA	Life Cycle Cost Analyses	TOP COORD	Top operational coordination
LEG	legal services sector	TRU	Training Unit
LEGAL	Legal advice on administrative matters	TVV	Thermo vision Vehicle
LES	Law Enforcement Sector	TWA	tripartite working arrangement (Frontex, EMSA and EFCA)
LIBE	Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees
LING	Linguistic activities	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
LN	LinkedIn	UNSCR	Security Council Resolution
LOG	Logistics, including Facilities management and Security	US	United States of America
LOU	Liaison Officers Unit	VA	Vulnerability Assessment
LPU	Legal and Procurement Unit	VAN	Vulnerability Assessment Network
MALE RPAS	Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System	VAT	Value Added Tax
MAS	Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance	VC	Virtual Conference
MB	Management Board	VIS	visa information system
MED	Mediterranean	VPN	Virtual Private Network
MFF	Multiannual financial framework	WA	Working Arrangement
MIC-RAN	Maritime Intelligence Community Risk Analysis Network	WB	Western Balkans
MIG	Maintenance and Implementation Group	WCO	World Customs Organization
MIPS	Mission Processing System	WG	Working Group
MMA	Multipurpose Maritime Activities	WHO	World Health Organization
MMO	Multipurpose Maritime Operations		
MNITE	Minimum Number of Items of Technical Equipment		
Mol	Ministry of Interior		
MPF	Mobility Partnership Facility		
MPR	media and public relations		
MPRS	Media Production Request System		
MRCC	Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre		
MS	Member State		
MSS	Mobile Surveillance Systems		
MUSO	migration analytical assessment		
NACGF	North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum		
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization		
NCC	National Coordination Centre		
NDP	Numérisation de Dossiers Personnels		
NP	Negotiated procedure		
OA	operational action		
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights		
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office		
OPERA	Operational Resources Management Application		
OPLAN	Operational Plan		
OPV	Operational patrol vessels		
ORD	Operational Response Division		
ORG	SYSPER organisational chart module		
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe		
PAD	Public Access to Documents		
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction		
PeDRA	processing personal data for risk analysis		
PER	SYSPER personnel data management module		
PGM M/IMPL	Programme management and implementation		
PMO	The Paymaster Office		
PPE	Personal protective equipment		
PROC	Procurement sector		
QA	Quality Assurance		
RAU	Risk Analysis Unit		
RBI	Rapid Border Interventions		
RCMS	Readmission Case Management System		
RECAMAS	Return Case Management System		
REM	Remote Electronic Monitoring		
RES DIR	Resource Director		
RSF	Return by Scheduled Flights		
SAC	Schengen Associated Countries		
SAM	Situation Awareness and Monitoring Division		
SAR	Search and Rescue		



# Introduction

Article 106(4)(d) of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter: 'EBCG Regulation'), stipulates that each year the Executive Director shall prepare the consolidated annual activity report on the agency's activities and submit it to the Management Board. Article 100(2)(j) of the EBCG Regulation states that the Management Board shall adopt an annual activity report of Frontex for the previous year and forward it, by 1 July at the latest, to the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors.

This annual report follows the instructions received from the European Commission in the form of guidelines<sup>2</sup> and contains those new elements required. To guide the readers and recipients of the information the report has been divided into five main parts which form the Annual activity report 2020, supplemented by 11 annexes.

The document is introduced by a reflection on the conditions and challenges at the political and policy context followed by an executive summary complemented with the key achievements of the Agency during 2020 and brought to a close with key conclusions in the form of a synthesised list of attainments.

**Part one** of the report provides comprehensive information on the specific achievements validated against the activities set in the annual programme of work 2020 following the logical framework of the strategic and horizontal objectives set.

**Part second** of the document caters for further detail on the Agency performance based on a series of aspects related to the governance and use of resources, (inter alia):

- Work of the Management Board;
- Major developments of the Agency;
- management of human and financial resources;
- efficiency and effectiveness of the internal control systems, including an overall assessment of the costs and benefits of controls;
- Assessment by management.

**Parts three to five** are devoted to present conclusions on the internal control system of the Agency, the elements upon which the Authorising Officer bases his Declaration of Assurance.

The core document is supplemented by 11 annexes enhancing the information provided in terms of use of resources as well as detailed information on specific aspects of the Agency work during the year such as an evaluation of the results of return activities or with regard to the annual implementation of the tripartite working arrangement.

As stated in Article 47 and Article 50(7) of the EBCG Regulation, the main activities in each of the strategic action areas also provide a comparative analysis of the results of evaluations of core operational activities with a view to enhancing the quality, coherence and effectiveness of future activities.

As stated in Article 48 of the Frontex financial regulation<sup>3</sup>, the authorising officer shall report to the Management Board on the performance of his duties in the form of a consolidated annual activity report and submit it for the assessment of the Management Board. No later than 1 July each year the report, together with its assessment, shall be sent by the Management Board to the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors.

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

(<sup>2</sup>) C(2020) 2297 final, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION on the strengthening of the governance of Union Bodies under Article 70 of the Financial Regulation 2018/1046 and on the guidelines for the Single Programming Document and the Consolidated Annual Activity Report.

(<sup>3</sup>) Management Board Decision No 19/2019 of 23 July 2019 adopting the Frontex Financial Regulation.

## Mission, vision, values and objectives

The EBCG Regulation entered into force on 4 December 2019. The extended and enhanced mandate drove the need to revise the mission, vision and values applied by the Agency. The process of reevaluating the mission statement took until the end of 2017. When adopting the Programming document 2018-2020 the Management Board also adopted the revised mission, vision and values of the Agency.

### Mission

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

### Vision

The European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

### Values

- **we are professional**  
we have the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to fulfil our mission efficiently with high ethical standards and we continuously strive for excellence to improve our performance;
- **we are respectful**  
we recognise people, institutions and their roles and demonstrate respect by treating these as valuable and important;
- **we seek cooperation**  
together with the Member States' relevant national authorities and with participation of other stakeholders we manage the EU external borders together and seek cooperation with third countries; together, we cooperate and collaborate across the organisation as well as with external stakeholders in order to accomplish common goals and objectives;
- **we are accountable**  
we are trusted with a shared responsibility to implement European integrated border management (IBM); we are trustworthy in fulfilling our responsibilities in our work, its timeliness and quality;
- **we care**  
as European public agents we serve the interests of citizens because we care about people and believe in European values;

## Tasks of the Agency

Frontex should carry out its tasks without prejudice to the responsibilities of the Member States with regard to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security in accordance with EU and international law. The specific tasks of the Agency received in the EBCG Regulation are set forth in article 10:

1. monitor migratory flows and carry out risk analysis as regards all aspects of integrated border management;
2. monitor the operational needs of Member States related to the implementation of returns, including by collecting operational data;
3. carry out vulnerability assessments, including assessments of the capacity and readiness of Member States to face threats and challenges at the external borders;
4. monitor the management of the external borders through liaison officers of the Agency in Member States;
5. monitor compliance with fundamental rights in all of its activities at the external borders and in return operations;
6. support the development and operation of EUROSUR;
7. assist Member States in circumstances requiring increased technical and operational assistance at the external borders by coordinating and organising joint operations, taking into account that some situations may involve humanitarian emergencies and rescue at sea in accordance with Union and international law;
8. assist Member States in circumstances requiring increased technical and operational assistance at the external borders by launching rapid border interventions at the external borders of those Member States facing specific and disproportionate challenges, taking into account that some situations may involve humanitarian emergencies and rescue at sea in accordance with Union and international law;
9. provide technical and operational assistance to Member States and third countries in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 656/2014 and international law, in support of search and rescue operations for persons in distress at sea which may arise during border surveillance operations at sea;
10. deploy the standing corps in the framework of border management teams, migration management support teams and return teams (collectively referred to as 'teams') during joint operations, as well as in rapid border interventions, return operations and return interventions;



11. set up a technical equipment pool, including a rapid reaction equipment pool, to be deployed in joint operations, in rapid border interventions and in the framework of migration management support teams, as well as in return operations and return interventions;
12. develop and manage, with the support of an internal quality control mechanism, its own human and technical capabilities to contribute to the standing corps, including to the recruitment and training of the members of its staff acting as members of the teams, and the technical equipment pool;
13. within the framework of the migration management support teams at hotspot areas:
  - a. deploy operational staff and technical equipment to provide assistance in screening, debriefing, identification and fingerprinting;
  - b. establish a procedure for referring and providing initial information to persons who are in need of international protection or wish to apply for such protection, including a procedure for the identification of vulnerable groups, in cooperation with EASO and competent national authorities;
14. provide assistance at all stages of the return process without entering into the merits of return decisions, which remain the sole responsibility of the Member States, assist with the coordination and organisation of return operations and provide technical and operational support to implement the obligation to return returnees and technical and operational support to return operations and interventions, including in circumstances requiring increased assistance;
15. set up a pool of forced-return monitors;
16. deploy return teams during return interventions;
17. within the respective mandates of the agencies concerned, cooperate with Europol and Eurojust and provide support to Member States in circumstances requiring increased technical and operational assistance at the external borders in the fight against cross-border crime and terrorism;
18. cooperate with EASO within their respective mandates, in particular to facilitate measures in cases where third-country nationals whose applications for international protection have been rejected by means of a final decision are subject to return;
19. cooperate with the FRA, within their respective mandates, in order to ensure the continuous and uniform application of the Union acquis on fundamental rights;
20. cooperate with the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), within their respective mandates, in order to support national authorities carrying out coast guard functions including the saving of lives at sea, by providing services, information, equipment and training, as well as by coordinating multipurpose operations;
21. cooperate with third countries in relation to the areas covered by this Regulation, including through the possible operational deployment of border management teams in third countries;
22. assist Member States and third countries in the context of technical and operational cooperation between them in the matters covered by Regulation (EU) 2019/1896;
23. assist Member States and third countries in the training of national border guards, other relevant staff and experts on return, including through the establishment of common training standards and programmes, including on fundamental rights;
24. participate in the development and management of research and innovation activities relevant for the control of the external borders, including the use of advanced surveillance technology, and develop its own pilot projects, where necessary, for the carrying out of activities as provided for in Regulation (EU) 2019/1896;
25. develop technical standards for information exchange;
26. support the development of technical standards for equipment in the area of border control and return, including for the interconnection of systems and networks, and support, as appropriate, the development of common minimum standards for external border surveillance, in line with the respective competences of the Member States and of the Commission;
27. establish and maintain communication network referred to in Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896;
28. develop and operate, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, information systems that enable swift and reliable exchanges of information regarding emerging risks in the management of the external borders, illegal immigration and return, in close cooperation with the Commission, Union bodies, offices and agencies as well as the European Migration Network established by Council Decision 2008/381/EC (36);
29. provide the necessary assistance for the development of a common information-sharing environment, including interoperability of systems, as appropriate;
30. follow high standards for border management allowing for transparency and public scrutiny in full respect of the applicable law and ensuring respect for, and protection and promotion of, fundamental rights;
31. manage and operate the False and Authentic Documents Online system referred to in Article 79 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 and support the Member States by facilitating the detection of document fraud;
32. fulfil the tasks and obligations entrusted to the Agency under Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 of the European Parliament and of the Council and ensure the setting up and operation of the ETIAS Central Unit in accordance with Article 7 of that Regulation (EU) 2019/1896;
35. assist Member States in facilitating persons to cross the external borders.

## Conditions and challenges, political and policy context

The year 2020 was marked by the negotiations of the Multiannual Financial Framework, which determines the budgetary ceilings of the EU annual general budgets during the period 2021-2027, as well as the direction of legislative and policy actions in the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) domain. There were numerous legislative initiatives that were presented by the European Commission.

An important package of legislation that marked 2020 was the Commission *New Pact on Migration and Asylum*, adopted on 23 September 2020. The accompanying Commission *Communication on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum* set out the rationale and overall vision for the Commission Pact and the various legislative and policy proposals included therein. The Pact itself contains a number of complementary non-legislative policy measures building upon the management of external borders, including identity, health and security checks; the border procedures on asylum and return; a new solidarity mechanism for situations of search and rescue, pressure and crisis; a stronger foresight, crisis preparedness and response; an effective return policy and an EU-coordinated approach to returns; as well as a comprehensive governance at EU level for better management and implementation of asylum and migration policies. The Pact Communication highlighted the need for **common EU system for returns**, in which Frontex should become 'the operational arm of EU return policy' notably by implementing its mandate, by appointing a dedicated Deputy Executive Director for returns, integrating more return expertise into the MB, the deployment of the standing corps, and by support given to the introduction of a return case management system at EU and national level.

### Adopted legislation in 2020:

**Regulation (EU) 2020/493 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the false and authentic documents online (FADO) system (OJ L 107, 6.4.2020), repealing the Joint Action 98/700/JHA.** Frontex is to take over, as provided for in this Regulation, the administration as well as the operation and technical management of the FADO system from the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union. The ownership of the existing data should then be transferred to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

### Other legislative progress in 2020:

- **Amending the VIS Regulation** – negotiations in the Council began in June 2018 under the Bulgarian Presidency. At the end of 2019, the Finnish Presidency opened the trialogue negotiations. After 17 informal trialogues, eleven technical trialogues and three political trialogues under the German Presidency, the Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on 8 December 2020.
- **Eurodac Regulation** – an amended proposal presented by the Commission on 23 September 2020 for the comparison of biometric data for the effective application of Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management] and of Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Resettlement Regulation]; negotiations in the Council began on 14 October 2020 being at a very advanced stage. However, several Member States are so far not willing to proceed with the adoption of a mandate for starting negotiations with the European Parliament unless progress is made in discussions with regard to other CEAS legal acts.
- **Asylum and Migration Management Regulation** – proposal presented by the Commission on 23 September 2020 and the negotiations brought to the attention of Home Affairs Ministers, an understanding of the substance of the Commission proposal, links with other legal acts identified, numerical examples provided and Member States' initial positions have been ascertained (progress report).
- **Screening Regulation** proposal presented by the Commission on 23 September 2020 introducing a screening of third country nationals at the external borders and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817. Negotiations in the Council's Working Party on Frontiers began on 19 October 2020. The new Screening Regulation aims to ensure fast identification of the correct procedure applicable to a person entering the EU without fulfilling the entry conditions. In terms of **EU funding**, the proposals for three funds (the AMF, the BMVI and the ISF) were negotiated in the Council and in the European Parliament's LIBE Committee, reaching provisional agreements on the operative part of the text on 9 and 10 December 2020 and approved by COREPER on 16 December 2020.
- **Security Union Strategy** published in July 2020 sets out the following four interdependent strategic priorities to be taken forward at the EU level: a future proof security environment; tackling evolving threats; protecting European Union from terrorism and organised crime; and a strong security ecosystem. The Commission considers that the full implementation of border security legislation (including the revised EBCG Regulation) and better use of existing databases is essential to achieve effective prosecution of terrorists. The Commission also aims to create a new framework for mandatory and high common standards for the secure exchange of information and the security of digital infrastructures and systems across all EU institutions, bodies and agencies. The Commission and EU High Representative will set out an EU approach to hybrid threats that integrates the external and internal dimension. The Commission services and the EEAS will explore options to streamline information flows from different sources, including MS, as well as EU agencies such as ENISA, Europol and Frontex. The creation of a European innovation hub for internal security (in Europol) is referred to as seeking to deliver common solutions to shared security challenges and opportunities, which Member States might not be able to exploit alone.

- Published alongside the Strategy was the **EU Agenda on Drugs and Action Plan 2021-2025** and the new **EU Action Plan against firearms trafficking**. The new EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025 sets out the political framework and priorities for action in the next five years. The objective is to protect citizens through better coordinated actions to address the security and health implications of drug trafficking and drug use. The EU Action Plan on firearms trafficking aims to improve the knowledge of the threat of the phenomenon, address the lack of comparable statistics on firearm events and seizures across the EU, reinforce law enforcement to stop the traffickers and step up international cooperation in the domain.
- The Commission published a new **Customs Union Action Plan** for the next four years with the aim to strengthen the customs union as a cornerstone of the single market that the Commission aims to close information gaps between customs, border management and security systems. The Commission announced that in 2022, it will launch an impact assessment on the pros and cons of establishing an EU customs agency (either a new one or part of an existing agency) covering a number of customs cooperation domains.
- **Counter Terrorism Agenda for the EU**, adopted by the Commission on 9 December 2020, identifies strengthening border security as one of the priorities to protect EU citizens against terrorism. The Counter Terrorism Agenda elaborates on a series of legislative and non-legislative initiatives that the Commission has taken or will take in the near future on border security and on the use of EU information systems and their interoperability.

## Executive summary

Year 2020 was planned by the Agency to be a year of pivotal transformation and initial discharge of the tasks received in the EBCG Regulation. Accordingly, Frontex has elaborated its annual report on the progress as of end of 2020, which is hereby presented. The Agency considers this document to be well suited to meet the information requirements of its stakeholders. Frontex has aimed at achieving the right balance in terms of level of detail of the information provided.

In order to provide a sound assessment on the Agency's performance within the year, the attention of the reader is drawn to a number of facts and factors which impacted Frontex overall performance during the year, namely:

- The Agency saw its establishment plan doubled from one to two thousand statutory positions. Such an increase posed obvious difficulties in absorbing the volume of new human resources entrusted to the Agency. In this regard it must be noted that Frontex engaged 557 new staff (485 discounting turnovers) as a result of recruitment processes (including SNEs) and additionally employed 48 trainees and 74 interims.
- The Agency undertook a decisive change with the first year of implementation of the EBCG Regulation, and in particular the creation of the standing corps. This new capacity alone proved to be a game changer for the Agency, requiring regular focus and intensive effort from a considerable number of Frontex business entities such as human resources, training, pooled resources units and the task force deployment in order to ensure timely and smooth recruitment, training and provision of personal equipment.
- The Agency was heavily impacted in its operations by the new reality brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Such change in the environmental conditions triggered mitigation responses from Frontex introducing a large-scale teleworking scheme as well as changes in the working patterns such as paperless workflows, online authorisations and virtual meetings for all business processes. It is relevant to note in this regard that although the Agency was able to continue providing operational support to MS/SAC, our outreach was impacted, in particular in the areas not completely within our control as was the case in the domain of return-related activities battered by the world-wide travel restrictions.

When it comes to assessing specific performance per area of business, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Operational performance of the Agency still governed by the previous Regulation - EBCG 1.0 - was maintained despite the major changes undergone during the year. Certain operational activities such as those in the area of return suffered the largest impact as a result of the travel restrictions imposed during a great part of 2020, however the Agency sought and implemented complementary return initiatives to mitigate the impact as detailed in Annex 6.
2. With regard to the implementation of EBCG 2.0, the build-up of the standing corps commenced during the year and over 419 staff were recruited and 251 were deployable as of 1 January 2021. In parallel extensive work has been performed in order to develop the internal regulatory framework required by executive powers granted to SC category 1, amongst others a specific code of conduct, a supervisory mechanism on the use of force as well as those related to the acquisition, storage, transport and use of firearms, which although not completed by the end of 2020 have remarkably progressed during the year.
3. New training curricula were developed and delivered to the SC despite COVID-19 impact. Further to this, personal equipment was gradually made available to the staff and a deployment model was devised and subject to close review for continuous improvement based on the lessons-learned identified during the first deployment rotations.
4. The Agency initiated the recruitment of the pool of Fundamental Rights Monitors as a compliance capacity contributing to ensuring full respect of the Agency operational activities with Fundamental Rights principles. At the moment of closing this report, the first job offers have been issued and the Agency will continue to boost the pool during the year.
5. Performance related to the management of human resources have progressed relatively well during the year bearing in mind the tremendous challenges as outlined above. Nonetheless, there remains a lot to be done in 2021 to close the gap and meet our stakeholders' level of ambition.
6. Performance related to the management of financial resources have been clearly impacted by the ramifications of COVID-19 together with a substantial increase in budgetary resources when compared with 2019 and for which the Agency, in an exercise of good administration, returned to the General Budget of the EU EUR 95.5m in the context of the global transfer exercise.
7. Performance related to the management of IT systems proved to be particularly good during the year in view of the increase in the number of users requiring support – net increase of 485 users within the Agency by end of the yearY and bearing in mind the additional category 2 officers of the standing corps deployed to the Agency by MS/SAC. However, it is relevant to note that by the end of 2020, symptoms of stress to the capacity were registered and the time-limits to action tickets in accordance with SLAs were hampered.
8. The area of compliance shows a spectrum of results based on the various parameters assessed, where those requiring additional clarification are the following:
  - a. The domain of FRO comprising SIR and Complaints Mechanism prove to be functioning reasonably well at internal level however, the final outcome is contingent upon the timely engagement of MS/SAC;
  - b. The area related to follow-up and implementation of audit recommendations of the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission (IAS) fell below expectations, consequently resolute action is being taken including a review of the processes and clarification of internal responsibilities to timely implement the outstanding actions.

# Key achievements

## SO 1: Reduced vulnerability of the external borders based on comprehensive situational awareness

### Frontex Situation Centre - real-time and near-real time monitoring

Frontex **Surveillance Aircraft Services (FSA)** performed a total of **1,068 missions** in 2020 out of which 1,030 were surveillance flights and 38 for fishery control. The planes flew over the Central Mediterranean Sea (JO Themis 2020), Aegean Sea (JO Poseidon 2020), Black Sea (MMO Black Sea) and Adriatic Sea (JO Themis and JO Montenegro). Frontex also monitored the land borders in Poland, Croatia and Hungary.

A total of 16,732 migrants were detected last year, out of which 15,433 were spotted by Frontex surveillance in Central and Eastern Mediterranean Sea, while 1,299 migrants were detected at land borders. Since Frontex initiated the maritime weekly dialogues with maritime intelligence to establish an information and knowledge exchange platform as regards vessels of interest, **114 vessels suspected of illegal activities were tracked and reported according to the Member States' needs.**

### Eurosur/Copernicus

In 2020, Copernicus/EUROSUR Fusion Services continuously contributed to short/immediate-term informed decision-making processes and situation awareness, including saving lives at sea and tackling cross-border crime.

Frontex EFS services supported Spanish Guardia Civil in **intercepting a sailing vessel carrying 5.1 tons of hashish** in Senegalese waters and as a result of the operation, the internal criminal organisation smuggling large amounts of hashish through the Mediterranean Sea was dismantled.

Similarly, Frontex EFS services supported EUROPOL and the Spanish National Police in **dismantling an organised criminal group specialised in migrant smuggling** using speedboats from Algeria and Morocco to Europe. The EFS supported Hungarian authorities with imagery intelligence services based on the state-of-the-art SAR technologies to **detect and analyse the locations of tunnels under the Hungarian-Serbian border** used to facilitate illegal border crossing.

### Baseline vulnerability assessment process

In line with the provisions of the Common Vulnerability Assessment Methodology (CVAM), the 2020 vulnerability assessment annual cycle started in January 2020 with the launch of the **baseline assessment** process. This annual process consists of an extensive data collection effort by Member States (MS/SAC) with **over 100,000 data points being collected**. In 2020, despite the challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this flagship process was successfully concluded thanks to the commitment and dedication of MS/SAC stakeholders and the engagement of Frontex staff. Moreover, the data collected and **the assessment generated** as part of this process **played a key role in supporting several planning activities** of the Agency and of EBGC stakeholders.

### ETIAS and Interoperability Task Force

The year 2020 was a transitional period for the ETIAS Task Force (TF). The Agency formally established the ETIAS and Interoperability Programme Board, with an advisory function to assist the Executive Director in the implementation of the programme. In this regard, the ETIAS TF continued to progress with the preparation phase of the project of setting up the ETIAS Central Unit (roadmap, business processes). It also continued managing the project for the access of the EBCG Team Members Access to Schengen Information System (A2SISII) and began its preparatory activities for the initiation of a 'Multiple Identity Detection ('MID')' project.

The ETIAS TF supported regularly high-level meetings between the Directors of DG HOME, eu-LISA and Frontex to coordinate the development of the implementation activities. With the support of other entities, including the Data Protection Office, continued supporting the European Commission in the development of the Delegated and Implementing acts provided for in the ETIAS. In the area of international cooperation, the ETIAS TF organised field visits to USA and Canada to gain insight on their electronic visa systems (ESTA and ETA).

In 2020, the original planning of the European Commission for the establishment of a Carriers Assistance Centre was modified and it became clearer that the ETIAS Central Unit will have a slimmer role and responsibilities for the assistance to be provided to the carriers.



## SO 2: Safe, secure and well-functioning EU external borders

### Joint operations (JO)

During 2020, Frontex managed to maintain the strategic operational response despite the global challenges and the restrictions to the free movement of persons due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The key strategic joint operations were prioritised and efforts were made to ensure the presence of the members of the teams at the external border. At the same time, Frontex implemented two rapid border interventions at the external land and maritime borders of Greece with Turkey: rapid border intervention Evros and rapid border intervention Aegean.

Frontex assets in maritime operations have helped rescue more than **3,408** migrants during their patrolling activities. The operational activities resulted in the detection of **790** facilitators, **4** traffickers of human beings and a wide variety of other types of cross-border crimes, illegal goods and substances such as: **1,463** litres of alcohol, **4,013** pieces of ammunition, approximately **361** kg of cocaine, more than **144** tons of hashish and marijuana, **40** kg of heroin and **601** grams of other types of drugs. Furthermore, **154** stolen vehicles were detected and **39** cases were reported involving the detection of parts and pieces of stolen cars.

### Strengthening the coordination of the joint operations

From 15 July 2020, when the activity at the land border crossing points resumed, the profile of Frontex support officer was deployed to Frontex headquarters in Warsaw to support the International Cooperation Centre of the JO. The pilot deployment of this particular profile relied on the already established coordination structure on the local levels as well as the reporting channels that were in place for the operational activity, supporting the development of the concept of the standing corps chain of coordination. The deployment allowed testing and fine-tuned the synergies/coordination between the different land activities (border surveillance and border checks), resulting in more integrated management of these activities.

**The most significant examples of joint operations of 2020 are described below, representing an overview of variety of activities and tasks in this area.**

### Illegal border crossings

- A fishing and a sailing vessel with 127 migrants and 3 facilitators arrested (July - JO Themis 2020)
- A fishing vessel with 177 migrants (November - JO Themis 2020)
- A sailing vessel with 59 migrants, 2 facilitators arrested (September - JO Poseidon 2020)
- A rubber boat with 30 migrants, 1 facilitator arrested (November - JO Poseidon 2020)

### Seizure of smuggled of drugs

- Seizure of 4.6 tonnes of hashish during border check (August - JO Minerva 2020)
- Seizure of 4.2 tonnes of hashish in two fast boats (October - JO Indalo 2020)
- Seizure of 646.1 kg of cannabis, 249.8 kg of hashish and 2 smugglers arrested (April - JO Themis 2020)
- Seizure of 449.25 kg of hashish (October - JO Indalo 2020)
- Seizure of 336 kg of hashish and arrest of 2 smugglers (July - JO Indalo 2020)
- Seizure of 207.76 kg of hashing and arrest of 2 smugglers (September - JO Indalo 2020)
- Seizure of 152.2 kg of cannabis, 25.9 kg of hashish and 2 smugglers arrested (August - JO Themis 2020)
- Seizure of 16.2 kg of hashish during border check (August - JO Minerva 2020)

Frontex contributed to the above listed achievements Activities through i.e. own means such as Frontex surveillance aircraft (FSA), canine teams or the intervention was coordinated by the Agency upon detection by technical assets i.e. vessels, Fixed Wing Aircrafts (FWA) pledged by MS/SAC participating in Frontex coordinated activities.

### Search and rescue (JO Poseidon 2020)

On 09 February, Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) Piraeus received an information about a boat with POB in distress at the sea area of Alexandroupolis and launched a SAR operation. The information passed to Hellenic Coast Guard (HCG) CPB 617 and HRV CPB. At 00:20, the above-mentioned migrants were detected on board a rubber boat by HRV CPB at the sea area Dikella SW of Alexandroupolis port. In total, **39 migrants, were rescued** by the HRV CPB, and three more semiconscious migrants were rescued by HCG CPB 617 and all of them were safely transferred to Alexandroupolis port. **Six migrants were transferred to the hospital** suffering from hypothermia.

On 9 November, a rubber boat with **30 migrants on board was detected** by an HCG CPB and Czech thermo vision vehicle (CZE TVV) at the sea area NE of Kos Island, inside the Turkish territorial waters. After detection, JRCC Piraeus informed Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Ankara and simultaneously a Turkish (TUR) CG vessel which was close to the boat of migrants was informed but did not respond to the incident at all. Afterwards, the TUR CG vessel escorted the above-mentioned rubber boat towards the Hellenic Territorial Waters (HTW), obstructing the actions of the HCG CPB and exposing the lives of the migrants in danger. Subsequently, the TUR CG vessel left the area and **all migrants were**

safely transferred and disembarked to Kos Island under the close monitoring of the HCG CPB. One facilitator was arrested.

#### **Joint activity with Georgian authorities and EU MS (JO Coordination Points 2020 Air and JO Focal Points 2020 - Operational Activities at the Air Border Crossing Points)**

Within the framework of the Joint Operation Coordination Points 2020 Air and Joint Operation Focal Points 2020 Air, Frontex continued the Joint Activity with Georgian Authorities to mitigate the flow of irregular Georgian migrants toward EU/SAC airports.

Frontex deployed a team composed of 5/6 EU Experts at Kutaisi Airport in each rotation period and Georgian officers were deployed at different EU airports. The Georgian Patrol Police along with the support of Frontex EU Experts were performing pre-boarding checks at Kutaisi airport and advised airline companies in their assessments on the carriage of travellers. As a complementary activity, Georgian officers were deployed at the most affected EU airports (in terms of refusal of entry to Georgian nationals) to support the verification of entry conditions.

#### **Support of INTERPOL (JO Focal Points 2020 - Operational Activities at the Air Border Crossing Points)**

The operational activities at the air border crossing points within JO Focal Points 2020 offered a good opportunity to streamline cooperation and gain experience in making use of the INTERPOL databases. In 2020, INTERPOL sent its operational officers to five focal points' airports, in Madrid, Vienna, Amsterdam, Paris/Roissy and Bucharest. The deployed INTERPOL officers used the INTERPOL I-Batch data search application to search the INTERPOL Nominal (colour notices and diffusions) and the Stolen and Lost Travel Documents – SLTD database using API data provided by local border police. During their short deployments in total **43 nominal hits** (17 unknowns by local authorities) and **75 SLTD hits** (18 unknowns by local authorities) **were detected**.

#### **Operationalisation of EU Montenegrin Status Agreement**

In the context of the Status Agreement between the EU and Montenegro that entered into force on 1 July 2020, Frontex and the Montenegrin authorities identified the operational activities' scope with executive powers for further implementation of the land border between Montenegro and Croatia.

The operation launched at the border crossing point Debeli Brijeg starting on 15 July 2020, involved technical support towards deploying a mobile office and equipment for border checks. On 14 October 2020, the second activity was launched with the aim to tackle cross-border crime at the country's sea borders, including the smuggling of drugs and weapons, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings and terrorism.

#### **Prevention of Departure (JO Montenegro 2020)**

- Prevention of Departure - sailing vessel with 52 migrants (October - JO Montenegro 2020)
- Prevention of departure of a sailing vessel with 39 migrants (December - JO Montenegro 2020)

On October and December 2020, supported by coastal radars, the Montenegrin Border Police detected a suspicious sailing vessel (S/V) known for potential involvement in illegal activities. Frontex surveillance assets were deployed feeding data to support Montenegrin Patrol Vessels (no Frontex asset) intercepting the targets.

#### **Other relevant developments:**

**Handbook of Best Practices for Focal Point and Coordination Points Coordinators:** to this staff in their daily cooperation with deployed team members and third country observers.

**New on-line briefing tool:** In order to meet the requirements defined by the Operational plan, during the pandemic the operational briefings prior to the deployments of Team and Seconded team members (TMs/sTMs) within air border joint operations were carried out via internet with the use of an online briefing tool available in Virtual Aula.

#### **Law Enforcement (LE)**

In 2020, the Agency has gradually increased the support to EU MSs in matters of border control, including **tackling cross-border crime** at the external borders, as one of the key components of the European integrated border management (EIBM) and the EU maritime security strategy (EUMSS). In 2020, Frontex did not only increase the operational support in counteracting migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings but also other serious cross-border crime such as smuggling of stolen vehicles, drugs, firearms, or excise goods. Moreover, environmental crimes such as waste or wildlife trafficking were an important part of support to EU MS. The active involvement of Frontex in the prevention and detection of cross-border crime not only contributed to the objectives of the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT against organised and serious international crime, but also resulted in several examples of successful multiagency cooperation.

**In 2020, the development of Frontex law enforcement functions focused on:**

- Involvement in majority of EMPACT priorities i.a. leading/co-leading Joint Action Days (JADs);
- Enhancing the LE modules under joint operations (JO) and finding synergies with JADs;

- Development of Investigation Support Activities on Cross-Border Crime (ISA-CBC) targeting drugs smuggling especially from North Africa (hashish) and Latin America (cocaine);
- Implementation of the LE functions under the Multipurpose Maritime Operation (MMO) Black Sea 2020 for the first time;
- Elaboration of pilot project: 'Mobile operational support teams for counteracting cross-border crime' (MOST-CBC PP).
- THB counteraction and VEGA concept;
- Training and planning of deployments of the cross-border crime detection officers (CBCDO) under the standing corps and JOs;

Since the development of **customs operational cooperation** is key to successful and modern protection of borders and at the same time essential to prevent, detect and investigate cross-border crime, it was one of the key priorities in 2020. Frontex further increased the strategic and operational collaboration with CCWP (Customs Cooperation Working Party), DG TAXUD and its Customs Eastern and South-eastern Land Border Expert Team (CELBET 3). As an example of this cooperation, Frontex provided a **Frontex toolbox for the EU Customs Services**, which apart from the Eurosur Fusion Services Catalogue includes also operational formats, such as the Frontex Pilot Projects and Joint Action Days, Capacity Building Tools etc. The toolbox is also relevant for the CCWP-Europol-Frontex coordination mechanism, which seeks to harmonise operational activities of EU MS and agencies.

Another flagship project of 2020 is the **Handbook of Detection of Firearms for Customs and Border Guards** – a tool intended to counteract arms smuggling – which is an example of a successful collaboration of law enforcement agencies, customs, police and border guards as well as European Commission (DG TAXUD and HOME) and other international and regional organisations initiatives with the purpose to counteract arms smuggling.

### EU policy cycle/EMPACT

Frontex further enhanced its support and active role with regard to the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT as stipulated in the Council conclusions 8654/17 on setting the EU's priorities regarding the fight against organised and serious international crime between 2018 and 2021. The agency participated in the drafting of the annual operational action plans and took a leading role in numerous operational actions throughout 2020.

Despite the COVID-19 limitations, in 2020 Frontex increased its contribution to the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT Operational Actions (OAs) priorities and had broadly been engaged in the drafting of the new Policy Cycle 2021-2024. In order to support EU MS under the respective priorities, **the Agency was involved in 91 Operational Actions** in the frame of the EU Policy Cycle/ EMPACT. As a highlight of 2020, during the three implemented Joint Action Days the following **results** were **achieved**: 74 arrested migrant smugglers, 10,387 irregular migrants apprehended, 411 fraudulent documents detected, 384 stolen vehicles detected, 1,254 parts of stolen vehicles detected, 38 million pieces of cigarettes seized, 3 tons raw tobacco seized, ca. 1.8 tons of cannabis and 10 kg of heroin confiscated.

Furthermore, within EMPACT Environmental Crime Operational Action Plans 2020 and 2021, Frontex was a leader for the **'Operation 30 Days at Sea 3.0'** which focused on marine pollution while INTERPOL, Europol and France were co-leaders. The operation was country-led, and coordinated by INTERPOL globally, in cooperation with Europol and Frontex in the European Region. The key objective of the operation was to enhance the global law enforcement response to pollution crimes leading to marine pollution, with the ultimate objective of enhancing sea quality and tackling criminal networks involved in these crimes.

### Coast guard functions related activities<sup>4</sup>

In 2020, despite the limitations generated by the COVID-19 crisis, coast guard functions related activities kept strengthening on the basis of two main pillars: **enhancing the cooperation among coast guard functions** stakeholders at European and international level and **fostering the exchange of best practices** among the European coast guard community.

In 2020, Frontex maintained a framework allowing to develop and maintain reliable cooperation on coast guard functions with European and non-European partners by contributing to various coast guard fora i.e. the Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation, Coast Guard Global Summit and North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum. With regard to developing cooperation with third countries, a major step was taken with the organisation of an online technical meeting about coast guard functions cooperation in December with Moroccan authorities involved in coast guard functions activities.

Frontex kept developing cooperation with EFCA and EMSA under the TWA. Three major steps has been achieved in 2020: developing a common definition of the **Multipurpose Maritime Operation Concept**, drafting of the practical **handbook on European cooperation on coast guard functions** and the formalisation of the exchange of sightings forms related to fisheries control and environmental protection from assets deployed within Frontex operational areas toward EFCA and EMSA.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed information on the tripartite working arrangement EFCA-EMSA-Frontex available in Annex 7.



**Operationally**, following the implementation of the European Coast Guard Functions Officer (ECGFO) pilot project. During 2020 ECGFOs were deployed within JO Themis and JO Poseidon and JO. An evaluation meeting for 2019 deployments took place in Warsaw in March 2020 with representatives from EFCA and EMSA.

**Multipurpose Maritime Operation** on Coast Guard Functions in the **Black Sea** (MMO Black Sea 2020) was implemented under the Joint Operation Focal Points 2020 (June – August). Hosted by Bulgaria and Romania with 6 national authorities involved including EFCA and EMSA and the participation of 30 maritime and 3 aerial assets co-financed by Frontex. Concerning human resources, 6 European coast guard functions officers and one cross-border crime detection officers took part in the operation. EU SAT CEN and EMSA Copernicus related services were used within MMO and delivered under the umbrella of Eurosur Fusion Services with these results:

- 132 joint inspections of fishing vessels and boats were performed;
- 71 Fishing Vessels Sighting Forms were dispatched to EFCA;
- Two joint patrols with the Romanian Naval Authority (EMSA Community) implemented concerning boarding and control of cargo vessels activities and identification of stolen boats;
- Two Potential Marine Pollution Sighting Forms were dispatched to EMSA.

Further to this, under the MMO a **search and rescue** workshop was organised successfully, including also two boarding drills were organised in Sozopol/Bulgaria and Mangalia/Romania.

### Centre of Excellence for Combatting Document Fraud Activities

In 2020, following a proposal from the Frontex Expert Group on Document Control (EXP-DOC) as well as the required internal consultations, Frontex Executive Director established the Frontex High-Level Round Table on Document and Identity Control (HLRT). The round table is composed of managers from EU Member States/Schengen Associated Countries who are in a position to oversee national activities and priorities on document and identity fraud with the capacity to make commitments to Frontex activities. The first meeting of the round table took place in Warsaw from 16 to 18 of September 2020. During the 2020, forgery desk, which is restricted to Frontex document experts only and is duly controlled and monitored, was finalised and equipped with specialised document inspection equipment and a physical document library to facilitate training, remote support sessions and presentations.

### Return dimension

The area of return related activities i.e. return, pre-return, post-return were remarkably affected during 2020 by the travel restriction imposed by the pandemic, however the Agency strived in continuing providing support and assistance to MS/SAC as well as to devise alternative, complementary ways to discharge its tasks in this regard.

#### Pre-return and post-return assistance

While COVID-19 had largely impacted the area of pre-return, a number of activities were still conducted. As of 2020, the Agency was responsible for the coordination of 10 Country Working Groups aimed at providing a platform for MS practitioners, the European Commission and Frontex which allow the exchange of information and practices in relation to cooperation with dedicated third countries.

The European Return Liaison Officers (EURLO) network operationally managed by the Agency consisted of 12 EURLO deployments, and 9 of those deployments were supported by Frontex during the year. Despite COVID limitations, the network yielded results in the form of identification activities. Furthermore, 5 return specialists were deployed, and an online workshop was organised focused on lawfully dealing with minors and their families in the context of return.

As regards the activities in the field of post-arrival and post-return, major steps have been taken to establish the Frontex Reintegration Programme. To that end, a Transfer Plan was established in June 2020 that will guide an orderly take-over of key activities of the ERRIN Programme.

#### Returns

As of January 2020, Frontex broadened the spectrum of its return-related support to Member States to include also technical assistance to voluntary returns, following the expansion of its mandate. Overall, throughout the year, the share of voluntary returns made up for 18% of all Frontex supported flights. This number is expected to grow further as more and more Member States and national Agencies request technical assistance in returning people who wish to go back to their home countries of their own free will.

The first **voluntary return by scheduled flight** with Frontex assistance was carried out in February 2020. Throughout the year, non-EU nationals returned in a voluntary manner to 64 countries and they made up 38% of all persons returned by scheduled flights in 2020. The first **voluntary return by charter flight** took place in July. Since then, the Agency provided assistance seven times, returning 631 persons in total to Albania, Georgia and Iraq. The proportion of voluntary returns with charter flights has reached 8%.

This voluntary modality of return is of high importance, proving that Frontex fulfils the European Commission's recommendations by swiftly implementing the enhanced new mandate in this regard. This new type of service allows to support cost-effective returns of third country nationals who fly as a regular passenger. A major advantage of this

modality for Member States - especially in COVID-19 times - is the fact that voluntary returns do not require the involvement of staff, which greatly simplified the implementation of safety measures.

The process has been improved by customising the Frontex Application for Return (FAR) Scheduled Flights module, which now allows Member States to easily notify the Agency about their need for technical assistance for voluntary returns (in the case of charter flights, the dedicated voluntary return sub-module was introduced in the beginning of 2021).

#### **Return-related digitalisation**

The return related activities of Frontex were supported by a number of IT tools, among them **Return Case Management System (RECAMAS)** for which an updated version was made available to the MS in 2020. Additionally, in 2020 the inception phase for **Irregular Migration Management Application (IRMA 2.0)** was completed. On September 2020, the new software for **FAR - scheduled flights module** was released. It brought major improvements such as being tailored to users' needs and recommendations as well as containing a new feature to allow Member States to declare their intention to perform COVID-19 tests for third country nationals and staff included in the passenger list and claim these costs from the Agency.

**FAR Charter Flights** module saw two new releases in 2020, which introduced the flash report functionality allowing escort leaders to send updates on the progress of return operations via SMS or email. In addition, the readmissions from Greece to Turkey within the EU-TR Statement (before it was unilaterally suspended in March) were entirely handled in FAR Readmissions module, and several other features were introduced to improve the user experience.

#### **Return-specific standing corps deployment planning**

The EBCG Regulation introduced the possibility to support Member States in the field of return through the deployment of return teams from the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps. Two profiles of the standing corps officers are to be deployed in the framework of return teams from 2021: Forced Return Escort and Support Officer (FRESCO) and Return Specialist (RS).

FRESCO will provide ground and on board support to return operations and voluntary return/departures and carry out escorting tasks in forced return operations, while the return specialists can be deployed to support specific stages of the return process: third country cooperation, Member State return IT systems, IRMA/FAR use and return counselling.

In order to make those deployments effective, Frontex completed the preparatory steps during 2020 including:

- Definition of new operational model to provide support to MS by deploying FRESCO;
- Identification of priority airports for deployment;
- Organisation of a workshop on the use of force and equipment in return activities;
- Assistance in the creation and delivery of the return module of the basic training for standing corps category 1.

#### **Task Force Deployment**

On 6 February 2020, the Executive Director established the Task Force Deployment Management, whose mission is to ensure the full operationalisation of the standing corps. Since that date, the task force has contributed to the preparation of policies and procedures, enabling the effective deployment of the standing corps. It supported other Frontex entities in the development of ICT-related solutions, pools of equipment, human resources related issues, tender procedures and the financial support mechanism.

In 2020, the task force drafted a proposal for the internal structure of the standing corps and one for the structure for their effective management through the establishment Deployment Management Division. Moreover, the task force prepared the draft concept for antenna offices.

Following the provisions provided in Article 63(5) of EBCG Regulation and the Management Board Decision 7/2019, the Steering Committee finalised negotiations with Bulgaria, Greece and Hungary aiming to conclude the agreements establishing the terms of operability of the Agency's equipment.

### **SO 3: Sustained European Border and Coast Guard capabilities**

In line with the provisions of the EBCG Regulation, Frontex aims to foster a common, long-term development of capabilities for the European Border and Coast Guard to fulfil the goals set up in the European integrated border management (EUBM) Strategy. To achieve that the Regulation foresees formalising capability development planning in the MS/SAC and the Agency in the form of an overarching capability roadmap for the EBCG. In practical terms stemming from integrated planning approach the capability building includes recruitment and training of new border guards, investment in their career development as well as ensuring adequate equipment at their disposal. To enable long-term future-oriented capabilities the research and innovation is instrumental to be able to map out future challenges, societal and technological developments.

Year 2020 saw the completion of the first key step in the process. Together with MS/SAC and the European Commission, the Agency worked out the **Methodology and the Procedure for Establishing the National Capability Development Plans (CDPs)** which was adopted by the Management Board by early January 2021. The document is crucial to allow MS/SAC to begin developing their National CDPs to ensure the necessary synergies between national programming and relevant EU funding instruments, in particular the Border Management and Visa Instruments.

Development of core capabilities particularly related to the standing corps were in many aspects completed in 2020. Although the work was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic requiring high level of flexibility, the biggest challenge was the **re-design of the standing corps basic training** to reduce contact training time.

Ensuring operational safety and health (OSH) became of paramount priority of the Agency in order to remain operational. The Agency remained in active contact with public health authorities, including ECDC and national authorities around Europe adapting working procedures to provide necessary protection for the personnel deployed in operations and being trained. To ensure swift ability to deploy and re-deploy scarce safety personal protective equipment, the airlifting of replenishments of stocks was organised in the operational theatres. The outbreaks of COVID-19 infections in the training centres were contained through the establishment and implementation of the crisis management plan.

An example of successful cooperation with EU Institutions and Agencies was the completed largest inter-institutional procurement process to acquire personal protective equipment with Frontex in the lead.

### Capabilities for the operational activities - standing corps

The implementation of the **Recruitment Strategy for standing corps category 1**, as presented to Member States at the Regional Meetings and the Extraordinary Management Board during the autumn 2019 represented an important milestone. It outlined principles of the law enforcement recruitment previously unseen in the EU structures. As a result, **419 European border and coast guard officers were recruited, trained and equipped during 2020**, and sufficient reserve list for appointments was established for 2021.

The ambitious timeline imposed by the Roadmap for implementing the new EBCG Regulation constrained the ability to prepare all the internal elements needed for the implementation of a complex task. The Agency outlined its process and the sequence of planned activities, however, certain delays in recruitment were experienced.

#### Recruitment

With regard to the recruitment of standing corps category 1 employed by the Agency, in addition to the regular comprehensive recruitment process based on equal opportunities, broadest competition and transparency, the particularities of the tasks of the corps required that the recruitment process included a physical aptitude test and psychological assessment. Interviews with candidates were conducted partially remotely, due to restrictions in travel. As a result of the process, 430 standing corps officers category 1 were recruited in 2020.

#### Uniforms and weapons

In 2020, the Agency developed the design and specifications for the uniforms of the statutory staff to be deployed in the operational areas. The concept of the first EU uniform was based on a thorough research conducted in 2019 and 2020 and its development involved consultations with recognised experts in the field. The design of the uniform had to fulfil a dual purpose: strategic – conveying EU values, integrating the authority and the service to the Union citizens as well as tactical – allowing to carry out duties in varied operational areas and climate conditions. Similarly, series of consultations and mapping exercises were conducted to take note of the existing restrictions for the employment (carry, use, storage and transportation) of weapons as well as the technical specifications of lethal and non-lethal weapons in MS/SAC.

#### Training

The focus of training in 2020 was on establishing the tools and capacities necessary to train the standing corps to ensure their operational readiness as of January 2021, finalising the **development of the basic training programme**, setting up the **cooperation framework** with training institutions in MS/SAC, developing the profile-related **specialised training courses** for both category 1 and category 2 staff and, **delivering the training**.

COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the implementation of the training plan. Restrictions imposed by MS/SAC led to the unavailability of both trainers and training locations, as well as restricted possibility to travel to the training sites. To ensure business continuity Frontex (re)designed the entire training process adjusting it to remote learning.

The first iteration of the basic and specialised training programme for category 1 took place from June to December 2020 and it was successfully accomplished by **252 graduates**. The second iteration of the programme started in October 2020 with 165 participants and is expected to finish in May 2021.

#### Contribution to the standing corps by MS/SAC

Long-term planning involves establishing the profiles of the standing corps staff along with the total numbers of each profile required to fulfil the operational needs. In January 2020, the Management Board adopted the decision establishing the profiles for operational staff within the EBCG standing corps, specifying requirements and job competences for each profile. Building on this decision and taking into account the numbers of staff available to the Agency either as statutory staff – category 1 or through ongoing secondments, Frontex prepared the annual and multiannual programming of the standing corps including the operational needs for 2021. The programming indicates the contribution of given profiles per MS/SAC. This multi-stage process was established based on the Agency's risk analysis, the results of the vulnerability assessment and the multiannual strategic policy cycle for EUIBM, and it was done in close cooperation with MS/SAC. The

planning was formally adopted by a Management Board decision in April 2020, which paved the way for the implementation of the establishment of the standing corps.

**Standing corps - categories 2 and 3** of the standing corps are composed of the officers nominated by the MS/SAC and seconded to the Agency for a long term and short-term deployment, respectively. By June 2020 Frontex received 315 nominations for category 2. By 1 January 2021, the Agency successfully verified and confirmed 366 candidates nominated by MS/SAC. The operational needs for category 3 officers of the standing corps were published by the Agency in August 2020 followed by Annual Bilateral Negotiations. As a result by 1 December 2020, the annual list for category 3 and technical equipment was finalised for the first operational half of 2021.

**Standing corps - category 4.** The Management Board Decision 9/2020 of 3 April 2020 adopting the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps annual planning for 2021 and indicative multiannual planning of profiles, includes officers of category 4, that is, the agreed numbers per profile that have to make available in case of a rapid intervention.

#### **Equipment provided by the Agency to the standing corps**

To match the level of ambition of the establishment of the standing corps, the Agency should acquire, maintain and operate the necessary technical equipment, which in time would become the backbone of the operational deployments. During 2020 Frontex worked on the multiannual acquisition strategy aiming to prepare the long-term planning, acquisition and, finally, secure disposal of assets. The strategy along with the implementation plan were drafted based on international financial standards and Life Cycle Cost Analyses LCCA practice and will be presented for the adoption by the Management Board in 2021.

#### **Weapons, ammunition, patrol cars and vehicles for migration management**

The EBCG Regulation stipulates as well that when performing their tasks the category 1 officers may be required the use of force, including use of service weapons and non-lethal equipment, which is a precedence in the history of the EU. However, the Regulation does not explicitly state that the Agency is legally entitled to acquire such weapons. While seeking legal solutions for acquisition of firearms, the Agency launched an open tender procedure for a Framework Contract to acquire firearms and ammunitions for standing corps, the delivery of which is expected in Q3 2021. Simultaneously, the Agency worked on acquiring non-lethal weapons and accessories such as batons, lachrymatory agents, carrying belts, bullet proof vests to ensure that the deployed standing corps members are properly equipped.

The Agency acquired a small number of patrol vehicles as a pilot. The Agency prepared for the increase of the vehicle fleet and is at the final stage to sign a framework contract for leasing of patrol cars and cars for transportation. The contract will strengthen the operational capacity of the Agency and will provide for functional independence of the deployed standing corps members.

The prototype of vehicle for migration management support (ordered in November 2019) successfully passed the factory acceptance test at contractor's premises and was delivered to Frontex in November 2020. The production of additional 10 vehicles (full FWC capacity) has been secured by issuing the specific orders in November 2020.

#### **Personal protective equipment (PPE)**

Despite various constraints regarding on the one hand transportation and on the other scarce availability on the market, the Agency successfully secured and delivered COVID-19-related personal protective equipment to all its operational locations covering the needs in the field, securing safety and health of the deployed personnel. In April 2020, as an immediate response to the crisis, the Agency acquired two tonnes of protective equipment (including 30,000 face masks) and established a strategic buffer of 250,000 masks in case of a sudden PPE equipment market shortage. In addition, to ensure the timely delivery of necessary PPE to the deployed staff, Frontex decentralised its logistics, establishing warehouse capacities in different operational locations to serve as logistics hubs for supplies able to respond to the changing needs quickly and flexibly.

#### **Manned Aerial Surveillance Services (MASS) and Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (MALE RPAS)**

Frontex surveillance capabilities were significantly increased thanks to a Framework Contract for Manned Aerial Surveillance Services, which ensures sustained readiness of available assets for surveillance services in accordance with the operational needs. Under this FWC Frontex executed sixteen specific contracts of a total value of EUR 25 million, ensuring almost 6,500 flight hours. Moreover, in the framework of the service level agreement signed between EFCA and Frontex, more than 100 flight hours were delivered for EFCA purposes. In order to continue fulfilling the operational needs, Frontex published a new tender for with an increased budget of up to 100 million Euro. The new FWC is estimated to be operational by the middle of May 2021.

Further to the MASS capacity, in order to increase the flexibility and capability aerial reconnaissance service, the Agency signed a framework contract for Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems in October 2020. The first specific order was signed in December 2020 and the implementation of the service will be started 2021, with the base airport in Malta.

## Annual Bilateral Negotiations (ABN) 2021

The process of Annual Bilateral Negotiations (ABN) is a subset of the whole Capability Pooling Process dealing specifically with pooling of SC category 3 officers and technical equipment from MS/SAC to make them available for deployment in the operational activities coordinated by Frontex as well as to confirm their commitments in terms of technical equipment for the rapid reaction pool.

The ABN negotiations were held on 12–16 October 2020 and involved 29 out of 30 MS/SAC. This was for the first time that the capability pooling was performed under provisions of the EBCG Regulation and many external factors and processes affected the ABN, including:

- Formation of category 1 and 2 which had an impact on the final needs for officers of category 3. This consequently meant that category 3 officers had to be temporarily kept in standby mode, covering potential needs in early 2021.
- The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on activities related to capability pooling process leading to digital solutions.

The proposals submitted by MS/SAC fulfilled 80 % of their obligation for category 3. Moreover, in accordance with the EBCG Regulation the importance of technical equipment acquired through the internal security fund -was underlined during the ABN.

### Opera Evolution

Over the past year, Frontex developed a new operational resources management application (OperaEvo) aiming to serve the requirements of the EBCG Regulation. From the beginning, the MS/SAC were closely involved in the design of the OperaEvo tool through voluntary participation in the OperaEvo working group. OperaEvo, launched in February 2020, covered all necessary functionalities needed for HR and TE management and will become fully operational by Q2 2021.

### Implementation of ABN 2020 Rapid Border Interventions

Following the request by the Greek authorities for additional assistance at the external borders, the Executive Director decided to launch two rapid border interventions (RBI) in the **Aegean Sea (Aegean 2020)** and at the land border with **Turkey (Evros 2020)**, which required immediate deployment of technical equipment from the rapid reaction equipment and technical equipment pools, as well as human resources.

Both interventions were subsequently extended several times, upon the request of the Greek authorities, and lasted until 6 September 2020 (Aegean 2020) and until 30 October 2020 (Evros 2020).

## Research and innovation activities

In line with the EBCG Regulation, Frontex proactively monitors and contributes to research and innovation activities relevant for European integrated border management. In 2020, jointly with DG Home Frontex signed the terms of reference for cooperation in the EU Research Framework Programme, laying down the foundation for closer partnership and collaboration to maximise the results from EU funded research for the Border and Coast Guard community. Based on this agreement, the Agency coordinated and steered research activities in the area of border security innovation, assisting the European Commission in the development of state-of-the-art technology responding to the operational needs for advanced EU border protection.

**Experts from the Agency**, alongside various experts from the industry and academia, **participated in the evaluations of proposals for border security related research projects received by the European Commission in the framework of Horizon 2020**. In addition, in 2020 Frontex participated in a wide range of activities in ongoing Horizon research projects, e.g. Perceptions, Aresibo, BorderSens, Compass2020, Andromeda, Mirror, ILEAnet<sup>5</sup>.

### Standards

The Agency's mandate foresees the need to define and develop technical standards for equipment. These technical standards will enable the convergence of the capability development plans of MS/SAC and the multiannual planning of the Agency's resources. In 2020, Frontex worked intensely on the preparation of a **first iteration of technical standards covering most aspects and equipment for border control: maritime equipment, aerial equipment, land border surveillance equipment, document inspection equipment, as well as technical guidelines on Entry and Exist System (EES) related equipment**. All these standards were developed in close cooperation with experts from MS/SAC, European Commission as well as experts from other agencies including EU-LISA and the Commission's Joint Research Centre. It is planned that they will be presented for the approval of the Management Board in 2021.

### Innovation

Frontex provides a technology-based capability development to the EBCG, by conducting testing and enabling acquisition of technological solutions. Importantly, the Agency enables the process of creating business solutions based on the

<sup>5</sup> More information available under <https://frontex.europa.eu/research/eu-research/news-and-events/>



knowledge facilitated by technology research. In 2020 the focus of technology innovation activities was on the one hand, on a new online format of industry dialogues, and on the other hand, the preparations for **technology pilot projects related to border checks and maritime border surveillance**.

### Industry dialogues

The **industry days** held in 2020 provided **information on the state of the art of technologies**, such as the automatic border control systems which evolve towards solutions that support current health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and allow continuity of service. There are several innovative alternatives that the industry is developing for this objective, such as touchless fingerprint scanners, biometric recognition on the move and integrated temperature sensors in border equipment, face recognition, registration and biometric pre-enrolment services. Some companies showcased interesting integrated solutions regarding automated surveillance systems that are mostly platform and sensor agnostic, that leverage the power of big data computing through machine learning and artificial intelligence, that in the end have the potential to contribute to more efficient border control and maritime surveillance operations.

### Pilot projects

In 2020, Frontex finalised contractual arrangements for a second **aerostat pilot project for maritime surveillance**, with the deployment planned in 2021. The project applies innovative solutions to scale up the initial scope for a multi-platform concept of operation, with the aim of proposing a comprehensive model of a scalable, cost effective, reliable and green solution for persistent maritime surveillance.

As the EBCG community is preparing for the entry into force of the **Entry/Exit System (EES)** Regulation in 2022, Frontex prepared the **technology pilot projects on Entry/Exit System solutions for land BCPs**, in coordination with Member States and in cooperation with eu-LISA. These pilots are a comprehensive EES test, supported by technological innovation systems: biometric recognition algorithms, touchless scanners, non-stop crossing checks, improvement of capture and verification quality, thermal sensors for body temperature, presentation attack detection. Frontex capability development activities in preparation for EES implementation were multi-fold: preparations for testing new technologies, developing minimum technical requirements for EES, selecting EES as the key theme of the International Conference on Biometrics for Borders 2020 along with the virtual exhibition of EES and border checks equipment, supporting MS in the redesign of BCPs in view of EES implementation.

### Training

#### Training contributing to building EBCG capabilities

Despite of the heavy impact of COVID 19 pandemic, the Agency continued to assist the Member States with upscaling their national border management related capabilities by delivering training in different IBM-related areas as well as following recommendations made under the Vulnerability Assessment or Schengen Evaluation processes. NB: The delivery of the specialised training courses was adjusted to remote learning

In 2020, Frontex finalised the Common Core Curriculum – Interoperability Assessment Programme (CCC-IAP) 2019–2020. The CCC-IAP evaluates how widely the CCC Basic has been integrated into the national training of border and coast guard, and the extent to which students have achieved the competences related to interoperability. The data collected is analysed and presented in the final report, which has been so far the only source compiling national training systems for basic training of border and coast guards in and outside the European Union. Due to the pandemic, the implementation status of the common curriculum was evaluated in 20 institutions from 19 countries and the assessment of students was completed in 15 institutions from 14 countries.

The third iteration of the European Joint Master's Programme in Strategic Border Management (EJMSBM) was finalised and the students have successfully commenced their dissertation writing period while the programme has undergone a successful re-accreditation process.

#### Entry/Exit System (EES) Training

Further to a comprehensive training development exercise supported by MS/SAC, the online (self-study) Course on the Entry/Exit-System was launched in July 2020. The aim of this online course is to familiarise the border guards and other officers performing border checks with the new elements introduced by the EES Regulation to the current border control process. Also in July 2020, the Agency organised a joint webinar together with eu-LISA, CEPOL, Europol and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) to explain the different EES business case for the different stakeholders and advertise the training offers of the Agencies to national multipliers from MS/SAC.

Frontex extended its support to MS/SAC in the preparation of the implementation of the Entry/Exit system at the external borders with a series of EES residential courses focusing on the challenges and possible solutions for the EES implementation with a strong component regarding the exchange of experiences/best practices between the Member States.

## HO 1: Implement and support European integrated border management to ensure safe and well-managed EU external borders

### Strategic Risk Analysis

One of the highlights of risk analysis in 2020 was the preparation and submission of the first **Strategic Risk Analysis (SRA)** report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Commission and the Member States, in the framework of the new multiannual strategic policy cycle on European integrated border management (IBM). In line with the EBCG Regulation, this new bi-annual report provides strategic foresight on future threats and challenges for EU border management over a 10-year horizon, enabling understanding of the global risk environment and the interplay of migration megatrends in returns, cross-border crime, terrorism, hybrid threats and other thematic areas that might affect the EU's external border security in the future.

### CDP methodology and resilience concept and quality assurance

Recognising the fact that the situation at the external borders of the EU is becoming more complex, posing challenges for border management and return, in 2020 the Agency worked on developing a **concept of resilient EBCG** through adequate capabilities. The concept bridges the gap between the strategic direction set out in the Technical and Operational European integrated border management (TO EIBM) Strategy and a practical dimension of sustaining mission-critical capabilities over time. It proposes a model, a set of principles and a number of implementation measures aiming at increasing the resilience of EBCG, making it better prepared and able to resist future challenges, adapt to changing circumstances and recover quickly following an impact.

One of key contributors to enhancing resilience are sustainable practices reflected in the efficient use and management of resources, responsible acquisition and introducing environmental and social dimension in delivering capabilities. For EBCG, the focus of sustainability is both on identifying and addressing the external challenges that threaten a stable long-term development, and, on ensuring that our own activities become more sustainable so as not to jeopardise our resilience.

## HO 2: Reinforce the external dimension aimed at multiplying Frontex operational impact through cooperation with the European Commission and EEAS, as well as through partnership with Member States, EU entities, third countries and international organisations

### Cooperation with third countries

#### Reviewed priorities for international cooperation in a new strategy

In 2020, the Agency carried out a comprehensive consultation process to review its priorities for cooperation with third countries and international organisations. The reviewed International Cooperation Strategy covers the period 2021-2023 and was adopted by the Management Board together with the Single Programming Document<sup>6</sup>. The document sets the direction for Frontex' engagement in the external dimension, including geographic priorities and different modalities of engagement with third countries and international organisations. Cooperation with priority third countries will continue to strive for dialogue and cooperation in the EU's neighbourhood, namely in the Western Balkans and Turkey, Southern Neighbourhood and Eastern Partnership countries. The Agency will also increasingly engage with the key countries of origin and transit in West Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Horn of Africa, as well as develop targeted cooperation in the Silk Routes countries and Latin America. A number of strategic partners, such as the US and Canada, will continue to be important for regular exchange, including in areas of research, innovation and good practice exchange.

#### Strengthened cooperation on health security in border management

Throughout the year, the COVID-19 pandemic had globally a big impact on societies as well as travel. The pandemic and the resulting heightened awareness of the importance of health security in border management prompted Frontex to explore cooperation in the domain of health, also in the external dimension. In cooperation with the Commission, Frontex developed a new dimension for its EU4bordersecurity project in the Southern Neighbourhood to cover a set of activities such as workshops and training that will focus on health and safety at the border. The activities implemented in coordination with ad-hoc technical partners, such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), and EU-Healthy Gateways, commenced on October 2020 with a regional webinar on the situational picture, challenges and needs related to health and safety at the border, event held in cooperation with ECDC and brought together over 100 representatives of relevant border and health agencies of EU and Southern Neighbourhood countries, regional bodies and agencies.

<sup>6</sup> MANAGEMENT BOARD DECISION 1/2021 of 13 January 2021 adopting the Single Programming Document 2021-2023 including the Multiannual Plan 2021-2023, the Programme of Work 2021 and the Budget 2021 (the Establishment Plan as part of it)

## First Euro-Arab Roundtable on Border Security

In December 2020, the Agency organised the first virtual Euro-Arab Technical Roundtable on Border Management and Security, giving Frontex the opportunity to discuss the challenges and possible future areas of joint efforts within the region. The event was held in cooperation with the Secretary General of the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC) and with the support of the German Federal Police as the Presidency of the Council of the EU. During the meeting, that brought together representatives from 32 countries, including 14 Arab states delegations expressed their commitment to further Euro-Arab cooperation on border management, and outlined their key priorities and expectations that will now form the basis in drawing up the programme of the Euro-Arab Border Security Conference, envisaged to take place in 2021.

## EU partners and international organisations

In October 2020, the Agency concluded a **working arrangement with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)**. The purpose of the working arrangement was to renew the framework of cooperation between both agencies in light of the enhanced mandate of Frontex.

In December 2020, Frontex concluded a **liaison agreement with Europol** whereby both agencies committed to deploy liaison officers in each other's headquarters, to take place in 2021. The agreement is part of the Joint Action Plan signed by the Executive Directors of the two agencies, aimed at strengthening their joint effort in enhancing the security of EU citizens.

Frontex and the **European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)** signed a **Service Level Agreement**, whereby the FRA committed to continue supporting the establishment and development of the Frontex Fundamental Rights Monitors, including their recruitment and training before their deployment. This is the second SLA between Frontex and the FRA, complementing the one signed in 2019 with a new set of activities.

## Frontex liaison officers' networks

In January 2020, the Agency **deployed a Frontex liaison officer (FLO) to Senegal**. The liaison officer is set to represent Frontex towards all relevant authorities in Senegal. The liaison officer is there to explore avenues for cooperation between Frontex and the Senegalese authorities competent in various matters of integrated border management. The FLO is based in the EU Delegation in Dakar and works closely with the national border management authorities as well as the European Migration Liaison Officer deployed by the Commission.

The Agency also worked to strengthen Frontex' **presence in the Western Balkans** - a region of key priority for Frontex' operational cooperation outside of the EU. In the course of the year, Frontex recruited the **second FLO to the Western Balkan region**, to reinforce the FLO based in Belgrade, Serbia since 2017. The new FLO will have a **regional mandate covering Albania, Kosovo\* and North Macedonia**. The FLO will continue to support the operationalisation of the Status Agreements and the implementation of working arrangements, while ensuring coordination of joint activities and operational cooperation between the Agency and the countries of the region, hand-in-hand with other European and international partners present in the field.

The network of FLOs in the EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries proved to be an essential tool in the context of the pandemic. From the very onset of the sanitary crisis, the FLOs were able to immediately relay critical information on the measures taken at the borders by the Member States and facilitate coordination at the EU level.

## HO 3: Develop an upgraded management system aimed at ensuring accountability, regularity and legality of all Frontex activities

### Human resources and security

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and an unprecedented number of new staff joining the Agency in 2020 (577 newcomers), Frontex managed to ensure continuity of its HR services, especially in the areas of talent acquisition, rights and entitlements, learning and staff development.

These are the major achievements in the area of talent acquisition, in particular:

- 49 new external recruitment procedures launched;
- 147 non-standing corps posts filled (TAs, CAs and SNEs);
- 430 European Border and Coast Guard staff (standing corps category 1) recruited;
- 48 trainees engaged under Frontex traineeship programme (spring and autumn);
- 74 new interims staff support filled (+ 85 % when compared to 2019).

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status. It is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



These are the major achievements in the area of personnel administration, in particular:

- 577 newcomers on-boarded (involving induction sessions, individual meetings, personnel files creation, encoding in data bases, advanced payments, etc.) and specific on-boarding programme for standing corps created;
- SYSPER 2 (the EC Human Resources and Management Information System for managing the employees' data, staff rights and obligations, time management and others features for career management and organisation charts) basic modules rolled out for Frontex.
- Implementation of SYSPER MIPS (mission management) module supported by implementation of a special statutory link ENS in SYSPER and financial management of standing corps category 2 deployments in MIPS enabled by encoding 351 in SYSPER.

In the area of security, the management of a programme for personnel security, including for standing corps was implemented. Physical security requirements for new ETIAS premises, Brussels Liaison Office and new Headquarters were assessed, including specialised counterintelligence and terrorism assessments, provided on the basis of recognised assessment models. In 2020, the Interim Authorisation to Operate (IATO) for EUROSUR Communication Network was reviewed and updated and EUROSUR ECN IATO 2021 signed by Frontex Security Authority.

### Finance and corporate services

In order to increase the efficiency of financial management in the Agency, the Financial Services headed the restructuring of the financial circuit from paper based to a fully digital internal workflow. Making use of ABAC functionalities to allow for a paperless processing of transactions the project was implemented at zero cost. Following a pilot phase, the digital circuit entered in force in April complemented by procedures, documentation, dedicated training, information and user support.

The project also streamlined the ex-ante controls, by reinforcing operational initiation function and elevating the operational verification which is now performed by the responsible Authorising officer. As an immediate benefit, the digital circuit ensured continuity in the expenditure life cycle and empowered a greater protection of the Agency staff during the pandemic.

Financial services engaged in a wide-ranging analysis of financial management within the increased budget of the Agency and identified measures aimed at gaining process efficiencies. On 16 December the financial threshold for the simplified financial circuit for payments has been raised from EUR 5,000 to EUR 15,000 with the view to maintaining efficiency in the financial verification function and prevent possible bottlenecks in the financial circuit. A new framework of delegations and sub-delegation has been defined which is based on functions performed by staff members (ED Decision with entry into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021).

In order to secure the contributions of the Member States to the standing corps, the EBCG Regulation envisages the establishment of a financial support system that will provide financing under the new type of grant called 'financing not linked to cost'. For that purpose, in 2020 Financial Services elaborated a new grant template dedicated to this special type of financing and awarded the first grants.

### Legal services

Despite the restrictions posed by the COVID-19 situation, 2020 was a busy year for the legal services sector. In the light of the increasing numbers of requests for legal support, particularly related to the deployment of the standing corps, LEG has provided its support in reviewing and contributing to the drafting and signature of various operational plans, memoranda of understanding on the deployment of Frontex liaison officers to Member States and to third countries, status agreements with multiple third countries, also supporting the ETIAS Central Unit in its further development.

Furthermore, legal services carried out quality control reviews of internal decision-making processes, for example it provided its assistance in the drafting of new Fundamental Rights Office (FRO) rules, as well as the rules connected to the Agency's Complaints Mechanism. Finally, Frontex was fully represented in court cases both before the EU general court and national courts, achieving a 100 % success rate for all court cases between 2017 and 2020.

The Transparency Office remained charged with processing a continuously increasing number of applications for Public Access to Documents. A new automation tool was implemented enabling smooth and coordinated processing of applications for Public Access to Frontex Documents both within the Agency and externally.

### Fundamental Rights

With the adoption of the EBCG Regulation, a **service level agreement** was signed between the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and Frontex with regard to the establishment, management and deployment of the

**Fundamental Rights Monitors (FROMs).** Already in 2019, pilot monitoring visits were conducted to operational areas in order to test the most effective means for monitoring and to prepare the right modalities for the deployment, conduct and work of the FROMs. The outcome of the project included a methodology for the FROMs on profile-specific monitoring and reporting, training curricula for the FROMs and advice to Frontex on how to include the FROMs into its operational processes. In 2020, the guidelines, manuals, managerial models, procedures, learning plans and curricula for the FROMs were finalised. Furthermore, FRA and Frontex elaborated the terms of reference of the future monitors, after thoroughly assessing the qualifications needed for their profile. **At the end of 2020, Frontex has initiated the recruitment for the Fundamental Rights Monitors.**

In 2020, a new **Fundamental Rights Strategy**<sup>7</sup> (FRS) has been developed, in accordance with Article 80(1) of the EBCG Regulation, to align the Agency's activities with fundamental rights standards and principles. The new Fundamental Rights Strategy replaces its 2011 version and was **adopted on February 2021**. As a practical guidance of fundamental rights, it outlines the impact that fundamental rights have on the Agency's work on integrated border management and it contains the requirements to comply with the Agency's international and European obligations. The new Fundamental Rights Strategy elaborates on what it means to respect, protect and promote fundamental rights of those who cross the EU borders. The Fundamental Rights Strategy will further be elaborated into an action plan, aligning with the annual work programme of the Agency for 2021. The action plan will include practical fundamental rights safeguards that guide the implementation of Frontex' operational activities.

### Data protection

In 2020 the DPO focused particularly on three major files: the move of Frontex to the Microsoft Cloud and the impact of Schrems II decision on the processing operations performed by the Agency in relation to international data transfers, the processing activities related to the management of the COVID pandemic, such as body temperature measurements, contact tracing and COVID testing and advising the Agency and the Commission on their initiative for conducting social media monitoring, which in turn had an impact on the scope of the new Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for PeDRA.

One of the milestones reached was the provision of advice on the FWC for Frontex Surveillance Aircraft, where data protection provisions aim at ensuring compliance with data protection obligations not only by Frontex but also by possible applicants to the tender. In addition, the DPO was heavily invested in the JO in Montenegro, allowing effectively to transfer staff data to a third country using specific clauses in the operational plan in full compliance with Article 48 of the Data Protection Regulation.

The DPO provided extensive support to ECRET assisting and advising ECRET in the DPIA drafting for the new version of the Integrated Return Management Application (IRMA), which would also include Frontex Application for Returns (FAR). A specific agreement was signed for allocation of controllership and responsibilities upon exchange of personal data between FAR and Austrian national system in the framework of RECAMAS. Data protection considerations have also been properly addressed in the framework of transfer of ERRIN network to Frontex, including in relation to the provision of the Joint Reintegration Services (JRS).

On human resources matters, the DPO supported the Agency in relation to the implementation of the standing corps by providing advice and recommendations on the preparation of the new pre-employment medical assessment, which the Agency outsources to a private company since the medical services of the Commission declared that they were not in a position to support Frontex anymore. Furthermore, the DPO has also provided advice on the data processing in SYSPER.

In 2020, there was an increase in supervisory activities by the EDPS compared to 2019. In 2020, the EDPS approached Frontex for conducting two inspections and five requests for cooperation. In parallel there were 281 internal requests for advice submitted to the DPO Office in 2020. This is 14 % increase in requests received in 2020 when compared to 2019. There were 5 data subject access requests submitted to the DPO.

### Media and Public Relations

Despite COVID-19 pandemic, Media and Public Relations Office (MPR) continued its **information campaign on the recruitment** of the first candidates to the European border and coast guard. The standing corps was promoted through videos, posts and targeted campaigns, as well as media buying and interviews with the leading European newspapers. Meanwhile, MPR produced videos (on standing corps recruits, the training at Kętrzyn training centre and their new uniforms) as well as visual materials to promote the first EU uniformed service.

With the adoption of the new regulation and enhanced Frontex mandate at the end of 2019, the **Agency visual identity had to be revamped** to better reflect those fundamental changes. The new logo, designed and implemented by the Frontex Media and Public Relations Office itself, was launched in July 2020 and was promoted in all communication

<sup>7</sup> Management Board Decision 12/2021 of 14 February 2021 adopting the Fundamental Rights Strategy.

channels. It was followed by its swift implementation in Frontex key products (applications, document templates, standing corps uniforms etc.) and an updated general presentation, as well as new promotional video.

With the spread of the pandemic, the **new intranet platform (We All)** became a place to go for the most up-to-date information on COVID-19, on guidelines on working arrangements for staff as well as new developments in the Agency. It is also a source of the monthly statistics which allows to adjust the published content to the internal audience's interests and expectations. Finally, in 2020, Frontex continued to expand its presence in three social media channels: Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, ending the year with more than 110 000 followers.

## Handling COVID-19 crisis

### COVID-19 Crisis Cell

Following the outbreak of the pandemic, Frontex set up the crisis cell which supported the Executive Management in leading the Agency through the COVID-19 crisis situation. Ensuring occupational safety and health became of paramount priority of the Agency in order to remain operational during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Agency remained in active contact with public health authorities, including ECDC and national authorities around Europe, as well as medical experts, who supported a further development of the Agency's safety and health capabilities, adapting them to provide necessary protection for the personnel deployed in operations during COVID-19 pandemics. Frontex continued cooperation with external stakeholders, in particular Justice and Home Affairs Agencies, such as Europol and EASO, partnering on publishing a booklet on 'Deployment Information' for deployed staff members, taking on board guidance on protective measures for COVID-19.

The priority areas were focusing on business continuity, ensuring staff health and wellbeing, and minimizing disruption to its operations. Communication was a crucial component of the Agency's crisis response, thus reliable updates were provided on the COVID-19 situation in Poland and in the EU, on travel restrictions and internal measures, such as teleworking, shifts, temperature checks, Covid testing, guidelines etc. At the same time, the crisis cell developed the exit strategy which describes how environmental conditions shall support decision-making with regard to the introduction of workplace measures at Frontex headquarters in the future.

# Key conclusions

## Part I. Achievements

### Operational achievements:

- The Agency implemented two rapid border interventions at the external land and maritime borders of Greece with Turkey: rapid border intervention Evros and rapid border intervention Aegean.
- Frontex Surveillance Aircraft Services (FSA) performed a total of 1,068 missions in 2020 out of which 1,030 were surveillance flights and 38 related to fishery control.
- A total of 16,732 migrants were detected last year, out of which 15,433 were spotted by Frontex surveillance in Central and Eastern Mediterranean Sea. A total of 1,299 migrants were detected at land borders and 114 vessels suspected of illegal activities were tracked and reported according to the Member States' needs.
- Frontex assets in maritime operations have helped to rescue more than 3,408 migrants during the patrolling activities. The operational activities resulted in the detection of 790 facilitators, 4 traffickers of human beings and a wide variety of other types of cross-border crimes, such as smuggling of illegal goods and substances: 1,463 litres of alcohol, 4,013 pieces of ammunition, approximately 361 kilograms of cocaine, more than 144 tons of hashish and marijuana, 40 kilograms of heroin.
- The operational activities at the air border crossing points within the joint operation focal points 2020 offered a good opportunity to streamline cooperation and to gain experience by making use of the INTERPOL databases. During short deployments, there were in total 43 nominal hits (17 unknowns by local authorities) and 75 SLTD hits (18 unknowns by local authorities) detected.
- The Agency was involved in 91 operational actions in the frame of the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT.
- Multipurpose maritime operation on coast guard functions in the Black Sea (MMO Black Sea 2020) was implemented under the joint operation focal points 2020 (June–August) and under the MMO a search and rescue workshop, including two boarding drills, was successfully organised.
- The Agency secured and delivered COVID-19-related personal protective equipment to all its operational locations covering the needs in the field and securing safety and health of the deployed personnel.
- In the area of Return the Agency managed EURLO Network which consisted of 12 EURLO deployments, and during the year nine out of them were supported by Frontex. In parallel, the Agency broadened the spectrum of its return-related support to MS to include also technical assistance for the voluntary returns. Throughout the year, the share of voluntary returns made up for 18% of all Frontex supported flights. As regards the activities in the field of post-arrival and post-return, major steps have been taken to establish the Frontex Reintegration Programme.
- The return-related activities of Frontex were supported by a number of IT tools, among them Return Case Management System (RECAMAS) for which an updated version was made available to the MS. Additionally, the inception phase for Irregular Migration Management Application (IRMA 2.0) was completed.
- 2020 vulnerability assessment annual cycle started in January 2020 with the launch of the baseline assessment process. This annual process consists of an extensive data collection effort by Member States (MS/SAC) with over 100,000 data points being collected.
- During 2020, the first Strategic Risk Analysis (SRA) report was elaborated and submitted to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Commission and the Member States, in the framework of the new multiannual strategic policy cycle on European integrated border management (IBM).
- A new Fundamental Rights Strategy<sup>8</sup> (FRS) has been developed in accordance with Article 80(1) of the EBCG Regulation.
- ETIAS Task Force continued to progress with the preparation phase of the project of setting up the ETIAS Central Unit (roadmap, business processes).
- Together with MS/SAC and the European Commission, the Agency worked out the methodology and the procedure for establishing the national capability development plans (CDPs) which was adopted by the Management Board.
- During 2020, Frontex worked on the multiannual acquisition strategy aiming to prepare the long-term planning, acquisition and, finally, secure disposal of assets while the ABN negotiations held on October 2020 involved 29 out of 30 MS/SAC. This was for the first time that the capability pooling was performed under provisions of the new EBCG Regulation, the proposals submitted by MS/SAC fulfilled 80 % of their obligation for SC category 3.
- Experts from the Agency, participated in a wide range of activities in ongoing Horizon research projects, e.g. Perceptions, Aresibo, BorderSens, Compass2020, Andromeda, Mirror, ILEAnet. Furthermore the Agency worked intensely on the preparation of a first iteration of technical standards, covering most aspects and equipment for border control: maritime equipment, aerial equipment, land border surveillance equipment, document inspection equipment, as well as technical guidelines on Entry and Exist System (EES) related equipment.
- In 2020, Frontex finalised contractual arrangements for the second aerostat pilot project for maritime surveillance and it finalised the Common Core Curriculum – Interoperability Assessment Programme (CCC-IAP) 2019–2020. The CCC-IAP evaluates how widely the CCC Basic has been integrated into the national training of border and coast guard, and the extent to which students have achieved the competences related to interoperability.
- In 2020, the Agency carried out a comprehensive consultation process to review its priorities for cooperation with third countries and international organisations. The reviewed International Cooperation Strategy covers the period 2021–2023 and was adopted by the Management Board.

<sup>8</sup> Management Board Decision 12/2021 of 14 February 2021 adopting the Fundamental Rights Strategy.

- In cooperation with the European Commission, Frontex developed a new dimension for its EU4bordersecurity project in the Southern Neighbourhood to cover a set of activities such as workshops and training that will focus on health and safety at the border.
- The Agency organised the first virtual Euro-Arab Technical Roundtable on Border Management and Security, giving Frontex the opportunity to discuss the challenges and possible future areas of joint efforts within the region. Further to the cooperation initiatives, the Agency concluded a working arrangement with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL). The purpose of the working arrangement was to renew the framework of cooperation between both agencies considering the enhanced mandate of Frontex and concluded a liaison agreement with Europol whereby both agencies committed to deploy liaison officers in each other's headquarters.
- The Agency deployed a Frontex liaison officer (FLO) to Senegal and recruited the second FLO to the Western Balkan region with a regional mandate covering Albania, Kosovo\* and North Macedonia.
- There were 577 new staff joining the Agency in 2020 and Frontex managed to ensure continuity of its HR services, especially in the areas of talent acquisition, rights, and entitlements, learning and staff development.

#### Build-up of the standing corps:

- Task Force Deployment Management, whose mission is to ensure the full operationalisation of the standing corps was established and contributed to the preparation of policies and procedures, enabling the effective deployment of the standing corps. It supported horizontal coordination for the development of ICT-related solutions, pools of equipment, human resources related issues, tender procedures and the financial support mechanism.
- Management Board adopted a decision on the long-term planning involving establishing the profiles of the standing corps staff along with the total numbers of each profile required to fulfil the operational needs. The MB decision established the profiles for operational staff within the EBCG standing corps, specifying their requirements and job competences.
- Following an information campaign for the recruitment of the first candidates to the European border and coast guard, 419 European border and coast guard officers were recruited, trained and equipped during 2020, and sufficient reserve list for appointments was established for 2021 while the training focus during the year was on establishing the tools and capacities necessary to train the standing corps to ensure their operational readiness as of January 2021, finalising the development of the basic training programme, setting up the cooperation framework with training institutions in MS/SAC.
- The Agency launched an open tender procedure for a framework contract to acquire firearms and ammunitions for standing corps, the delivery of which is expected in Q3 2021.

## Part II. Management

- Year 2020 was the first year of the implementation of the new EBCG Regulation, and in particular the year in which standing corps were created. This remained the focus area for the Management Board and it required intensive effort of all Frontex business entities.
- The Management Board was strengthened by the establishment of the Executive Board and new Rules of Procedure.
- The organisational structure of Frontex was amended to adjust it to the enhanced mandate and it will be implemented in 2021.
- The Agency was gradually developing new elements of the fundamental rights framework set by the new EBCG Regulation, in close cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union.
- The Agency was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Business continuity was ensured by introducing paperless workflows, online authorisations and virtual meetings for all business processes.
- Despite the challenges, Frontex continued to provide operational support to Member States, and the priority operational activities, including the rapid border interventions in Greece, were sustained. There were always between 600 and 800 border and coast guard officers deployed to Frontex joint operations during the worst moment of the lockdown and closure of internal borders from March to June.
- Some planned activities were heavily impacted, in particular in the domain of return-related activities which were battered by the world-wide travel restrictions. However Frontex returned more than 12.000 irregular migrants (compared to 16.000 in 2019) that represented 20% of the migrants effectively returned from the EU to third countries in 2020 (compared to 10% in 2019).
- The external limitations to Frontex activities resulted in a decrease of the annual budget when compared to that originally adopted by EUR 95.5 million.
- The total value of procurement procedures processed by Frontex in 2020 amounted to EUR 263 million.
- Together with the officers of the standing corps category 1, who are statutory staff of the Agency, Frontex staff continued its gradual growth, posing a challenge for the HR services.
- New ICT tools were implemented to increase the efficiency of HR and financial processes and to increase the staff absorption capacity.
- Close cooperation with the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors contributed to the implementation and follow-up on audit recommendations, some of which, however, were pending for longer than initially envisioned. This is an area to which the Agency will devote particular attention and resolute action during 2021.

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status. It is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

# Part I - Achievements of the year

## 1.1. Strategic Objective 1:

### Reduced vulnerability of the external borders based on comprehensive situational awareness

#### Focus Area 1.1. Produce actionable information and analysis to enable the functioning of the European Border and Coast Guard

**Key Activity 1.1.1. Perform situation monitoring and surveillance in all four tiers of the EIBM and process information collected from all sources in support of the Agency's activities, with a focus on the pre-frontier area and third countries**

#### Specific Objectives

Produce actionable information through 24/7 (near) real-time situation and crisis monitoring and surveillance

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

Produce actionable information through 24/7 (near) real-time situation and crisis monitoring and surveillance

- Frontex centralised infrastructure, initially planned to be implemented in one single procurement had to be split in two phases, due to ICT challenges related to drafting performance and technical requirements for the equipment that the Agency intended to acquire.
- In 2020 during the first phase – acquiring ‘Consultancy services on the audio-video technical design of the future Frontex centralised infrastructure’ was planned and the procurement was concluded at the end of 2020.

#### Real-time and (near) real-time integrated and tailor-made information services

Throughout 2020, situational monitoring and surveillance capabilities were delivered to internal and external stakeholders – including MS and EU institutions – via Copernicus/EUROSUR Fusion Services.

Several operational exercises and training sessions were organised to improve situational monitoring and surveillance capabilities of MS:

- IMINT training (March 2020);
- Multipurpose Maritime Operational Exercise Black Sea 2020 (May 2020);
- Operational exercise in the Ionic Sea (September 2020);
- Operational exercise in the Baltic Sea (October 2020).

Copernicus/EUROSUR Fusion Services also contributed to the implementation of coast guard function activities and EU Policy cycle/EMPACT priorities.

- During 2020, Frontex surveillance aircraft (FSA) performed a total of 1,068 missions out of which 1,030 were surveillance flights and 38 for fishery control.
- FSC initiated maritime weekly dialogues with the involvement of Frontex entities involved in maritime intelligence to establish an information and knowledge exchange platform as regards vessels of interest. Upon a joint assessment, FSA or satellite monitoring is directly activated and the information is communicated to the competent Member State through the NCC network.

#### Crisis management support.

- FSC activated the pre-crisis response mechanism regarding the Abroon Caravan and facilitated the information exchange between Europol, EASO and EEAS to ensure the completeness of situational awareness among all stakeholders through Frontex 24/7 service.
- Throughout the year, the crisis cell supported the Executive management in leading the Agency through the COVID-19 crisis. Crisis cell was empowered with a temporary allocation of functions and staff from entities across the Agency to ensure efficient and sustainable management of all the crisis processes and tasks. The priority areas were focusing on business continuity, ensuring staff health, safety and wellbeing, while minimising disruption to its operations. At the same time, the crisis cell developed the exit strategy which describes how environmental



conditions shall support decision-making concerning the introduction of workplace health and safety measures at Frontex headquarters.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

Establishment of fully functioning centralised management capabilities for Frontex. Target: a centralised infrastructure for managing the Agency operational activities.

The first phase – acquiring ‘Consultancy services on the audio-video technical design of the future Frontex centralised infrastructure’ was planned and the procurement was concluded at the end of 2020.

#### Additional EFS services fused to support real-time aerial surveillance (as laid out in the EBCG Regulation)

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of EFS service requests in 2020 increased by 13%, from 386 requests in 2019 to 445 in 2020. Consequently, an increase in product delivery was also observed. EFS service delivery in 2020 included:

- over 160 thousand anomaly alerts;
  - 1,030 multipurpose air surveillance flights;
  - 1,163 SAR images;
  - 668 optical images;
  - 94 vessel monitoring reports;
  - 619 IMINT and GEOINT reports.
- A total of 16,732 migrants were detected last year, out of which 15,433 were spotted by FSA in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Sea. In all cases, the competent and relevant rescue coordination centres were informed including ITA MRCC, JRCC PIRAEUS, MALTA RCC as well as the Tunisian and Libyan RCC depending on the geographical location of the sighting. Out of the total number, 1,299 migrants were detected at land borders.
  - The FSA planes flew over the Central Mediterranean Sea (JO Themis 2020), Aegean Sea (JO Poseidon 2020), Black Sea (MMO Black Sea) and Adriatic Sea (JO Themis and JO Montenegro). It also monitored the land borders in Poland, Croatia and Hungary.
  - During 2020, a total of 114 vessels suspected of illegal activities were tracked and reported according to the Member States’ needs.

#### Agency-wide event response policy available

- The decision of the Executive Director no. R-ED-2020-33 on the Crisis Management Policy was adopted on 02/03/2020. The Crisis Management Policy (‘CM Policy’) outlines the Agency’s response and actions that are guided by a Concept of Operations which aims to provide a common approach to all types of incidents and crises, from a business continuity event to operational incidents demanding strategic and operational governance.

**Key Activity 1.1.2.<sup>9</sup> Maintain a robust awareness mechanism based on constant situation monitoring and risk analysis including pre-warning and forecasting, within all four tiers of the EIBM, and including cross-border crime**

#### Specific Objectives

Regularly provide analysis and assessments by border sections  
/ BCP on all aspects of the European IBM to inform operational and strategic decisions.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

##### Attribution of impact levels and setting up a monitoring system to cover the full scope of EIBM

- Frontex was monitoring and assessing the impact level of Eurosur border sections and attributing impact levels accordingly throughout the year with no delay.
- In the situations when impact level changed, the concerned Member State was informed and consulted, so that the new impact level could be updated in Eurosur. In 2020 selected border sections of Croatia and Spain (Canary Islands) had their impact level updated following operational developments.

#### Strengthening the capability to detect, prevent and combat illegal migration and cross-border crime

<sup>9</sup> Operational personal data collected and processed for the purposes of risk analysis exchanged with Europol, Eurojust and MS competent LES for the purposes of these to prevent, detect, investigate or prosecute CBC (conditions for transmission to be further elaborated in the MB rules and in more specific terms for transmission to MS on OPLANS and to EU agencies on new WAs). Personal data related to persons who cross the border without authorisation collected and processed for the purposes of risk analysis and transmission to MS authorities responsible for border control and migration.

- Frontex prepared several analytical products supporting operational activities aimed at combating cross-border crime and terrorism, such as the report on an irregular migrant who used the Central Mediterranean route and killed 3 persons in a terrorist attack in Nice in 2020 or the report analysing the use of specific Internet applications for illegal border-crossing and migrant smuggling. All such analyses were shared with Europol, Member States and partner third countries.
- In the context of the emerging crisis at the Greek-Turkish border in February 2020 Frontex launched two rapid border interventions based on risk analysis performed. The situation was continuously monitored and assessed.
- Frontex provided regular analytical support for EMPACT operational activities in the form of analytical products for the intelligence collection, implementation and evaluation phases as well as providing dedicated analyst to Frontex Operational Coordination Centres during JADs.
- Frontex worked out an analytical planning process enabling to provide analytical support for operational activities targeting cross-border crime (ISA-CBC 2, MOST) as well as CBC-related handbooks such as 'Handbook on Firearms for Border Guards and Customs'.
- Extension of the European Union Document Fraud data collection. Frontex successfully implemented the new data collection tool which significantly improved data quality and made an exploration of detailed data possible for European Union Document Fraud – Risk Analysis Network (EDF-RAN) and other interested users.
- In 2020 Frontex continued to provide regular analytical products and handbooks on document fraud, as well as tailored products such as analysis on the use of fraudulent documents related to COVID-19 movement restrictions or contribution to SOCTA (EUROPOL).
- In the context of COVID-19 Frontex prepared several assessments covering different topics amongst them situational assessment on smuggling of illicit goods.
- Maritime domain risk analysis in 2020 covered topics of oil smuggling and fraudulent registration of vessels.
- Together with EASO and Europol, Frontex produced the second joint analysis on secondary movements that was presented by the Agencies to Member States and EU institutions.
- Frontex Risk Analysis supported the annual and multiannual operational planning, the vulnerability assessment and Schengen Evaluations.

#### Collection & processing operational personal data suspects, witnesses, victims of cross-border crime & terrorism Collection of intelligence on modus operandi, routes, etc. from human sources (debriefing of migrants)

- Performing debriefing interviews continued during 2020 in the framework of the Frontex joint operations as the main source of information gathering on modus operandi, routes, criminal networks, pull and push factors, etc.
- Frontex processed all operational personal data collected in the context of joint operations by debriefing experts and shared them with Europol.
- Frontex processed personal data based on Frontex MB decision 58/2015 which is outdated and does not allow for the implementation of all data processing activities specified by the EBCG Regulation – hence, currently, Frontex can process only personal data of suspects (not victims or witnesses) and share them with Europol only<sup>10</sup>.

#### Support to internal and external stakeholders in better understanding the pre-frontier situation

- Frontex continued data and information exchange and remained in regular contact with Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership partners in the framework of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership Risk Analysis Networks (WB-RAN and EaP-RAN).
- Wider utilisation of open source information continued to result in various short and focussed ad-hoc reports on relevant developments which could impact the situation in various migration source/transit countries. In 2020 Frontex contributed with risk analysis to the monitoring of emerging crisis in Belarus, Turkey and Armenia – Azerbaijan were over 100 reports were produced (key developments, early warnings, briefing notes and other tailored products).
- Regular data exchange, joint analytical activities, products and constant communications performed in the framework of the regional networks coupled with in-house open source monitoring served to provide analytical products on the pre-frontier. Regular (annual, quarterly, monthly) as well as ad-hoc analytical products have been generated together with EU and regional partners.
- Frontex started designing its forecasting and early warning capabilities during the second semester of 2020. The aim was to increase the number of data sources to be exploited in conjunction with currently available data to enhance the capacity to produce future-oriented analysis over the full spectrum of the EIBM with a particular focus on the situation in third countries and the pre-frontier area.

<sup>10</sup> Frontex is currently working on a draft of implementing rules that are to replace Frontex MB decision 58/2015 and are to allow Frontex to process operational personal data to the full extent of the EBCG regulation. In the meantime, Frontex has requested an assessment from the EDPS on the legal standing of the current MB 58/2015 vis-à-vis the EBCG Regulation and the possible direct applicability of the EBCG Regulation to cover for the period until the new implementing rules are adopted by the MB.



- The pilot project on forecasting started in 2020 with the requirements collection and interface design of a forecasting tool. The tool will allow analysts in future to link the trends of illegal border-crossings at sea and land borders to additional external data sources and will produce different forecasting horizons taking into account external push and pull factors to determine the output forecasting.

#### Updated CIRAM (version 3.0) and adoption by the Management Board

Frontex continued with the revision process for the update of CIRAM to version 3.0. The discussions with the European Commission and MSs/SAC proceeded to the extent possible, given the pandemic related restrictions. The revision process is still ongoing and the adoption of the CIRAM 3.0 by the MB has been re-scheduled for the third quarter of 2021.

#### Development of the maritime intelligence community - Risk Analysis Network

- The maritime risk analysis network is one workstream within the maritime intelligence community – Risk Analysis Network Project (MIC-RAN). In 2020, all meetings, plenary and workshop (Q3, Q1) were cancelled mainly due to COVID-19 measures and postponed for 2021. Nevertheless, Frontex shared with the maritime intelligence community strategic assessments.
- A second workstream of the project is the search of advanced maritime tools for analysis purposes. Frontex ran the maritime analysis tool procurement in the first quarter of 2020 and signed a contract with the awarded company in December.
- According to the actions points defined during the ‘2nd Plenary Meeting’ of MIC-RAN, Frontex continued working on the development of the maritime risk indicators, which was the topic of the cancelled workshop in 2020, and it will remain the topic for the 1st workshop after the reactivation of the RAN Community in 2021.

#### Establishment of thematic risk analysis networks

There were no new thematic risk analysis networks created in 2020. Due to the still pending implementation of the first EIBM Strategy Cycle and, therefore, missing EBCG prioritisation on cross-border crime fields and because of the cancellation – caused by the pandemic – of all cross-border crime risk analysis related meetings and workshops the development of Thematic Risk Analysis Networks with Member States’ authorities and relevant partners on supra national level could not be extended in 2020.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

##### 1. Timely attribution of impact levels to border sections at the external border.

- Frontex monitored and assessed the impact level of Eurosur border sections and attributing impact levels accordingly throughout the year with no delay.
- The actual implementation of the forecasting tool is planned to be embedded into an intelligence suit and is subject to the acquisition and use of the required software which will deploy the tool model into the analysis processes to support the production of actionable intelligence.

##### 2. Number of personal data of suspects, witnesses, victims of cross-border crime and terrorism collected.

- Frontex transmitted to Europol personal data of suspects of cross-border crime that was collected in the context of joint operations, to support investigations. In 2020, Frontex transmitted to Europol 513 SIENA transmissions that contained information and personal data related to 856 suspects, 417 means of communication, 125 locations and 64 organisations. Europol cross-checked these data and identified 152 hits.
- The number of interviews with personal data as well as with no personal data performed during 2020 sharply decreased in all operational areas as the access to irregular migrants was very limited between April and December mainly due to medical security measures implemented due to COVID-19. During the period January - March 2020 the access to irregular migrants also decreased due to limitations established by some of the hosting Member States concerning the access to irregular migrants.
- The number of field visits performed to debriefing and screening teams during 2020 decreased due to travel bans related to COVID-19. Nevertheless, online meetings were performed with deployed teams to support their performance and the gathering of information.

##### 3. Finalisation and approval of the CIRAM (version 3.0). Regular reports containing information and analysis on the situation in the pre-frontier area.

Frontex continued with the revision process for the update of CIRAM to version 3.0. The revision process is still ongoing and the adoption of the CIRAM 3.0 by the MB has been re-scheduled for the third quarter of 2021.

4. SL (satisfaction level) concerning the support provided in better understanding the pre-frontier situation.

Frontex did not measure systematically the satisfaction level of users of products and services supporting a better understanding of the pre-frontier situation. Occasional feedback received in 2020 was positive.

5. Maritime intelligence community and Risk Analysis Network created and functioning regularly.

These activities were carried out as described in the actual results above.

#### **Key Activity 1.1.3. Contribute to EBCG planning processes through the knowledge generated by situation monitoring, risk analysis and vulnerability**

##### **Specific Objectives**

Produce knowledge generated by RA and VA to feed into Frontex operational and strategic planning to further improve the offer of products and services to Member States and EU policy makers.

##### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Establish a core knowledge basis for yearly planning of operational activities.  
Specific assessments for the drafting of operational plans.

- A series of knowledge products and contributions were drafted by VAU to support the planning processes of several stakeholders in the Agency. These included dedicated knowledge products following the completion of the 2020 Baseline Assessment process, as well as tailored products following the completion of each Rapid Vulnerability Assessment (RVA).
- Frontex developed scenario-based situational assessment concerning the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on different fields of EIBM.
- An assessment for operational deployment was produced in 2020 to support the Operational Planning Cycle of the Agency. The assessment provides the basis for the allocation of human resources and technical equipment offered by the Member States or available at Frontex to be deployed to Frontex-coordinated operations planned in 2021 – 2022.

Final evaluation of the results of an articulated operational response.

For every operation taking place in 2020 and planned for 2021 Frontex prepared tailored analytical products that serve as a basis for operational planning. Every joint operation taking place in 2020 was evaluated by analysts to assess the adequacy of measures taken against the risks identified in tactical focused assessments.

Tailored reports to support the short-term planning needs of the EBCG community.

Frontex has been delivering frequent operational reports to support the short-term planning needs of the EBCG community, mostly within the framework of joint operations or joint activities. The majority of reports are recurrent as defined in the specific activity plans. Occasionally, Frontex has been disseminating ad-hoc reports on new *modus operandi*, emerging threats to draw the attention of stakeholders and support the optimal planning of operational activities.

Periodical strategic analysis products on irregular migration and cross-border crimes presented to the EBCG community and relevant partners.

- Major periodical products serving long-term strategic decision-making such as Annual Risk Analysis and Strategic Risk Analysis (SRA) were produced. SRA is a new product providing strategic foresight on future threats and challenges for EU border management over a 10-year horizon to inform the policy cycle and strategic planning processes. (see highlights)
- Strategic updates in the form of annual brief and monthly analysis were provided to the EBCG community and relevant partners. A tailored analytical brief highlighting important border-related developments and risks was prepared for every of seven sessions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council in 2020.
- In-depth cross-border crime threat assessments were prepared for the baseline vulnerability assessment updated every year. Monthly Analysis covering migration, cross-border crime and terrorism threats was delivered to the EBCG community.

Tailored products to support the long-term strategic decision-making, mainly delivered to EBCGA and relevant EU stakeholders (COM, EP, Council, etc.).

- Tailored analytical contributions to EU partner agencies' analytical products on cross-border crime topics, such as EUROPOL's SOCTA (strategic analysis, trends and recommendations on different crime areas).
- Frontex published a joint report on secondary irregular migration in the EU/SAC together with EASO and EUROPOL.
- Produced regular analyses on return for RAU periodical strategic reports and the use by ECRet during its meetings and events with Member States.
- Frontex also prepared visual tools allowing analysts to monitor the information channels used to transmit debriefing reports to Frontex to rapidly identify bottlenecks and under-performing validation levels and take action to improve the information flow.

Maintain oversight on operational data quality.

Frontex ensured all personal data collected and transmitted to Frontex by debriefing experts in the context of joint operations was treated in line with data regulation legal requirements.

Targeted support measures to remedy identified vulnerabilities in Member States Border Management.

The Vulnerability Assessment Biannual Report for EU institutions (EP, Council and COM) was revamped and further expanded to comply with the requirements set by Article 32 (11) of the EBCG Regulation. In particular, more in-depth information was provided on findings and recommendations stemming from the vulnerability assessment processes, to further improve the situational awareness of decision-makers at EU level.

**Results on indicators and targets:**

Timely production and provision of the bi-annual report to EU institutions (EP, Council, European Commission) (VAU)

Two reports issued in 2020.

Delivery of VA knowledge products to various planning processes

- Fourteen tailored VA contributions and knowledge products to support the planning activities of other Frontex entities and stakeholders at the EU level.
- All analytical products planned for 2020 and specific request for information were delivered on time or with small delays within the agreed tolerances.

**Focus Area 1.2. Create an EBCG environment and community of intelligence-led operational activities (considering the process of data collection, processing and information exchange and analysis in connection to, but not only limited to the EUROSUR framework review and networks).**

**Key Activity 1.2.1. Support the set-up and functioning of information exchange and risk analysis centres and networks, including in third countries.**

**Specific Objectives**

Ensure an enhanced situation awareness on developments in the pre-frontier third countries through regular interaction in regional risk analysis networks and delivery of related product portfolio.

**Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Strengthened information exchange capabilities within regional and thematic risk analysis networks in the Schengen Area and pre-frontier area.

**The Thematic Risk Analysis Network for the Schengen Area**

- The activities of the Frontex Risk Analysis Network were maintained despite the challenging pandemic conditions. Four virtual meetings were held with the full situational overview presented. The EU Member States actively contributed with their analysis. Recurring analytical products were delivered to the FRAN community in full.
- The focus was particularly placed on identifying health risks in the performance of European Border Management activities. A survey and subsequent dedicated virtual meeting were carried out to map MS reporting on health threats, while links to ECDC were established by RAU.

**Regional networks in the pre-frontier area**

- Frontex continued its activities to coordinate the interactions of regional risk analysis networks covering the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries (regular and ad-hoc meetings, commonly defined-periodic data exchange, joint analytical products, constant communication etc.).
- These efforts continued to feed up-to-date knowledge about the pre-frontier dimension. Regular analytical products and knowledge generated in the activities shared with the EU partners as well as with the regional partners contributed to maintaining an enhanced awareness beyond national borders to support adequate and coordinated responses to commonly identified threats.
- A regular regional-level daily data exchange on migration pressure remained active at the level of the Western Balkan region besides the regular monthly data exchanges.
- Online dashboards based on the daily reporting are available to all reporting entities supporting their enhanced awareness in an up-to-date manner. Periodic inputs were provided in the framework of the European Commission-led videoconferences on the Western Balkans situation where regional partners and MS participate.

#### Provision of EUROSUR Fusion Services, including to third countries based on bilateral agreements

While EUROSUR Fusion Services were provided to MS/SAC as planned, a pre-requisite for the provision of EUROSUR Fusion Services to third countries is the Implementing Act (IA) on the EUROSUR Situational Pictures defining in detail the composition of the Specific Situational Pictures and the related roles and responsibilities for sharing. The IA from the Commission was expected for September 2020, however it was delayed until the first half of 2021. Consequently, there was no legal framework in place for the provision of EUROSUR Fusion Services to third countries.

Further development of Risk Analysis Cells networks in pre-frontier third countries: AFIC (relevant for Frontex budget if not covered by AFIC DG DEVCO). Remark includes the general decision that Frontex is the project owner and that will impact the following years until approx. 2025), WB, EaP and TURAN.

- In 2020, Frontex continued monitoring the external security threats and migratory trends and developments in neighbouring, source and transit countries in Africa and produced products aiming to introduce key developments with a focus on an early warning. Frontex produced four smaller analytical reports and the Joint Annual Report for 2019.
- Moreover, Frontex was also involved in several training activities and delivered sessions on risk analysis methodology, cross-border crime and specific practicalities in second-line border check i.e. in February 2020 a risk analysis methodology training was delivered to the Moroccan authorities in the frame of the Frontex/Morocco 'Comité Mixte de Pilotage'. All the Moroccan border relevant law enforcement authorities attended the training.
- In the frame of the so-called 'INTERPOL-AFRIPOL-SHARAKA Project', four similar virtual risk analysis training sessions, focusing on second-line checks at the borders and on the latest border security threats, were delivered to the Algerian, Lebanese, Jordanian and Moroccan authorities. Each of these training sessions was attended by relevant border security authorities of the concerned countries.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

Regular meetings, information exchange and joint analytical activities and reports concerning the thematic risk analysis networks.

- In its current phase, the 'Strengthening of Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community' project supports capacity building activities and is focused on reducing illegal migration attributable to migrant smuggling as a key area of cooperation between the EU and AFIC members. The project already delivered several plenary and regional workshops, operational meetings, as well as seven risk analysis training sessions, during which 141 analysts from 23 AFIC member countries were successfully trained. During the implementation of the project 5 Risk Analysis Cells were opened in Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and The Gambia.
- Frontex produced four AFIC Monthly Analysis Reports and the Joint Annual Report 2019. Furthermore, disseminated 38 analytical products on relevant developments and early warnings related to third countries and disseminated them to a wide range of internal and external partners.

**Key Activity 1.2.2. Drive the development of an EBCG community 'ecosystem of information management capabilities' by taking the business lead in the development of information management applications interacting with each other, using the same databases and technologies.**

#### Specific Objectives

Ensure high quality data and statistical analysis, to be readily available to the Agency and the wider EBCG community, as well as continuous enhancement of the tools available for the purpose of risk analysis and visualisation of analytical findings.

## Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

### Timely and comprehensive information feeding into risk analysis.

The first presentation of the functional requirements of an integrated intelligence software suite was delivered. The conceptual framework covered the entire intelligence production process, allowing applications of the Division to be linked, and providing hooks for effects-based operations, including the engagement of other functions of the Agency involved in these activities. To make the conceptual framework tangible, 100+ screenshots were embedded.

### Provision and further enhancement of EUROSUR Fusion Services. EUROSUR incident catalogue based on revised CIRAM.

EFS services were continuously upgraded to meet user requirements and to benefit from technological advancement. In particular:

- A new stream of Satellite Automatic Identification System (Sat-AIS) positions was integrated into JORA 2, providing a detailed picture of maritime traffic anywhere in the world with delivery times were reduced to less than two minutes;
- A new stream of Terrestrial Automatic Identification System (T-AIS) positions was integrated into JORA 2. This data is specifically focused on the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, providing a near-real-time picture of two of the most important regions on Europe's external border;
- New and updated tools were introduced to further automate the processes for map visualisation in situational reports;
- Further developments of Frontex CoreGIS were completed to provide more advanced GIS products;

JORA2 upgrade and deployment activities continued throughout 2020. The transition from JORA to JORA2 was completed.

The design work of the new EFS services portfolio was carried out to align it with the new requirements laid out in the EBCG Regulation as well as the upcoming EU Space Regulation. The updated EFS products portfolio will include additional products developed via service evolution activities carried out in the past years. The new EFS service portfolio is expected to start the roll-out in 2021.

### Risk analysis application and knowledge management and distribution platform.

The application used for data collection was upgraded for adjusting to the latest technological advancements by developing a new platform with enhanced capabilities and functionalities. This brought the possibility of broadening its use also for other data collection networks like Frontex Risk Analysis Network and return data collection. The automatization of reporting continued with new internal tools for personal data analysis and online reports for Member States for European Documents Fraud, Return data as well as other user-tailored dashboards. For faster validation of joint operation data, an automated tool was implemented.

Based on feedback from stakeholders, data processing and reporting activities for all risk analysis networks were timely performed and with a level quality assessed positively.

### Results on indicators and targets:

#### Percentage of requests delivered on time. Target 90%.

In 2020, 445 service requests were received. All services were delivered in a timely manner, the target was achieved. There were 181 ad-hoc requests for statistical data, 29 requests for new or amended internal dashboards (online reports) and 3 for external dashboards. All requests were delivered in a timely manner and the quality was confirmed by relevant stakeholders.

## Key Activity 1.2.3. Establish standards and implement common models for information sharing and analysis, including on cross-border crime in all four tiers of the EIBM.

### Specific Objectives

Ensure further development of the EUROSUR interoperability and provide MS with the secure infrastructure that ensures continuous and uninterrupted information exchange capabilities

## Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

### Creation of technical and operational standards for EUROSUR information exchange framework in accordance with the requirements laid down in the EBCG Regulation.

The adoption of the EUROSUR Implementing Act was postponed from Q3 2020 to the first half of 2021. Since the Implementing Act was the pre-requisite for the creation of technical and operational standards for the EUROSUR information exchange framework, standard development activities were postponed to 2021. However, the preliminary

works were initiated to accelerate the development and implementation of these standards once the EUROSUR Implementing Act is adopted.

Development of the common models for information sharing and analysis.  
Further enhancement of EFS service delivery standards.

In 2020, the initial works started to transform the EFS service delivery standards from a service to a product-centric approach that would allow exploiting the most innovative technologies and processes available on the market. The transition is expected to be completed in 2021 with the introduction of the new EFS service portfolio.

In the area of data governance, several activities were undertaken in 2020 defining the strategy for the management of data within the SAM division, targeting data quality as well as roles and responsibilities.

#### **Results on indicators and targets:**

A number of technical and operational standards created/updated.

Operational information exchange standardisation activities carried out by Frontex were continuously aligned with the EUROSUR requirements.

Data policies for defining access to data:

An umbrella data policy was drafted to ensure consistency and to allow for specific data policies to be drafted for each of the data collection networks. In 2020, the work on three draft data policies continued

### **Focus Area 1.3. Contribute to the development and implementation of a fully interoperable and efficient European Quality Control Mechanism**

**Key Activity 1.3.1. Contribute to enhanced awareness on MS preparedness by assessing possible vulnerabilities of border management capabilities, while exploiting the full potential of vulnerability assessments and the Commission-led Schengen evaluations.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

Carry out periodical vulnerability assessments according to CVAM methodology

#### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Baseline vulnerability assessment reports prepared for all Member States.

The 2020 Baseline Assessment (BA) process was successfully carried out on time despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assessment of structural gaps and shortcomings in Member States' capacities made.

As part of the BA 2020 process, an extensive data collection of MS/SAC capacities for border control was carried out, and a thorough assessment of gaps and shortcomings in these capacities was performed by Frontex.

Simulation exercises based on risk analysis leading to assessment reports conducted.

Two simulation exercises (SE) were launched in 2020, to assess the contingency planning capacity of two MS/SAC.

Conducting rapid vulnerability assessments (formerly called: emerging threats assessments).

Following the adoption in November 2019 of the revised Common Vulnerability Assessment Methodology (CVAM), the Rapid Vulnerability Assessment (RVA) process was revamped and a concept note, foreseeing also divisional input and specifying dissemination policy for related RVA knowledge products. Three RVAs covering seven countries were successfully conducted in 2020.

#### **Results on indicators and targets:**

Delivery of targeted assessments for MS/SAC according to the timeframes established by Common Vulnerability Assessment Methodology (CVAM)

All assessment process described above (BA, SE, RVA) were carried out in line with the timeframe set by the CVAM. All reports stemming from these processes were delivered within the deadlines stipulated by the CVAM.



**Key Activity 1.3.2. Address identified gaps and shortcomings by designing and recommending measures to ensure MS preparedness to present any future challenges, to be implemented also with the support of the Agency.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

Design and recommend measures to ensure MS preparedness to present and future challenges, to be implemented also with the support of the Agency.

#### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Recommended measures to address both short as well as long-term gaps and shortcomings of border-control capacities. Monitor the implementation of the recommended measures to ensure that they are carried out in a timely and effective manner.

Following the completion of the assessment processes launched in 2020 (BA, SE and RVA) a series of recommendations for measures were issued to MS/SAC, to address vulnerabilities identified in their border control capacities. This process was further enhanced by introducing so-called bilateral talks on measures with all interested MS/SAC.

Provide targeted EBCGA support solutions to concerned MS/SAC to effectively remedy identified vulnerabilities.

In line with the requirement set by Article 32 (8) and (9) the EBCG Regulation, the Agency has offered its targeted expertise to support MS/SAC in the implementation of a variety of measures issued in the framework of VA activities.

#### **Results on indicators and targets:**

##### **1. Recommendations issued according to timelines set by CVAM.**

Except for one measure, all recommendations were issued in line with the timelines set in the CVAM or within extended timelines following requests from Member States.

##### **2. Monitoring of recommendations according to provisions contained in CVAM**

Monitoring activities carried-out in line with the requirements set by the CVAM, and 4 quarterly reports produced to update Frontex Executive Management on the state of play of ongoing measures.

**Key Activity 1.3.3. Maximise the synergies between the Commission-led Schengen evaluation mechanism (SEM), vulnerability assessments (VA) and national quality control mechanisms by ensuring interoperability by developing tools and platforms to support activities such as data collection and reporting, as well as further develop the CVAM by designing standards and benchmarks.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

Ensure interoperability between the SEM, Vulnerability Assessment and national quality control mechanisms, by developing tools and platforms to support activities such as data collection, reporting and operational assessments.

#### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

To further develop the Common Vulnerability Assessment Methodology.

A series of explorative studies on quantification started at the beginning of 2020, with a focus on the objective criteria on border checks and border surveillance. In order to maintain close cooperation with MS/SAC experts, two expert groups (EG) were created with relevant specialists from several volunteering MSs/SACs. Moreover, in 2020 a procurement procedure was also launched to obtain external expertise in this domain.

Continue the development of a dedicated IT platform for Vulnerability Assessment activities with the roll-out of successively enhanced versions.

The Vulnerability Assessment Platform II project, taking into account earlier work done, was formally launched in the third quarter of 2020. The scope of the project is to provide an IT platform securely accessible for all MS/SAC and that will be handling all core VA processes. The first deliverable of the VAP 2.0 platform (a data collection module) was released in December 2020 and provided with full required functionality by the solution provider in January 2021. It is expected that additional modules will be delivered throughout 2021. Furthermore, to ensure secure and reliable communication with and allow efficient access to the VAP application, all MS/SAC will be provided with so-called SINA laptops in the course of 2021. The VAP project should conclude with the fulfilment of all requirements by the end of 2021.

Maximise synergies between SEM and VA, regular meetings and secured exchanges of documents between VAU and COM-led SEM take place.

Synergies on SEM-VA cooperation were further enhanced, with the appointment of VAU as the entity in charge of SEM matters within Frontex, and the establishment of a pool of Frontex staff members to participate as observers in SEM on-site missions. Moreover, as of the third quarter of 2020, relevant VA reports were shared with members of SEM on-site teams, in line with the requirement set by Article 33.3 of the EBCG Regulation.

#### Development of new VA tools.

Following the successful roll-out in 2020 of two VA tools (to assess MS/SAC readiness in the area of contingency planning and document fraud detection), an additional tool was piloted with three volunteering MS/SAC during the third quarter of 2020. The pilot consisted of a simulation exercise in the field of referral mechanism and cross-border crime (with a particular focus on trafficking in human beings) in selected air border crossing points.

#### To further engage Member States' and European Commission's experts in the development of vulnerability assessment activities

Despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, several events were organised in an online format for MS/SAC and European Commission experts' members of the Vulnerability Assessment Network (VAN). Moreover, a survey to assess the level of satisfaction of VAN members with VA activities was also carried out in 2020, with a series of recommendations for improvement being identified and to be implemented by VAU in 2021.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

1. Carry out regular videoconferences with European Commission, DG HOME on VA/SEM cooperation. Target: at least 6 meetings per year.

Monthly meetings between DG HOME and VAU took place throughout 2020.

2. On top of regular videoconferences, ensure timely exchange of relevant documents between VA/SEM over secure channels. Target: approximately 4-6 document packages a year.

A regular exchange of information packages containing SEM and VA documents was carried-out throughout 2020 via secure channels.

3. Work on quantification of at least one objective criteria. Target: validity and accuracy of CVAM enhanced.

The work on the quantification of two objective criteria was initiated in 2020 with the plan to finalise the initial concept for one criterion preferably by the end of 2021.

4. Implementation of more user-friendly tools for VA processes. Target: at least four regular meetings of the Vulnerability Assessment Network (VAN).

One new VA tool was successfully piloted in three volunteering MS/SAC.

5. At least 2-4 further meetings per year.

Four VAN meetings were organised in 2020. Moreover, over the course of 2020, a High-level Roundtable on Vulnerability Assessment (VA) took place, as well as a series of technical workshops and awareness sessions for VAN members.

### Focus Area 1.4. Develop and implement the system for providing operational support and reinforcing Member States border control activities through establishing and operating the ETIAS Central Unit

**Key Activity 1.4.1. Establish the ETIAS Central Unit to be ready to function by defining the operational concept for the Central Unit, delivering the capabilities and means (HR, technical, services), performing integration with the ETIAS system and National Units and end-to-end testing of the whole system.**

#### Specific Objectives

- Define organisational structure of the ETIAS Central Unit.
- Execute project activities aligned with the overall common ETIAS implementation planning (aligned with the EC - eu-LISA, MS and Europol planning).
- Recruit 20 members for the ETIAS CU.
- Ensure progress of the preparation of the ETIAS premises in line with the planning.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020



#### Organisational chart defined and approved.

In 2020, project activities were undertaken to analyse the possible structure of the ETIAS Central Unit within the organigram of the Agency as well as its sub-structure.

On 9 December 2020, the Management Board adopted the amended organisational structure of the Agency (MB Decision 43/2020<sup>11</sup>), including the structure for the ETIAS Central Unit and agreed on its gradual implementation. In this regard, the ETIAS TF will be transformed into a permanent structure - the ETIAS Central Unit Division. The entity will be established at the level of Division taking into account the amount of resources foreseen for this future entity (250 staff members), as well as complex and multi-layered nature of the tasks assigned. It will be composed of two units:

- Application Handlers Unit - to manage the work of application handlers operating in shifts in the 24/7 system;
- Assistance Centre Unit - to manage the ETIAS Helpdesk, as well as support the carriers.

The timeline for the establishment of the division and its sub structure depends on the developments at EU level, such as the approach of the Commission on the role of the Agency for the support of the carriers<sup>12</sup>, including the progress of the development of the ETIAS components. Thus, in 2020 it was not feasible nor effective to analyse the specificities for the detailed organigram of the ETIAS Central Unit as well as its sub-structure of the governed by other entities and which will be continued in 2021.

#### Activities of the TF and their progress in line with the overall planning (no significant delay).

In 2020, the project preparation phase for the project 'setting up of the ETIAS Central Unit' continued. It included the identification of all necessary activities, the assessment of their duration, urgency, costs, resources as well as the multiple external and internal interdependencies, and the development of a high-level planning, the structuring and formalising the project and ensuring its governance. The governance of the project was assessed by an external consultancy company to ensure that the programme's organisation and governance are setup adequately with project management practices suitable for its importance and complexity.

Moreover, additional supporting activities were performed in parallel: internal activities to identify and map the compliance obligations including the development of the necessary data protection documentation and requirements initiated in 2020 and continue over 2021.

In parallel, the ETIAS TF supported the European Commission in the elaboration of the relevant implementing and delegated acts; eu-LISA, with the collection of requirements and the review of the technical tender specifications; the Member States in setting up their ETIAS National Units, by promoting the exchange of information and of lessons learned, and as much as possible of uniformed processes, procedures and practices.

#### Staff members recruited by the end of 2020.

The recruitment strategy and the high-level planning for the recruitment of staff for 2020 and 2021 continued during the year to be defined and elaborated in cooperation with the respective Frontex business entities, and this planning is integrated in the broader recruitment goals of the Agency.

The number of recruitments were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, the Frontex prioritisation for the standing corps recruitments, and also by the limited capacity of the Human Resources and Security Unit to perform the recruitment procedures, despite the noteworthy efforts of the involved staff.

In absolute numbers, ETIAS TF recruited two additional staff members in 2020 and at the end of the year and it consisted of eight staff members in total.

#### Activities and their progress in line with the plan with a view to start using the premises on 01/01/2022.

ETIAS TF provided support to the Task Force Build for the procurement of the alternative office facilities to host the ETIAS Central Unit. A market prospection followed by a negotiated tender procedure for the future premises of the ETIAS Central Unit was carried out by the TF Build. Offers were received and were under evaluation in 2020. Negotiations initiated with the selected tenderer progressed during 2020 and reached an advanced stage. The results of this process will be available only in 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Management Board Decision 43/2020 of 9 December 2020 adopting the Agency's amended organisational structure.

<sup>12</sup> In 2019 Commission's approach was providing the establishment of a Carrier Assistance Centre (the 'CAC') within the ETIAS Central Unit. CAC would manage the registration of the carriers and would provide them with operational support for EES and ETIAS systems. However, in 2020 Commission approach on this topic changed. At the end of the year it became clear that the ETIAS Central Unit will have a slimmer role and responsibilities for the assistance to be provided to the carriers. The related discussions with the European Commission, eu-LISA, the Member States, the carriers and their organisations continued during the whole year and they will expand also in 2021.

The original planning for relocation to the new premises by 01.10.2021 was postponed until 01.01.2022.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

##### 1. Structure documented and validated by senior Management.

Target partially achieved: Frontex MB adopted the Decision 43/2020 which defined the organisational structure up of the ETIAS Central Unit to the level of the unit.

The organisational structure with the entities below the level of unit was not defined and validated in 2020. Analysis for the identification of the necessary sub-structures continued in 2020 and will expand in 2021.

##### 2. No delays in the supply of the deliverables by Frontex based on the planning unless caused by delay due to external dependency.

Target achieved: Despite the COVID-19 crisis, the ETIAS TF managed to meet the expectations of all the stakeholders and provide the expected result in all cases, such as contributions, comments, reviews and feedback where necessary.

##### 3. Percentage of the staff recruited by the end of 2020 compared to the provision.

Target partially achieved: 10%: 2 staff were recruited in 2020, out of 20 staff initially planned however this result must be analysed in the context of the Agency where conflicting priorities for recruitment processes based on finite recruitment capacities impacted ETIAS.

##### 4. Premises available for use by the deadline unless not affecting the overall delivery due to external dependencies.

Target not measurable in 2020: The premises for the ETIAS Central Unit available by 01.01.2022. Offers were received under evaluation in 2020. The results of this process will be available only in 2021.

**Key Activity 1.4.2. Operate the ETIAS Central Unit in a 24/7 mode in accordance with the ETIAS Regulation (processing the applications, supporting law enforcement requests, ensuring data subject rights, providing travellers and carriers assistance services, defining and maintaining risk profiles and screening rules, managing public awareness with the European Commission, leading operational cooperation between the different ETIAS actors, management and governance reporting).**

#### Specific Objectives

Not relevant until Q1 2022 for the Carrier Assistance Centre and end of 2022 for the entire ETIAS Central Unit.

#### Expected Results, Main Outputs/Actions, Key Deliverables

Not applicable.

#### Indicators and Targets and baseline

Not applicable.

## 1.2. Strategic Objective 2:

### Safe, secure and well-functioning EU external borders

#### Focus Area 2.1. Provide effect-oriented and flexible operational response

**Key Activity 2.1.1. Develop and implement a model for flexible, robust and multipurpose permanent operational and contingency response, by deploying standing corps equipped to support the EU external borders and migration management along the four tiers access model upon vulnerability assessment and risk analysis.**

#### Specific Objectives

Adapt operational response planning to the new multiannual planning cycle. Plan, implement and evaluate permanent multipurpose Joint Operations at EU external borders and at the border of key third countries. Access of Team Members to SIS II.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

##### Plan of Operational Response 2021 in place

The Plan of Operational Response 2021 was approved by the Management Board on 13 January 2021 (MB Decision No 1/2021) and it set out the operational priorities for Frontex activities in the area of field deployments as an Annex to the Single Programming Document.

For the first time, the Plan of Operational Response foresees the deployment of the standing corps as border management teams, migration management teams or return teams to provide technical and operational support to Member States and third countries (TC).

The key elements included in the document are the following:

- Joint operations will be implemented at all types of external borders: air, land and sea, and will deliver tailor-made operational support within the full range of activities of the Agency's mandate. This will enhance the border control capacities of the Member States, as well as of the key third countries in the spirit of shared responsibility;
- As a multipurpose operational response, the joint operations will support the performance of border checks, surveillance at land and sea borders, the collection of information, prevention, detection and combatting of cross-border crime, as well as migration management. Moreover, they will provide the opportunity of exercising the selected coast guard and law enforcement functions and act as a general framework for the implementation of other projects, services and products;
- This will contribute to the operational capacity building and sharing best practices within the border and coast guard domain. As in all activities of the Agency, the full compliance with the fundamental rights obligations will be ensured;
- Joint operations in third countries will be implemented two-fold: with executive powers on the territory of those third countries which concluded status agreements with the EU; and without executive powers – to further develop and expand the network of coordination points.

##### Planned, implemented and evaluated joint operations within focal point concept

Six **joint operations** (within FP concept) which were implemented in 2019 were evaluated in 2020 (air: 2 operations, land: 2 operations, sea: 2 operations). In addition, the evaluation of JO coordination points 2020 land was done in 2020.

In 2020, a new concept of focal points was planned and implemented. **Joint operation focal points 2020** was established as a platform to implement specific and independent operational activities, with a view to developing a robust and flexible operational response in air, land and sea domains. The following activity plans were implemented under the focal point concept:

- Operational activities at **air border crossing points**: due to the COVID-19 outbreak, only 28 out of 68 focal points were activated during the implementation period. The priority in activation was given to the permanent focal points. However, the JO was suspended for a period of 4 months (mid-March - mid-July) as a result of the implemented travel restrictions;
- Operational activities at **land border crossing points**: due to the COVID-19 outbreak 34 out of 47 focal points were activated during the implementation period;
- **JO Montenegro** - focal point Debeli Brijeg: one FP activated during the implementation period;
- Operational activities in Cyprus, in the Canary Islands, and the Black Sea.

During 2020, following a similar concept of operational activities implemented at the border crossing points on the external borders of member states, the **joint operations coordination points 2020** at the air, land and sea border crossing points of respective TCs were planned and partially implemented, as follows:

- **JO coordination points 2020 air**: 10 out of 19 coordination points were activated during the implementation period. The priority in activation and allocation of the available resources was given to the 'high-risk' airports. However, the JO was suspended for a period of 4 months (mid-March - mid-July) due to the implemented pandemic restrictions);
- **JO coordination points 2020 sea**: two coordination points were planned in Ukraine (Odessa) and Albania (Durrës), however, they were not activated during the implementation period due to COVID-19;
- **JO coordination points 2020 land** - due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation not implemented in 2020 (none of the 17 CP were activated).

The evaluation of 2020 FP concept operations will be carried out in 2021.

##### Planned, Implemented and Evaluated Joint Operations within Flexible Operational Activities and Multipurpose Maritime Activities concepts

In 2020, seven **joint operations** (within FOA and MMA concept) implemented in 2019 were evaluated (air: 1 operation, land: 2 operations, sea: 4 operations).

In 2020, two JO's, namely JO FOA Land 2020 and JO FOA WB 2020 in Albania, were planned and implemented from 29 January 2020 till 27 January 2021 within flexible operational activities. Both operations were interconnected and share the same coordination structure. They were coordinated from the same FOA Land ICC, which was based in Frontex HQ in Warsaw as of 15 May 2019. FOA Land ICC hosted national officials from Greece, Bulgaria and Albania, and daily video conferences with the entire FOA operational area, where the latest operational issues are discussed.

In 2020, four JOs (Poseidon, Themis, Indalo and Minerva) were planned and implemented within the multipurpose maritime activities concept whereas none were implemented in the sea domain within flexible operational activities.

The evaluation of 2020 FOA concept operations will be carried out in 2021.

#### A2SISII Procured services and contract in place

In 2020, the project team efforts were focused on the preparation and conduction of the tender procedure for the selection of an external contractor to develop the interface providing access to SIS II and the restricted procurement procedure was published in February 2020. Due to the specificities of the tender, environment conditions and the number of iterations of clarifications needed the contract signature could not be completed by 2020 and is planned to be signed in the Q1 of 2021.

The second important part of the A2SISII project was the tender for the purchase of the scanning peripherals namely, document readers and fingerprint scanners, needed to perform automated queries of the SIS. The tender had to be relaunched in November 2020 since the offers received by mid-year were considered as not compliant.

To gain query access to the central SIS database, technical connectivity between Frontex and eu-LISA (managing the central system) is required. This connectivity was set up and tested on the pre-production environment only. Testing on the production environment will be carried out upon the development of related software.

#### New joint operations launched in the Western Balkans

The new joint operations in Montenegro FP Debeli Brijeg was launched in 2020 at land borders from 15 July 2020 to 27 January 2021. From 14 October 2020 to 27 January 2021 the first maritime operational activity in third countries was launched in Montenegro (in both cases within the focal points concept).

#### Pilot project to test the Frontex TMs to perform check against SIS.

The pilot project will be implemented at the end of 2021 once the A2SISII web application will be available.

#### Results on indicators and targets

Definition of the operational needs and an agreement on hosting capacities with MS as an outcome of technical meetings with host MS and the host countries network conference resulting in the definition of numbers per profile to be deployed in 2021 joint operations.

Planning of 2021 operational activities started in February/March 2020, when the first communication triggering the ABN process was sent to the MS/SAC. Based on the initial risk assessment, vulnerability assessment and historical data, the proposal of hosting capacities for the deployment of the standing corps 2021 was prepared and shared with MS and TC. The responses were collected and evaluated. During bilateral meetings with MS in the context of on-line ABN negotiations, the numbers and profiles of category 3 standing corps for 2021 were agreed upon.

**In the air domain:** ad-hoc bilateral working-level meetings with Finland and France took place. In addition, on 23 September the technical meeting with all MS hosting air operation activities was organised, where the changes in the operational concept (standing corps deployments, new profiles) were presented/explained.

**In the land domain:** Host Countries Network Conference for land activities (with MS and TC) was held in an online format in September 2020 when deployment plans were sent to host MS's in September in order to reach their prior agreement. In November and December 2020, three bilateral online meetings were held between Frontex and Poland, Finland and Romania in order to discuss activation of already existing focal points (Finland) and to activate four new focal points starting with the 2021 operational year (two in Poland and two in Romania).

**In the maritime domain:** Bilateral meetings, for the planning of the JO in 2021, between Frontex and the following host countries were held: Greece on 24 September 2020, Italy on 12 November 2020, Cyprus on 22 September 2020 and Spain on 21-22 October 2020.

**Land TC:** following host countries network conference on 7-8 September dedicated also to third countries, in October a request was sent to all nine third countries to confirm the hosting capacity and to accept extended deployments for the

whole operational year in some locations. Confirmation of hosting capacity was received whereby five TC's namely, Albania, Georgia, Kosovo\*, Moldova and Montenegro agreed to extend deployments.

#### Two Joint operations launched in new locations following entry into force of Status Agreements.

Two operational activities – both under the focal point concept – were launched in Montenegro, after entering into force the status agreement between the EU and Montenegro. The first operational activity was implemented at land borders started on 15 July at focal point Debeli Brijeg until 27 January 2021. The second operational activity was carried out at sea borders and started on 14 October 2020 until 27 January 2021, **being the first maritime operational activity in a third country.**

#### 14 joint operations implemented

During the 2020 operational cycle 11 joint operations were implemented. However, under its umbrella 14 operational activities were carried out. Out of 16 initially planned, two operations were cancelled due to the epidemiological situation in 2020. Hereunder is a summary providing a breakdown of activities:

Joint operations	Implementation		Remarks
	Start date	End date	
<b>JO focal points 2020</b>	29.01.2020	27.01.2021	Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the deployments were suspended for four months (from 18 March to 14 July).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operational activities at the <b>air border crossing points</b></li> <li>Operational activities at the <b>land border crossing points</b></li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Operational activities in Sea Borders</b></li> <li>- Cyprus</li> <li>- Canary Islands</li> <li>- Maritime operational activities in the Black Sea</li> </ul>			
	29.01.2020	27.01.2021	
	04.11.2020	27.01.2021	
	08.06.2020	24.08.2020	
<b>JO Montenegro</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FP Debeli Brijeg</li> <li>Maritime operational activities in Montenegro</li> </ul>	15.07.2020	27.01.2021	
	14.10.2020	27.01.2021	
<b>JO coordination points air 2020</b>	29.01.2020	27.01.2021	Due to COVID-19 restrictions deployments were suspended for four months (18 March until 14 July).
<b>JO coordination points land 2020</b>	Due to imposed movement restrictions in TC related to COVID-19, JO coordination points - land 2020 was suspended until 15 September 2020. Taking into account the fact that restrictions continued to exist throughout the year, on 16 September 2020, the Executive Director decided to terminate this Joint Operation, noting that conditions to conduct these operational activities were no longer fulfilled.		
<b>JO coordination points sea 2020</b>	Reiterated postponements of activation due to the rapidly changing epidemiological situation related to the COVID-19 outbreak lead to temporarily suspend the implementation till 26 August, when finally it was cancelled. No deployment took place within this joint operation and consequently, no coordination points were activated during 2020.		
<b>JO FOA Land 2020</b>	29.01.2020	27.01.2021	
<b>JO FOA WB 2020 in Albania</b>	29.01.2020	27.01.2021	
<b>JO Poseidon 2020</b>	29.01.2020	27.01.2021	
<b>JO Themis 2020</b>	29.01.2020	27.01.2021	
<b>JO Indalo 2020</b>	20.05.2020	27.01.2021	While in the period from 1 January till 20 May 2020 the JO Indalo 2019 was still running.
<b>JO Minerva 2020</b>	15.07.2020	15.09.2020	

Table 1a - Joint operations

**300,000 person-days, 60,000 patrolling hours using aerial and maritime assets and 300,000 operating hours for terrestrial equipment such as patrol cars and thermos-vision vehicles deployed in the joint operations.**

In air JO's, a total of 180 members of the team were deployed which resulted in 5,401 person-days during the year. The breakdown between operations is the following: coordination points air 2020: 60 HR performed 1,924 person-days; focal points air 2020: 120 HR performed 3,477 person-days.

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status. It is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

In **land JOs**, 2,281 HR performed 96,160 person-days and terrestrial equipment such as 598 patrol cars performing 29,196 asset-days and 56 thermo-vision vehicles performing 2,459 asset-days were deployed in the joint operations implemented at the land borders (excluding RBI Evros whose results are reported in a chapter below).

Join Operations	TMs	Person-days	PCs	Asset days	TVVs	Asset days
FOA Land	1,116	52,965	448	22,512	43	1,802
FOA WB in Albania	825	29,354	150	6,684	13	657
JO Focal Points 2020 - OA at Land BCPs	327	13,270	7	245	-	-
JO Montenegro - Focal Points Debeli Brijeg	13	577	-	-	-	-

Table 1b - Joint operations

**Joint operations** implemented at the **sea borders**, 242,013 person-days and 46,286 patrolling hours of aerial and maritime assets were deployed (excluding RBI Aegean 2020, whose results are reported in a chapter below).

Moreover, the terrestrial equipment such as patrol cars and thermos-vision vehicles deployed in the JO at the sea domain delivered 27,275 operating hours (19,183 operating hours by patrol cars and 8,092 operating hours by thermo-vision vehicles).

Join operations	Team members	Person-days	Aerial, maritime and terrestrial assets	Asset days
JO Poseidon	2,269	138,253	129	10,393
JO Themis	1,293	51,578	60	2,495
JO Indalo	1,152	42,946	48	1,252
JO Minerva	118	5,934	-	-
JO FP Sea - Black Sea	16	579	37	2,393
JO FP Sea - Canary Islands:	37	1,133	-	-
JO FP Sea - Cyprus:	26	1,037	-	-
JO FP Sea - Maritime Operational Activities in Montenegro	16	563	1	67

Table 2 - Joint operations

#### Timeliness in the delivery of services and equipment

During the 2020 the procurement for the development of A2SISII software was launched, its first phase was finalised and the second one, namely technical evaluation of offers initiated. According to the planning, the A2SISII web application should be available in November 2021 and the mobile application in April 2022. The procurement for scanning peripherals had to be cancelled due to the lack of offers fulfilling the requirements, it was relaunched still in 2020 and the contract will be signed in 2021. The scanning peripherals (document readers and fingerprint scanners) shall be available in Q2 2021 for the piloting of the developed solution.

#### Technical connectivity with eu-LISA

The technical connectivity with eu-LISA was established and tested in the preproduction environment. The final test on the production environment will be conducted in 2021 once the Frontex web application will be available.

#### Agreed SOP with the host MS

The SOP was drafted and internally agreed between Frontex entities and considering that the A2SISII application will be ready at the end of 2021, the finalisation of the SOP was de-prioritised. The final document will be agreed in 2021, in time to be ready before the A2SISII system will be put into operation.

#### Additional information

After receiving a request from Greece on 1 March 2020, pursuant to Article 37(2) of the EBCG Regulation, Frontex Executive Director decided to launch on 2 March 2020 two rapid border interventions to enhance the security of the EU land and sea external borders. In a short timeframe, Frontex drafted the operational plans and planed the resources received from MS's as a response to Frontex extraordinary call for contribution.

#### The RBI Evros 2020 (implemented from 11 March to 31 October 2020)

The implementation of the RBI Evros 2020 was launched on 11 March and terminated, after four extensions on 31 October. Member States contribution was decreasing constantly during the RBI, as it started with a needs coverage of 99% for Border Surveillance Officer and 100% for FSO profiles for the first two deployment periods and dropping down to 60% and 50% respectively recorded in the last two deployment periods.

In this regard, RBI Evros was characterised by substantial deviations from the provisions of Article 20 of 2016/1624 Regulation (*in force until 31 December 2020 based on Article 123 of the current EBCG Regulation*), stipulating that each



Member State shall be responsible for its contribution to the number of border guards or other relevant staff, as referred to in paragraph 5, in accordance with Annex I of Regulation (EU) 2016/1624.

For RBI Evros 2020, the deployment level was established according to Greek initial request and ED Decision, to 100 border surveillance officers and 8 Frontex Support Officers per deployment period. Altogether, from the beginning of March till the end of October 2020, MS contributed with 309 BSOs who reached 18,197 deployment-days and 18 FSOs who reached 1,160 deployment-days.

MS contribution to RBIs is obligatory and the level of coverage of the operational needs should be 100 % at all times. Therefore, the level of MS contribution (coverage of 76.26% producing 23.74% of the shortage of resources on average) was assessed as a substantial deviation from the provisions of Article 20 of 2016/1624 Regulation. The RBI Evros 2020 covered the operational area of the ongoing JO FOA 2020 Land in Evros, which continued as planned. Therefore, the same coordination structure of JO FOA 2020 Land was used for the RBI.

As a result, the RBI teams deployed by Frontex which assisted the Greek authorities contributed to a sharp decrease in the number of attempts of illegal entry, in particular in the area where Frontex was deployed along the 12.5 km border fence. The recorded statistics of 2020 show a decrease of about 58% compared with the same period last year. In the frame of this RBI, a total of 324 TMs and 134 patrol cars were deployed, performing respectively 19,678 person-days, 9.931 asset-days.

#### **The RBI Aegean 2020 (implemented from 11 March to 06 September 2020)**

The implementation of the RBI Aegean 2020, which faced significant challenges raised by the outbreak of the COVID-19, was launched on 11 March and was terminated, after three extensions, on 06 September.

In the frame of this RBI, a total of 169 TMs and 13 assets were deployed (13,613 person-days and 1,341 asset-days) delivering a total of 3,468 patrolling hours. The terrestrial assets deployed under the RBI Aegean delivered a total of 2,927 operating hours.

**Key Activity 2.1.2. Promote EU shared responsibility in coordination of the aforementioned operational activities by increasing Frontex pivotal role and by using the antenna offices<sup>13</sup> as platforms for the Frontex response actions.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

Develop an integrated operational coordination structure for operational response activities.

#### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Establishing Frontex Operational Coordination Centre - FOCC\* in HQ, Antenna Offices in key locations.

Frontex Operational Coordination Centre (FOCC) was established at Frontex HQ offering an integrated environment for the Agency and the MS/SAC/TC allowing strategic coordination of operational response activities in line with Operational Plans of the operational activities. The establishment of FOCC within Antenna Offices will be implemented upon the gradual activation of those peripheral elements, expected for 2021.

#### **Results on indicators and targets**

FOCC becoming operational in the second semester of 2020. Agreement on the establishment of at least one Antenna Office.

FOCC became operational in accordance with the initially planned timeline. In addition to establishing a harmonised overview of the operational activities, it was used as the platform to coordinate the first deployments of the standing corps to the operational areas. The target related to the establishment within an antenna office had to be postponed until the activation of those peripheral elements.

#### **Additional information**

The ICC Warsaw for the Maritime Operational Activities in Montenegro was established under FOCC concept since the initiation of the JO, in October 2020. ICC Warsaw coordinated all activities and is using the premises and equipment of FOCC to conduct daily and ad-hoc meetings and operational briefings with FP Podgorica; relevant national entities in Montenegro. The same scheme continues for JO Montenegro 2021. Currently deployed are two officers from Montenegro

<sup>13</sup> The role of the coordinating officer will follow the tasking detailed in Article 44(1)(3) of the EBCG Regulation. Some of those tasks will be supported by the antenna offices as detailed in Article 60(3) in particular points (e) 'support the coordinating officer referred to in Article 44 in his or her cooperation with the participating Member States on all issues related to their contribution to the operational activities organised by the Agency and, where necessary, liaise with the Agency's headquarters' and (f) 'support the coordinating officer and fundamental rights monitors assigned to monitor an operational activity in facilitating, where necessary, the coordination and communication between the Agency's teams and the relevant authorities of the host Member State or host third country as well any relevant tasks'.

Border Police as ICC Coordinators; one officer from Italian Guardia di Finanza as National Official deployed for the GdF Helicopter; three CGFO and four CBCDO in FOCC/ ICC Warsaw; one CBCDO in Bar and one CGFO in LCC Podgorica.

**Key Activity 2.1.3. Tighten up the operational support to coast guard and law enforcement activities against cross-border crime, including document, identity and vehicle checks as an integral part of the Joint Operations.**

#### Specific Objectives

Ensure that Frontex Forgery Desk and the Regional Document Fraud Task Forces are established and staffed to provide effective checks on travel, identity, maritime documents and vehicles in the European border and migration management operational activities, supporting Member States in the fight against related frauds.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Staff is assigned to operational activities for combatting document fraud.
- The concept, service portfolio and related processes of the Frontex Forgery Desk and the Regional Document Fraud Task Forces are established and implemented.

In the course of 2020, one Senior Operational Officer – Team Leader was assigned to the Operational Support Team of the Frontex centre of excellence for combatting document fraud. One Project Management Officer was assigned to the technical support team – FADO project team. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the cancellation of numerous operational actions in course of the year, the operational support team continued with validating Frontex document alerts reported from the ongoing Frontex operational activities, took care of the document alert reporting process and provided support to deployed officers and BCPs at the external borders of the EU through Frontex FDA Helpline. The operational support team also contributed to numerous operational briefings online, organized by the Frontex field deployment unit.

The forgery desk has been established and fully equipped for handling information up to EU confidential. User guidelines have been established for all the equipment. Typical usage of the equipment has been identified. Standard operating procedures and training guides are still under development.

#### Results on indicators and targets

Indicator: Number of Frontex staff experts assigned to operational activities.

Target:

- 50% of staff is appointed by 2020.
- 50% of staff appointed implements regularly operational activities in the field by 2020.

A Document expert has been assigned the responsibility to operate, maintain and further develop the Forgery desk. The Forgery desk equipment provisioned has been acquired and installed pending the SOPs for its usage. Standing corps were appointed but not deployed to field activities by the end of 2020.

The Regional Document Fraud Task Force could not be established since it was decided that these Regional Task Forces will be staffed with the standing corps category 1 staff assigned to the ALDO profile. The category 1 staff of the standing corps has not been deployed yet in course of 2020.

## Focus Area 2.2. Position Frontex as an important player in the area of combatting cross-border crime

**Key Activity 2.2.1. Position the Agency as a one-stop-shop for EU MS and partner TCs to support the fight against cross-border crime including terrorism and all forms of document and vehicle frauds along the four tiers access model.**

#### Specific Objectives

Enhance Frontex role in the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT priorities by supporting, facilitating and leading operational activities within the selected priorities.

Develop partnerships with key international institutions and third countries that are likely to lead to a sustainable response to cross border crime threats.

Foster the role of the Expert Group on Document Control (EXP-DOC Group), a formal network of 100 document experts advising and supporting Frontex operational activities in the identification, development and implementation of documents and identity initiatives, including the fight against identity and document fraud. Their expertise together with the Document Fraud Task Forces is used to ensure effective checks on travel, identity, maritime documents and vehicles in the European border and migration management operational activities, supporting Member States in the fight against related frauds.

Make use of the expertise from the EXP-DOC network and the Document Fraud Task Force to enhance the effectiveness of checks on travel, identity, maritime documents and vehicles in the European border and migration management operational activities, supporting Member States in the fight against related frauds.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Increased coordination of the joint action days in conjunction with border management and fighting cross border crime at external borders including maritime borders;
- Establish Frontex as a key entity for operational actions to fight cross border crime for EU MS law enforcement, TC and other stakeholders;
- Increased support offered to the EU MS by engaging third countries in operational activities;
- Improved capability of border authorities, Police and Customs to counteract cross border and organised crime, including terrorism;
- To actively participate in EU Council networks, COM initiatives and relevant international and regional projects with the purpose to enhance the fight against cross border and organised crime, including terrorism;
- To have Frontex established as a key advisor, facilitator and supporter with regard to border management and fighting cross-border and organised crime, including terrorism;
- The EXP-DOC members regularly provide expertise in all Frontex activities on travel, identity, maritime documents and vehicle checks, supporting policy and interagency cooperation in operational activities;
- The Frontex Forgery Desk and the Regional Frontex Document Fraud Task Forces ensure effective support of the Agency on travel, identity, maritime documents and vehicle checks in field activities.

The below-implemented activities contributed to the fight against cross border crime in accordance with the specific objectives by increasing the awareness, readiness and operational results of the border guard, customs and law enforcement agencies deployed along the borders;

During 2020 despite the pandemic Frontex **coordinated 3 joint action days (JADs)** under the EU Policy Cycle/ EMPACT, all implemented using the platform of ongoing Frontex joint operations, co-led one and participated in another one.

- **JAD Danube 5** was implemented from 11 to 21 September 2020 and was held within the framework of the Facilitated Illegal Immigration (FII), Trafficking in Human Beings (THB), and Document Fraud (DF) OAPs 2020. Frontex coordinated the joint action day which was co-led by Austria and in which 10 MS and 5 third countries, as well as Europol and Interpol, participated, targeting the above-mentioned crimes with the focus on the WB area, the South Eastern European external border and selected BCPs at the EU Eastern external border.
- **JAD Mobile 3** was implemented from 12 to 23 October 2020, with a total of 22 countries (17 EU MS and 5 TC) supported by Interpol and Europol participating to combat the trafficking of stolen vehicles, their parts, stolen boats as well as preventing migrant smuggling and associated document fraud. The operation was led by Frontex and co-led by Germany, Greece, Poland and Europol under EMPACT OAP Organised Property Crime (OPC), Facilitated Illegal Immigration (FII) and Document Fraud (DF)
- **JAD Arkto 2** focused upon Facilitated Illegal Immigration, smuggling of excise goods (especially tobacco products) and related document fraud. The JAD took place from 16 to 25 November 2020 at the north-eastern external land borders of the EU. The JAD was held within the frameworks of respective EMPACT OAPs 2020. It was led by Frontex and co-led by Latvia (smuggling of excise goods) and Finland (facilitated illegal immigration). The JAD involved 6 MS, plus Europol, Interpol OLAF and Eurojust.

Moreover, Frontex actively supported other operational activities under the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT in conjunction with its mandate:

- **JAD South-East Europe (JAD SEE)** was implemented from 24 to 27 September 2020, JAD See was led by Spain and co-led by Frontex and aimed at tackling illegal immigration and the trafficking of firearms and drugs, under the respective EMPACT Operational Action Plans (OAPs). The operation brought together 22 EU MS and several non-EU Member States as well as Europol and other EU Agencies and international organisations.
- **JAD labour exploitation** took place from 14 to 20 September 2020. Law enforcement authorities from 19 countries, led by the Netherlands, supported by Europol and Frontex, joined forces to target labour exploitation. Simultaneously, France led parallel actions, involving law enforcement authorities from 6 countries and focused on exploitation in the agricultural sector. The operation involved a wide range of law enforcement authorities including police, immigration and border guards, labour inspectorates, tax authorities and other respective national ministries.
- **JAD child trafficking** took place from 5 to 11 October and it was coordinated by Frontex, Europol, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Spain and a further 9 EU MS. A wide range of law enforcement authorities including police, immigration and border control agencies, transport police, social assistance and child protection services and labour inspectorates participated in the joint action.

**Handbook on Firearms for Border Guards and Customs:** to improve the capability of border authorities and in the framework of the EU Policy Cycle for the organised and serious international crime for the period 2018 – 2021 Firearms EMPACT Priority, under Operational Action 3.3 of 2019, Frontex has been coordinating the drafting of the ‘Handbook on Detection of Firearms for Border Guards and Customs Officers’.

The OA is co-led by the European Firearms Expert group and co-led by the European Commission (DG HOME and DG TAX UD), as well as Slovenia, Romania and Poland and supported by the Customs Cooperation Working Party (CCWP), EUROPOL, SEESAC, OSCE, EUBAM, UNODC, WCO and Interpol. The handbook is one of the flagship projects and it will fill the gap related to the detection of firearms among border guards and customs, and thus also is relevant for KA 2.2.3.

To test the efficiency of the handbook in an operational setting, together with the Polish Border Guard, Customs and Police, on 25-28 August 2020 Frontex implemented a pilot exercise at two border crossing points at the Polish-Ukrainian border. The Evaluation meeting with all the stakeholders took place in October 2020 and showed relevant results.

In September 2020 in the framework of EMPACT Firearms and in cooperation with the SEE JAD Coordinator (Spain), Frontex organised a Webinar on firearms trafficking in the EU, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The webinar gathered 136 participants representing border, customs, and other respective state and Law Enforcement agencies of the EU Member States and Non- EU countries, supported by Europol, Interpol, SEESAC and UNODC and was translated into 5 languages.

**Cross-Border Arms Working Group:** in the course of 2020, Frontex contributed to the meetings of the Cross Border Arms Working Group established by EUBAM to enhance cooperation and capabilities of the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine and Moldova in the field of firearms, ammunition, explosives and CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) trafficking counteraction.

Frontex contributed to the annual action plan of the group by supporting the organisation and implementation of **Operation ORION II** targeting firearms, ammunition, explosives and CBRN trafficking in Ukraine and Moldova as well as at the EU external borders of the neighbouring EU countries. The support has been provided in the framework of the ongoing joint operation focal points 2020 Land (operational activities at land BCPs) coordinated by the Agency.

**CEPOL Firearms Online Module:** in order to improve the capability of border and law enforcement authorities, Frontex was invited to the expert working group established to contribute towards an update of the CEPOL Firearms Online Module. This online module aims at providing the users with a general understanding of different aspects of the illicit use of firearms for criminal purposes and the different measures to counter firearms-related criminal activities. The module is dedicated to law enforcement officers, judicial authorities and forensic experts who deal with the illicit use of firearms for criminal purposes, and to those who need to know and apply different measures to counter firearms-related crimes. Frontex has been involved in the process by drafting and reviewing some of the chapters of the Firearms Online Module. The updated version of the CEPOL Firearms Online Module has been finalized and is available for law enforcement agencies of all the EU MS via CEPOL e-learning platform (LEEd).

**THB/VEGA Children:** Frontex was actively engaged in the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT OA THB. It is a co-leader of O.A. 1.1 (Identification and monitoring of trends for an updated intelligence picture) and a participant in 7 other O.A. Additionally, since 2018, the VEGA Concept has been moved to the area of competence of the Law Enforcement Sector, which coordinates it with the other activities in the field of trafficking in human beings. The main components of the Frontex multi-approach as regards THB activities includes support in joint operations, specialized training: VEGA children concept, Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings, EU Policy Cycle - FII and THB EMPACT Priorities.

**MMO Black Sea 2020** enhanced the support in the area of law enforcement to the host member states, Romania and Bulgaria by using VEGA Children at sea borders; the deployment of the cross-border crime detection officer profile, which facilitated an increased exchange of data and experience in the cross border crime area; a sub-operation was launched on stolen boats/engines and led to the identification of several stolen engines.

In 2020, the members of the Frontex Expert Group on Document Control (EXP-DOC) continued providing expertise in the activities of the Agency. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most activities of the expert group had to be cancelled.

The forgery desk is fully equipped and in operation able to ensure effective support of the Agency on travel, identity, maritime documents and vehicle checks in field activities.

## Results on indicators and targets

### Indicators and Targets and baseline

- Indicator: increased number of requests from EU MS for Frontex to plan, facilitate and implement operational activities to fight cross border and organised crime, including terrorism;
- Indicator: increased number of operational results at the targeted border areas in the time of the operational activities compared to previous periods;
- Indicator: increased number of JADs planned, facilitated, implemented and evaluated;
- Indicator:
  - Number of activities implemented using the EXP-DOC members, operational results/seizures;
  - Increased level of participation in Frontex-coordinated JADs;

- Number of leading/co-leading operational actions;
- Increased number of maritime operational actions;
- Indicator: Number of activities implemented using the EXP-DOC members;
- Indicator: Number of Regional Document Fraud Task Forces established.
- Targets:
  - EXP-DOC members contribute to at least 10 major Frontex activities by the end of 2020;
  - At least one Document Fraud Task Force is established by the end of 2020.

In order to facilitate the operational coordination and exchange in the law enforcement activities remit, Frontex organized 17 operational meetings with 390 external participants from EU MS law enforcement authorities, TC officials and EU and international partner services in 2020. Due to COVID-19 limitations, these meetings were conducted physically when feasible as well as operationally required, or in video conference mode when possible. NB: these figures cover the respective actions of KA 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3.

All three JADs coordinated by Frontex generated the following operational results:

Joint operations	Detected Irregular migrants	Fraudulent documents identified	Stolen vehicles and vehicles parts	Drugs and cigarettes seized	Remarks
JAD Danube 5	7,307	261	24 stolen cars and 176 stolen car parts	-	20,000 undeclared surgical masks detected
JAD Mobile 3	3,080	141	352 stolen vehicles 1,077 stolen vehicles parts	1.8 t of cannabis 10 kg of heroin	17 people smugglers arrested 44,000 checks carried out
JAD Arktos 2	-	9	8 stolen vehicles	37 m cigarettes 1.8 tons of tobacco	3,500 litres of illegal fuel, 130 litres of alcohol
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,387</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>384 stolen vehicles 1,254 stolen parts</b>	<b>1.8 t of cannabis 10 kg of heroin 37 m cigarettes 1.8 tonnes of tobacco</b>	<b>74 migrant smugglers arrested</b>

Table 3: JADs coordinated by Frontex

Moreover, Frontex actively supported other operational activities under the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT in conjunction with its mandate with the following **operational results**:

Joint operations	Start Date	End Date	Achievements
JAD South-East Europe	24.09.2020	27.09.2020	17 cases of firearms trafficking or illegal possession of firearms 73 cases of migrant smuggling or illegal immigration 37 cases of drug trafficking 7 cases of firearms and drug trafficking 12 cases of document fraud 1 case of an international arrest warrant 19 non-JAD related crimes have been detected 51 weapons and 47 kilograms of drugs seized
JAD Labour exploitation	14.09.2020	20.09.2020	Identification of: - 535 potential victims - 193 suspects - 606 new investigations initiated Agricultural exploitation: 180 potential victims / 17 suspects
JAD Child trafficking	05.10.2020	11.10.2020	388 suspects arrested 19 suspects identified 40 new investigations initiated 249 potential victims of human trafficking / 61 confirmed minors

Table 4: JADs supported by Frontex

**Frontex contribution to Operation RETROVIRUS**, which aimed at preventing the negligent gathering, transporting, management and eventual disposal of sanitary waste with the origin in health care centres, or any other facilities in which sanitary activities take place regarding COVID-19 emergency. The operation was initiated by the Member States and developed under the framework of the EnviCrimeNet, as an informal law enforcement network on environmental crime led by Europol. The support provided by Frontex in Operation RETROVIRUS can be summarised as follows:

- Create awareness and spreading information among border control authorities on this phenomenon, with the aim to foster preventive and repressive activities;
- Promote stricter cooperation between border control, law enforcement and customs authorities, particularly in regard to this occurrence, with the aim to generate efficiency;



- Contribute to operational results by e.g. detecting false COVID 19 certificates, smuggling of non-declared sanitary masks and medical equipment during Frontex joint operations.

Upon request from the Polish law enforcement authorities, Frontex supported the operation and developed a number of activities aimed at contributing to the fight against those emerging criminal activities EUROSUR Fusion Services Catalogue was disseminated among all participants, to promote possible services to be utilised also in the framework of this operation, including the delivery of training to a large number of TMs deployed at the EU external borders to foster their attention on those specific goods.

In the course of 2020, most of the activities of the EXP-DOC group had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, it was not achievable that EXP-DOC members could contribute to so many activities. In the course of the year, there were only 3 activities, to which the expert group contributed:

- On 4-7 February 2020, a plenary meeting was organized for the EXP-DOC group in Warsaw, at the Headquarters of the Agency. 45 EXP-DOC members from 26 EUMS/SAC participated in the four-day event.
- On 8-9 December 2020, upon the request of ICAO and in close cooperation with the European Commission, an online demonstration was organised for the EXP-DOC on digital travel credentials. Together with 3 experts from the Frontex High-level Round Table on Document and Identity Control, 19 experts from the EXP-DOC group participated in the event, with 3 experts being temporarily nominated from their Member States.
- On 16-17 December the first online workshop of Reference Manual was organised, where 31 ALDO and SLDE experts participated from the EXP-DOC, representing 20 EU MS.

**Key Activity 2.2.2. Enhance the development of investigation activities supporting Member States in the prevention, detection and pre-investigative activities related to cross-border crime by providing technical and operational assistance.**

#### Specific Objectives

Establish ready-to-react multipurpose operational tools at all external borders, including maritime borders, in order to support, facilitate or lead preventive, detection and investigative measures.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- The extended ISA-CBC pilot project has been upgraded and promoted to an operational tool for EU MS to provide technical and investigative support.
- Stakeholders request the Agency to provide assistance and support in the frame of investigative procedures related to cross-border and organised crime, including terrorism.
- EU MS generate operational results and finalise investigative procedures on cases related to cross-border and organised crime, including terrorism supported by ISA-CBC/ PANDA.

**ISA-CBC 2.0 Pilot Project:** In 2019, the ISA-CBC Pilot Project (Investigation Support Activities for Cross Border Crime Pilot Project) was created to support concrete actions from national Drugs Investigation Units and Customs authorities by using Frontex' services and resources, supporting operations in the maritime domain and reinforcing concrete Ports/Airports targeted by drugs trafficking crossing EU borders.

The Pilot Project supported EU MS and MAOC-N and Europol tackling the cocaine route from South America and the hashish route from North Africa. A total of ten (10) Police and Customs services from seven (7) EU Member States joined ISA-CBC in the first phase.

**MOST-CBC Pilot Project:** In 2020, Frontex elaborated intensively the MOST-CBC Pilot Project (Mobile Operational Support Teams for counteracting Cross-Border Crime Pilot Project), a project aimed at exploring innovative technical, tactical and operational measures in the proximity of the external land borders and at the border crossing points to provide enhanced support to the host MS in the detection, prevention and in combatting motor vehicle crime as well as in targeting associated document fraud.

The concept of MOST-CBC, as an activity complementary to the existing JOs in the land domain, increases the efficiency of law enforcement activities at the EU external borders and brings additional operational results by its tailored approached towards cross order crime.

MOST-CBC has been designed to contribute to the detection of other types of cross-border crime, however, focusing mostly on motor vehicle crime and smuggling at its initial stage. Activities under MOST-CBC PP will further aim at boosting the operational activities and increase the operational outcome of law enforcement activities against cross-border crime. The MOST-CBC implementation plan has been drafted and circulated in-house for approval.

Frontex supported the **Joint Operation ORION II** on counteracting illicit firearms trafficking, ammunition, explosives and CBRN materials in the region organised by EUBAM. In the course of its three operational phases from September to November 2020, the operation covered territories of Moldova and Ukraine, all Moldova - Ukraine border crossing points (BCPs), Moldova-Ukraine common green/blue border, BCP Chisinau International Airport, ports of Chernomorsk, Odesa



and Giurgiulesti, as well as the EU external borders. This support included coordination of a 10-day border phase and contributed to 54 seizures in total, 194 pcs of small arms 282 pcs of light weapons, 6,389 rounds of ammunition and 19 pcs and 4.65 kg of explosives.

In 2020, the co-operation with DG TAXUD and the agreement on the senior level to further enhance the interaction underlined the willingness on the EU level to have Frontex positioned as a facilitating body for the co-operation between border guards and customs.

Frontex engagement with the Customs Eastern Land Border Expert Team (CELBET) continued despite COVID 19 limitations by participating in the annual steering committee of CELBET and engaging in areas of risk management, operational controls, training and evaluation. The engagement with CELBET constitutes a vehicle for the facilitation of the engagement with COM and MS in the customs area according to article 68 of the EBCG Regulation.

#### Results on indicators and targets

- Indicator: Number of cases related to cross-border and organised crime, including terrorism supported.
- Indicator: Number of participating EU MS in the supported cases.
- Indicator: Number of requests of EU MS to support cases related to cross-border and organised crime, including terrorism.

**ISA-CBC 2.0 Pilot Project:** as a result of operations in 2019-2020, a total of 5.1 tons of cocaine and 6.3 tons of cannabis resin were intercepted by national authorities. The estimated worth of cocaine and hashish seizures supported by the ISA-CBC (c. EUR 521m of black-market worth).

**Joint Operation ORION II** on counteracting illicit firearms trafficking, ammunition, explosives and CBRN materials in the region organised by EUBAM and contributed to 54 seizures in total, 194 pcs of small arms 282 pcs of light weapons, 6,389 rounds of ammunition and 19 pcs and 4.65 kg of explosives.

The engagement of EU MS Customs services in Frontex activities with Cross Border Crime and Customs relevance, led or co-led by Frontex, with the extended participation of both border guard, customs and police, has been increased in 2020.

Based on the request of the German Presidency, Frontex provided the Eurosur Fusion Services Catalogue and operational formats, such as Pilot Projects i.e. ISA-CBC/MOST-CBC and joint action days, capacity building tools, as well as the opportunity to engage customs in the standing corps and joint operations e.g. with the cross-border crime detection officer profile.

In several European Commission and Council documents, Frontex provided the contribution to the harmonisation between the EU Policy Cycle/ EMPACT and the CCWP Action Plans, and engaged in the following activities:

- Supported the CCWP Action Plan 10, Mandate 10.1.3, firearm parts, accessories and components smuggled from third countries and intra-EU, in harmonisation with the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT OAs, as well the handbook for detection of firearms for Customs and Border Guard Officers. Further to this Frontex supported the preparatory work with regard to the JCO COLUMBUS 3.
- Supported the CCWP AP 10 mandate 10.3 on smuggling of branded, counterfeit and 'cheap white' cigarettes from third countries, which relates to the Frontex priority to counteract cross border crime and the parallel operational support to the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT. In 2020, the first exchanges and the establishment of contact points was implemented.
- Exchanged with regard to the CCWP AP mandate 10.1.1 on import, export and transit of strategic goods (listed and non-listed dual-use items), trade prohibitions and restrictions of the United Nations or the EU, in particular regarding economic sanctions, the first exchange and the contact and support modalities were established.
- In 2020 first contacts with regard to the CCWP AP mandate 10.1.2 on Cooperation between enforcement agencies responsible for STC in counter-proliferation activities and prevention of diversion to sensitive end-users were established.

**Key Activity 2.2.4. Support checks on any relevant documents and transportation means by providing centralised information systems (FADO and FIELDS), a 24/7 remote assistance and by deploying document fraud task forces in field operations along the four tiers access model.**

#### Specific Objectives

Develop a service portfolio supporting more effective checks on travel, identity, maritime documents and vehicles in the European border and migration management operational activities and supporting Member States in the fight against related frauds.

**Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020:**

- The programme for the new FADO systems is implemented in cooperation with the European Commission and ensures interoperability with other systems in line with Frontex developments, EU policies and national legislation;
- The concept, service portfolio and related processes of the forgery desk and the connected 24/7 help desk service for remote assistance to document checks in operations is implemented.

- The FADO regulation was published in March 2020. Frontex collected requirements and developed a high-level vision of the future FADO system. The high-level solution requirements and the vision documents have been endorsed by the FADO subgroup.
- FADO takeover project business case and the project initiation documents were created and submitted for approval to the management.
- The concept of the forgery desk and the basic use cases have been identified and it is ready to host the future FADO System and the future 24/7 service.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

Indicator: The FADO programme, the concept of the Forgery Desk and the connected 24/7 Help Desk service for remote assistance to document checks are established and approved with a clear schedule and deliverables. The necessary resources are available.

#### Targets:

- The implementation of the FADO programme is initiated and the project is kicked off and the business requirements are produced by 2020;
- 100% of the programme resources are available/recruited by 2020;

The requirements for the Forgery Desk (24/7) for remote assistance to document checks have been defined by 2020

- FADO programme resources were increased by the end of 2020;
- FADO project initiation is under final approval by the end of 2020;
- The Contextual Analysis, the High-Level Business Requirements Document and the Vision Document were produced and endorsed by the FADO Subgroup;
- The requirement for the 24/7 service was not defined because the Regulation (EU) 2020/493 stipulates that the Agency provides support to Member States on document control after the new FADO System has been taken over.

### Focus Area 2.3. In the frame of the tripartite working arrangement, reinforcing the cooperation between Frontex, EMSA and EFCA for the development of European cooperation on Coast Guard Function

**Key Activity 2.3.1. Strengthen the coast guard function of the Agency through multi-agency cooperation (joint capacity building and sharing of assets, support for the implementation of the coast guard function.**

#### Specific Objectives

Enhance processes related to the cooperation with EFCA and EMSA for a coordinated approach in the implementation of European Cooperation on Coast Guard Functions (CGF).

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

To finalise the practical handbook on the European cooperation on coast guard functions

The first version of the handbook was submitted to the European Commission in June 2020. Upon Commission's feedback, the agencies reviewed the final draft document and sent it back to the Commission for final adoption. Under the coordination of the three agencies, 53 experts from all the 22 Member States with sea border expertise contributed to the drafting process, together with Iceland and Norway as part of the Governing Boards of EMSA and Frontex. The final adoption of the handbook in the form of a recommendation by the Commission is the next step foreseen in 2021.

To organise Technical Sub-Committee 3 (TSC3) meetings

Despite the challenges posed by travel restrictions, TSC3 continued its work in 2020. In this year, three TSC3 meetings were held - only one in person in March in EMSA premises, the rest being moved to a virtual format due to the COVID-19 outbreak. TSC3 work focused on sharing capacities and legal issues.

The results on indicators and targets related to TSC3 meetings have been affected by the decision to give priority to analysis and informal exchanges in order to mitigate the limitations entails by virtual meetings.

To agree on the concept between EU Agencies (EFCA, EMSA and Frontex) for the European multipurpose maritime activities

The concept for the European multipurpose maritime activities was under development in 2020 and was focused on the Multipurpose Maritime Operations (MMO) as foreseen in the common article on the European cooperation on coast guard functions. In 2020, the MMO definition was developed by the three Agencies in the frame of Technical Sub Committee 3 (TSC3) and approved by this Committee during the meeting held on 7 October. The concept was developed based on the outcomes of Coastex 2017 (Portugal) and 2019 (Italy), European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF) activities supported by the agencies. In December 2020, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual European Coast Guard Event (AECGE) the common definition of the MMO concept was announced to the stakeholders.

To have a coordinated approach as regards participation of the three EU Agencies (EFCA, EMSA, and Frontex) in coast guard fora.

In 2020, the three Agencies (EFCA/EMSA/Frontex) continued cooperation and coordinated approach towards participation in coast guard fora, although the majority of activities under the coast guard umbrella were suspended in 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak and restrictions linked to it.

In 2020, the agencies continued cooperation with European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF). Only one workshop was held, before the lockdown. The three agencies took part in an on-line conference organised by ECGFF French Presidency as a side event of EURONAVAL in order to promote European Coast Guard cooperation. Regarding the Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation (BSRBCC), two workshops were organised (Cruise ship meeting and Annual Threat Assessment), then the action plan was cancelled and postponed to 2021.

With regards to Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS), and North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum (NACGF), their activities were suspended in 2020 and postponed to 2021. European Maritime Day 2020 was cancelled. Further to this, the Annual European Coast Guard Event was postponed and finally held online on 11 December.

The annual report of the inter-agency cooperation under the TWA framework is available under Annex 7.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

- Indicator: number of national authorities performing CGF involved in the handbook: 43
- Number of TSC3 meetings organised in 2020: target 4: achieved: 3
- Number of workshops in the frame of Coast Guard Fora: target: 3 achieved: 4

**Key Activity 2.3.2. Implement multipurpose maritime operations (MMO) in cooperation with EFCA and EMSA in order to support the coast guard function including SAR as a component of IBM to improve coordination and mutual knowledge between stakeholders and identify synergies with CSDP missions and operations with reference to the European maritime security strategy action plan.**

#### Specific Objectives

- To reinforce the interagency cooperation (EFCA, EMSA and Frontex) in order to support MS' national authorities in European cooperation on Coast Guard Functions;
- To share and to promote best practices with EU and non-EU Member States as well as within coast guard activities;
- To extend the MMO<sup>14</sup> platform to customs activities.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

##### To implement MMO in different sea regions around Europe

The 78-days MMO Black Sea 2020 was successfully implemented in cooperation with 6 Bulgarian and Romanian authorities dealing with CGFs, EFCA, EMSA and EU Sat Cen. The cooperation with the customs under the MMO Black Sea was not possible due to multiple postponements of the start of the operation caused by the COVID-19 situation. MMO Baltic Tracking 2020 was supposed to be implemented under Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation (BSRBCC) action plan, however, it was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

##### To keep updating the boarding handbook

The third Boarding Working Group meeting aiming at the update of the 'Handbook in Frontex - coordinated joint maritime operations – best practices and guidelines' was held in January 2020 in Malta. The 4th Boarding Group meeting focused on the finalisation of the update of the handbook in Frontex – coordinated joint maritime operations – best practices and guidelines was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

##### To implement SAR workshops in different sea regions around Europe

<sup>14</sup> MMO is a useful operational tool for developing such specific activity in close cooperation with customs authorities at the national and European level via information sharing (maritime intelligence products, i.e. ad-hoc analysis reports) and capacity sharing (assets). Moreover, collaboration with MAOC-N is already on-going especially under the EU Policy Cycle / EMPACT (CCH Drugs Priority) and proved positive in terms of the detections of drug-related trafficking.

A 3-days joint Romanian – Bulgarian SAR workshop, including SAR seminar, tactical emergency casualty care awareness session and multipurpose exercise was organised in Constanta, Romania and conducted within MMO Black Sea 2020. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the SAR workshop in Greece within JO Poseidon 2020 was cancelled.

To provide with expertise related to coast guard functions in different law enforcement, customs and military projects

**MMO Black Sea 2020** provided the possibility to enhance the support offered by Frontex in the area of law enforcement to the host member states, Romania and Bulgaria. New concepts were introduced such as VEGA Children at sea borders; the deployment of the cross-border crime detection officer profile, which facilitated an increased exchange of data and experience in the cross-border crime area; a sub-operation was launched on stolen boats/engines and led to the identification of several stolen engines, thanks to the direct cooperation facilitated by Frontex between the Romanian authorities and Germany. New areas for development were identified for implementation during MMO Black Sea 2021, such as increasing the cooperation with customs and increasing the cooperation with all law enforcement agencies in the detection of drugs trafficking, smuggling of excise goods, intellectual property rights infringements, as well as training that can support the host countries in increasing their law enforcement capabilities in the Black Sea Region.

Due to the COVID-19 situation, no activities were implemented in cooperation with CSDP missions. Joint Frontex EDA training was cancelled during the implementation phase in Portugal. A working agreement between Frontex and EUNAVFOR Med IRINI was approved by the European Commission in October 2020.

**1<sup>st</sup> technical meeting on Coast Guard Functions with a focus on SAR was held between Frontex and Morocco in December 2020.**

#### Results on indicators and targets

- Number of *ad-hoc* MMO implemented: target: 2; achieved: 1;
- Number of SAR drill implemented: target: 4; achieved: 1;
- Number of activities performed with the involvement of the customs: target: 1; achieved: 0;
- Number of activities performed in close cooperation with CSDP missions: target: 2; achieved: 0.

In order to promote best practices contained in the ‘Handbook in Frontex – coordinated joint maritime operations – best practices and guidelines’, boarding drills were implemented:

- In January 2020 in Malta under the umbrella of the Frontex Boarding Working Group (cooperative boarding including AIR MEDEVAC).
- Two boarding drills, one in Bulgaria and one in Romania, were conducted within MMO Black Sea 2020.

## Focus Area 2.4. Support migration management by ensuring effective returns

### Key Activity 2.4.1. Extend assistance to MS at all stages of the return process.

#### Specific Objectives

Provide tailor-made operational and technical support in the non-voluntary and (assisted) voluntary returns, across all the stages: pre-return stage, operational implementation as well as post-arrival/post-return stage, including pooling and sharing of information and practices.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

#### Continuation of assistance to MS in the frame of current activities

COVID-19-related measures and the closure of the EU’s external borders greatly affected operational activities in the area of return. In the first months of the pandemic, most activities were cancelled as a consequence of the safety measures adopted by the Member States and third countries and the limited availability of flights. As a result, the total number of persons returned with the support of the Agency drastically decreased.

However, despite many challenges posed, the Agency continued to implement its mandate in the area of return operations, voluntary returns, support to EURLO deployments, further development of the RECAMAS model and of the Agency’s central IT platform on return, the preparation for the implementation of the Frontex reintegration programme, and the development of the framework for the deployment of return teams from the standing corps.

Throughout the pandemic, Frontex showed flexibility when confronted with the restrictions imposed by the Member States, non-EU countries and airlines. The reshaped support provided by the Agency included:

- cancelling and rebooking return operations by scheduled flights;

- re-scheduling charter flights affected by COVID-19;
- replacing collecting return operations with other types of return operations (joint or national)
- taking advantage of repatriation flights organised by non-EU countries;
- reimbursement of eligible cancellation costs;
- reimbursement of COVID-19 tests for returnees, Member States officials and all participants of Frontex-supported return operations;
- adaptation and tailoring of safety measures to each return operation.

#### Development of ERRIN transfer plan, development of action plan for future implementation of post-arrival/post-return

In 2020, great efforts were made to facilitate the agreed transfer of the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN) in order to setup post-arrival and post-return activities by the Agency. An important element in the transfer process was the development of a 'Plan for a transitional handover of ERRIN (also known as the ERRIN Transfer Plan)', developed in cooperation with MS and the ERRIN Project Management Unit (PMU).

The ERRIN Transfer Plan adopted by the Agency on 22 June 2020 identifies the scope of different ERRIN activities that Frontex will take over (so-called scoping) indicating the key deliverables as well as provides the scope of activities from the ERRIN programme which will be taken over by the Agency, based on a three-cluster approach: Joint Reintegration Service, Return Counselling, Return and Reintegration Capacity Building in third countries.

The following deliverables have been reached in 2020:

- Phase-in phase-out roadmap – adopted 20 July 2020 – focuses on the operational process and governance of the transition, as described in the ERRIN Transfer Plan;
- Stakeholder management strategy – which aims to identify the different stakeholders and define an appropriate engagement and consultation strategy depending on their different roles and interests;
- Risk assessment and mitigation strategy – which aims to conduct an effective risk assessment and formulate risk management strategies through the whole transfer process.

In 2020, the following activities have been implemented in the above-mentioned clusters:

- Joint Reintegration Services: Work focused on the preparation of the pilot project that is planned to take place in 2021. Due to the complex nature of joint reintegration services, consultations started in Q4 2020 on the operational guidelines, and cost setting;
- Return Counselling: Frontex developed a working group to build the curriculum for the standing corps – Return specialist profile (theory, materials, exercise). The finalised version of the curriculum has been used for training of the SC as of January 2021;
- Return and Reintegration Capacity Building: Frontex started the development of the concept of return and reintegration capacity building in order to meet the MS needs and expectations.

#### Continuation of existing assistance and development of action plan for future implementation of pre-return

In 2020, the existing assistance in the area of pre-return was continued where possible although in particular meetings and some deployments (also see under key activity 2.4.2) were affected by COVID-19. The pandemic situation as well as the staffing, budgetary prospects for 2021 and the new organisational developments that are planned for 2021, partially delayed the development of the action plan for future implementation of pre-return.

Despite these constraints, activities related to the return specialists' profile within the standing corps took place to prepare for deployment as of the beginning of 2021. Additional activities were made and conducted in relation to various projects such as last-minute asylum requests in relation to returns, and the development of a toolbox in relation to minors.

#### Increase of the volume of operations

The impact of measures introduced by the Member States and non-EU countries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the limited availability of commercial flights, was severe in the area of return. While significant growth in the number of all types of returns was registered until March 2020, from March onwards all return-related activities had progressively reduced almost to zero.

However, during and after the summer period, the Agency and the Member States managed to partially resume operations, adapting to the dynamically changing circumstances. Frontex made available new flexible operational solutions and thanks to these efforts, Member States returned 12,072 non-EU nationals with the support of the Agency, which was only around 24% less than in 2019. As many as 7,952 persons were returned making use of charter flights, 3,981 were returned by scheduled flights and 139 in the course of readmission operations based on the EU-Turkey statement.

Given the extraordinary circumstances and very limited possibilities to organise returns during 2020, the volume of returns was satisfactory and is expected to grow as soon as the COVID-related measures get eased.

## Implementation of activities aimed at supporting (assisted) voluntary returns

Throughout 2020, Frontex broadened the spectrum of its return-related support to voluntary returns. Overall, throughout the year, the foreseen results were achieved notwithstanding the COVID-19-related restrictions that highly limited the possibility to organise returns. The overall share of voluntary returns made up 18% of all Frontex supported flights. This number is expected to grow as more and more Member States and national Agencies request technical assistance in returning people who wish to go back to the home countries of their own free will.

Voluntary returns proved to be of great importance to the Member States especially in COVID-19 times since they do not require the involvement of staff, which greatly simplified the implementation of new safety measures and also, allowed for the use of repatriation flights, taking into account the fact that the third-country nationals do not pose a risk. Therefore, they were highly promoted as an alternative to other types of return, given that non-EU nationals fly as regular passengers without being escorted.

The process was further improved by customising the Frontex Application for Return (FAR) Scheduled Flights module which now allows the Member States to easily notify the Agency about their need for technical assistance for voluntary returns – in the case of charter flights the dedicated voluntary return sub-module was open to production at the beginning of 2021.

Voluntary returns are seen as an area of great potential where national authorities are becoming more active and increasing the engagement with the Agency. This endeavour can also facilitate field cooperation with key stakeholders, providing strong incentives for cooperation with non-EU countries.

## Enlargement of existing network with MS contact points to reflect all stages of the return process

Despite COVID-19, the Agency showed resilience and made a swift transition to online cooperation in order to uphold the expectations of the Member States and the EU institutions. Frontex made available new flexible operational solutions, such as the use of repatriation flights, specific financial support (e.g. reimbursement of COVID-19 tests for all participants), easier cancelling and rebooking flights as well as launching new communication tools.

Beyond the actors cooperating with Frontex in the area of returns already throughout 2020, Cyprus and the Netherlands were two new Member States that started organising returns using the Frontex scheduled flights mechanism. In addition, new national Agencies mainly responsible for voluntary returns and voluntary departures started using FAR Scheduled Flights module for the organisation of returns via this means. All in all, eleven Member States asked for the support of the Agency when organising voluntary returns both by charter and scheduled flights.

The Agency also created a new network of MS contact points in the area of post-arrival and post-return (the Post-Return and Reintegration Network). Two meetings were held in 2020, back-to-back with the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN) Operational Management Board. These network meetings complement the other MS network meetings (DCP and PRAN) that were held three times in 2020, as well as the High-Level Round Table on Returns (held twice in 2020).

### Results on indicators and targets:

#### Indicators and Targets and baseline

- Indicator 1: 250 chartered and 2700 scheduled operations.
  - Indicator 2: Delivery of 3 action plans/transfer plans (ERRIN transfer, pre-return action plan and post-arrival and post-return action plan) in line with the deadline in the roadmap.
- Target: by the end of Q1 2020.

As described above, despite the COVID-19-related challenges, which drastically decreased the possibility to organise returns, the Agency has managed to achieve results very close to the ones defined in 2019 as targets for 2020.

- Frontex supported **232** returns by charter flights returning 7,952 non-EU nationals and **2,267** scheduled flights, returning **3,981** non-EU nationals.
- ERRIN transfer plan was established as envisioned.

### Key Activity 2.4.2. Strengthen MS return capacities through the use of the standing corps, capacity building, further developing of return IT-tools and reducing the administrative burden

#### Specific Objectives

Provide human and technical resources to MS to conduct efficient returns according to Frontex standardised procedures. Support the use of relevant IT systems, the interoperability of different EU IT systems and national RECAMAS (return case management system) and the digitalisation of the return process.

### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020



## Deployment from return pools upon MS request

In 2020, more than 47 % of all forced returns by charter flights were monitored by a monitor from the pool, and over 20% were monitored by national monitors. In total 183 monitors were deployed in the course of 153 return operations. Specifically, 120 forced-return monitors from the pool were deployed on 107 return operations and 63 national monitors were deployed on 46 return operations.

This means that less than 38% of all forced return operations by charter flights had no monitor on board (compared to 21% in 2019). This number was significantly affected by the global pandemic, where due to ever-changing restrictions, monitors often had to withdraw from their participation in return operations.

In 2020 no forced-return escorts from the Frontex pool took part in return operations. 95 forced-return escorts from the pool were deployed in readmission operations, however, the deployment of forced-return escorts is suspended until further notice when the readmissions can be continued. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no readmission operations took place since 5 March 2020.

COVID-19 also imposed a large impact on the deployment of return specialists to host MS. Most of the planned deployments were cancelled due to travel and sanitary restrictions. However, the Agency managed to deploy return specialists to Greece (four) and Belgium (one).

## Continue to provide the same technical resources to MS as in 2019

The continuous promotion of a flexible Frontex framework contract (FWC) for chartering aircrafts for returns resulted in 11 planes chartered in 2020: 9 for charter flights and 2 for readmission operations.

The new FWC provides:

- Flexibility, even to charter a few days before the planned operation;
- Favourable terms for cancellation, postponement;
- Less paperwork and bureaucracy as no tenders and mini competitions need to be launched for every single operation between the contracted brokers.

## Development of best practices and standard operating procedures for relevant stages of the return process

The new operational model of support to be provided by members of return teams under the Forced Return Escort and Support Officer (FRESCO) profile of the standing corps has been agreed in close cooperation with the Member States, which includes pilot deployments at airports as well as substituting the pool of forced-return escorts for return and readmission operations. Return support activities include the deployment of FRESCO at Member States' airports to provide primarily ground support to returns. The tasks, objectives, general rules and guidelines for ground support activities have been established and introduced to the dedicated module of the FRESCO specialised training curriculum.

A workshop was organised with the attendance of Member States' return experts, escorts and a medical professional on the use of force and equipment in return activities. Based on the extensive information gathered during the workshop, Frontex finalised the *Standards on the use of force and equipment for the Forced Return Escort and Support Officers of the standing corps* which establish the guidelines to be observed by return team members while using force during return support activities. The document also specifies the equipment on which FRESCO will be trained prior to their deployment.

## RECAMAS

Frontex provided further support to MS for the improvement of their national RECAMAS. The newly updated and expanded reference model v1.1 was released and made available to the MS in October 2020. The annual RECAMAS workshop took place on 26 October with the participation of representatives from MS and Schengen associated countries. Due to the COVID-19 situation, 4 gap analyses were performed in 2020 (Malta, Estonia, Latvia, Czech Republic) as physical meetings were not allowed.

Frontex concluded three grant agreements with Italy for the implementation of the recommendations steamed from the gap analysis of their RECAMAS, as well as grant agreements with Portugal, Finland and Belgium in the same context. Furthermore, the pilot project with Austria to interconnect its national RECAMAS with FAR was successfully completed. Frontex is now analysing this exercise in order to assess whether the initiative can be expanded to other MS.

## IRMA

With regard to IRMA 1.0 performance improvement was tackled via the migration to a new infrastructure together with the limitation of the retention period of certain data types. Furthermore, following the implementation of the return data collection scheme, additional measures to improve performance were made possible. A process that will be completed in 2021.

In 2020, the new return data collection scheme was launched and the first iteration of the exercise achieved a 100% response rate. All the MS/SAC provided (at least partial) input to the quantitative data collection and provided feedback on the qualitative assessment.

In reference to IRMA 2.0 the inception phase was completed in 2020. The PID was approved and the procurement for the actual development of the system launched. Additionally, a Business Analyst was recruited to support the team in IRMA 2.0 development.

## **FAR**

On 18 September 2020, the new software for FAR Scheduled Flights module was released. It brought major improvements from the operational and administrative side, both for Frontex and Member States' end-users. The new software has been tailored to users' needs and recommendations. A feature was added in FAR to allow Member States to declare their intention to perform COVID-19 tests for third-country nationals and staff included in the passenger list and claim these costs from the Agency.

As mentioned above the establishment of communication to interconnect FAR - Charter Flights module with the central return management platform and national RECAMAS of Austria (IFA) was successfully completed.

### **Results on indicators and targets**

#### **Indicators and Targets and baseline**

**Indicator: 150 forced-return monitors, 25 forced-return escorts, 10 return specialists.**

- The Agency had 120 forced-return monitors from the pool deployed on Frontex coordinated return operations, meaning that the target set in 2019 was fulfilled in 80%. Given the global pandemic and many last-second cancellations of monitors, this can be considered a very satisfactory result.
- Escorts – a total of 95 forced-return escorts from the pool were deployed throughout 2020 to support readmissions from Greece to Turkey (before they were unilaterally suspended), implying that the goal of 25 forced-return escorts has been significantly exceeded.
- Return specialists – a total of 4 return specialists were deployed as most of the planned deployments were cancelled due to travel and sanitary restrictions.

**Indicator: 5 RECAMAS gap analyses performed. Result met.**

### **Key Activity 2.4.3. Enhance returns through closer cooperation with third countries in the field of return.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

Contribute to the implementation of the EU return and readmission policy.  
Enhance awareness of third countries and facilitate cooperation between them and the EU Member States in return-related matters. Build return and readmission capacities of third countries.

#### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

**Provision of fora for MS to discuss and identify challenges/solutions regarding third-country cooperation (with/without the presence of a third country)**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a remarkable part of the activities in this remit was cancelled or postponed, carrying out those that could be implemented by means of on-line meetings. In the context of the transfer of EURINT activities, the organisation of country-working groups related activities continued with 10 active country working groups dedicated to: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan and Somalia. In 2020 there were organised 7 CWG meetings as well as one event for CWG Chairs aimed at discussing new arrangements and documents (Rules and Procedures for the organisation of Country Working Group meetings and terms of reference for the participation of non-members in Country Working Group meetings).

**Continue to deliver return and readmission capacity-building support to third countries within the current scope**

Two action plans 'Assistance in return-related matters' with ARM and MDA designed and partially delivered during 2019 in close cooperation with other Frontex units and – where relevant – with the Eurint programme, including return-related support activities, were being offered to the **Armenian** and **Moldovan** authorities. The assistance followed their previous familiarisation visits to Frontex and the expression of interest in developing further cooperation, in particular taking part in Collecting Return Operations (CRO).

Despite the restrictions, the planned escort officer training took place in Chisinau during 17-21.02.2020, witnessing the participation of 25 Moldovan officials, 20 from the Ministry of Interiors – Bureau for Migration and Asylum and 5 from

General Inspectorate of Border Police. All the participants passed the training and were qualified for participating in forced return operations (especially CROs).

The first engagement of Moldova in a CRO, although planned for 2020, had to be postponed multiple times and will be achieved as soon as the current sanitary emergency will ease, as much as the remaining activities.

Frontex extended a dedicated action plan as a proposal for activities that could be delivered from the side of the Agency in the domain of the '**Assistance in return-related matters' with Turkey**'. The proposal is pending the agreement of the Turkey side.

**Handover workshop, The Gambia:** with the support of EURLO officer deployed, a workshop on the handover procedure of returnees from the EU was conducted in the period 14 – 16 January 2020 prior to the first JRO after the moratorium on returns imposed by The Gambia. The activity was coordinated by Frontex with the support of the Netherlands and Germany with the aim to enable relevant authorities of The Gambia to handle higher numbers of returnees arriving at Banjul Airport in accordance with relevant standards. Participants were nominated by Gambia Immigration Department (GID) as well as from the Ministry of Interior, national police force, state intelligence service, aviation security, drug enforcement agency and airport fire and rescue service.

Continue to provide operational support on return related identification and documentation procedures within the current scope

In 2020, Frontex organised five identification missions (three long-term and two short-term) in total involving four third countries and six MS in line with the 'Specific activity plan for the organisation of identification missions' under FOA-R 2020. These identification missions resulted in 1,008 interviewed third-country nationals (TCN), 537 identified TCN and 68 Emergency Travel Documents ETDs issued. Numbers are significantly lower comparing to the previous years, mainly due to COVID-19 restrictions. Majority of short-term identification missions scheduled for 2020 were cancelled or postponed.

In partnership with the EURLO VCI Facility (Belgium-led), the Agency continued to provide support with identifications via VC for the AFG Consuls. The activity proved to be highly appreciated by all participants and partners, resulting in around 150 identification interviews via VC, with verification of nationality rate at the level of over 90% and issuance of 30 ETDs by the participating embassies.

Start of implementation of European Return Liaison Officers (EURLO) takeover

In the framework of the 'Specific activity plan on EURLO deployments' under FOA-R 2020, the activities of EURLO network were gradually integrated into the Agency activities. During the first year since the transfer, nine deployments were either initiated or taken over by Frontex. The other two deployments – to CIV and COD – will continue to be funded from AMIF until the end of 2022, following an agreement with the Belgian Immigration Office.

In the context of EURLO forum in 2020, two meetings were planned, however, could not take place due to the pandemic restrictions. On the other hand, Frontex organised 19 online meetings which allowed a regular exchange of information and reporting. EURLOs played a crucial role in feeding up-to-date information to Frontex and the Member States on the evolving epidemiological situation in their host third countries and the related restrictions which affected returns.

Enhance the delivery of return and readmission capacity building support to third countries within the current scope

No further actions could be taken to extend and enhance the delivery of capacity-building activities for third countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Enhance the provision of operational support on return related identification and documentation procedures within the current scope

In 2020, the Agency started exploring alternative solutions for supporting identification procedures via VC solutions. More concrete actions will continue in 2021. Initial discussions took place with IOM in order to define the possible role of Frontex in the concept of readmission case management system (RCMS), an initiative being developed in 2021.

## Results on indicators and targets

**Target:** 5 EURLO deployments under the Frontex umbrella (according to the EURLO transfer plan). **Result:** 9 EURLO deployments under the Frontex umbrella (according to the EURLO transfer plan with 4 additional deployments that were due to raised needs from MS).

**Target:** 20 meetings/missions/visits in relation to third-country cooperation (e.g. inward/outward missions; familiarisation visits; consular workshops; sensitisation missions; country working groups and identification missions). **Result:** 32 meetings/missions/visits in relation to third-country cooperation (5 IM, 8 CWG meetings, 19 EURLO VC meetings).

## 1.3. Strategic Objective 3:

### Sustained European Border and Coast Guard capabilities

**Focus Area 3.1. Implement Capability Development Planning, including contingency planning, the instrument as a vehicle for an integrated planning of EBCG capabilities**

**Key Activity 3.1.1. Establish and implement scenario-based capability development planning, including the contingency planning, methodology and process for Frontex, ensuring sound requirements management and serving as a blueprint for Member States methodology and ensuring full interoperability within the concept of an integrated planning**

#### Specific Objectives

- Establish and implement process, methodology and scenarios for capability development.
- Establish a process and methodology for Capability Synthesis and Capability Roadmap.
- Provide guidance and benchmark for MS/SAC capability development planning.
- Develop necessary tools in support of capability development.
- Manage external experts' database.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

##### Comprehensive planning process

On the planning side, the first-ever EU Capability Development Planning methodology and procedure was adopted following a series of dedicated meetings in November 2019 accompanied by periodical updates to the MB. The resulting MB Decision 2/2021 sees aside from the adoption of a common methodology, procedure and cyclical process, also the accompaniment of a Capability Development Forum, which will be dedicated to sustaining the European Border and Coast Guard capabilities and in doing so providing a platform for planning and implementing the development of European Border and Coast Guard capabilities.

The aim is to have the Agency's first Capability Development Plan and the corresponding national plans of Member States established by 2022. This will provide the foundation for establishing a coherent approach to planning. A similar exercise will be launched in early 2021 to adopt a methodology and procedure for contingency planning.

Furthermore, to better understand the state of play in MS/SAC on the maturity of their national capability development processes, the Agency performed an in-house survey-based study, mapping how planning is done in the respective authorities in Member States that are involved in integrated border management.

##### Capability development priorities

Looking at the priorities and the implementation of development actions addressing these, while the Capability Development Plan has yet to be established, from the outset of implementing the new EBCG Regulation, the immediate capability development priorities have been set out in the Regulation itself:

- The establishment of the standing corps comprising recruited, trained, uniformed and equipped statutory staff members alongside long-term secondments and short-term deployments of Member States.
- Integrated planning, and in particular the methodologies, procedures and processes for Capability Development Planning and Contingency Planning as well as the corresponding for Capability Planning and Establishment of the Pools available for upcoming operational activities
- The Multiannual Strategic Policy Cycle, including Strategic Risk Analysis.

The external experts' databases continued to be operational to support the Agency's full scope of work by providing expert advice to support the implementation of its activities. Given that the current database is due to expire by the end of 2020, the Agency in the course of 2020 was preparing the revamp to be launched in Q2 2021.

#### Results on indicators

**Indicator: Ratio between planned and executed activities. Target: 85 % execution of planned activities**

Given that most of the planned activities were implemented, the target of 85 % is assessed as achieved.

The COVID-outbreak and the two rapid border interventions, in particular, implied the need to reprioritise resulting in that the methodology and procedure for Capability Development Planning and Contingency Planning were delayed. Instead of adoption within the first quarter of 2020, the methodology for Capability Development Planning was adopted

at the very beginning of January 2021 and the methodology and procedure for Contingency Planning will be adopted by the second quarter of 2021.

### **Key Activity 3.1.2. Align capability sub-strategies with capability development planning to provide trained, equipped and deployable standing corps.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

Establish a process to translate the multiannual capability development plan into sub-strategies e.g. policies, concepts, architectures, recruitment, training, research acquisition, logistics, health and safety.

#### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Coherent and feasible sub-strategies and plans for the short, medium and long term.

National and Agency Capability Development Plans are expected by the end of 2021 and the Capability Roadmap is expected by end of 2023. This will provide the strategic steer and ensure that sub-strategies are aligned. As these overarching strategic layers are not yet in place, the sub-strategy level is governed by what is set out in the EBCG Regulation. Accordingly, the Agency has established and implemented strategies and plans on:

- Recruitment of the standing corps category 1;
- Annual and multiannual plan on the profiles and requirements of the standing corps;
- Training plan;
- Multiannual acquisition strategy (first draft pending the adoption Multiannual Financial Framework);
- Minimum Number of Items of Technical Equipment;
- Policy '2.0' on occupational safety and health (OSH) - draft prepared for approval.

#### **Results on indicators**

Indicator: Ratio between planned and executed activities. Target: 85 % execution of planned activities.

Given that most of the activities related to delivering coherent and feasible sub-strategies for the short, medium and long term have been completed, it has been assessed that the target of 85 % of the execution of planned activities has been achieved.

### **Key Activity 3.1.3. Manage capability pools to ensure achievement of the effect of operational activities.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

Revise the process for pooling capabilities as well as mobilising and deploying them to meet the operational needs in a timely manner taking into account capabilities coming from the Agency, Member States and Schengen Associated Countries.

Implement the processes.

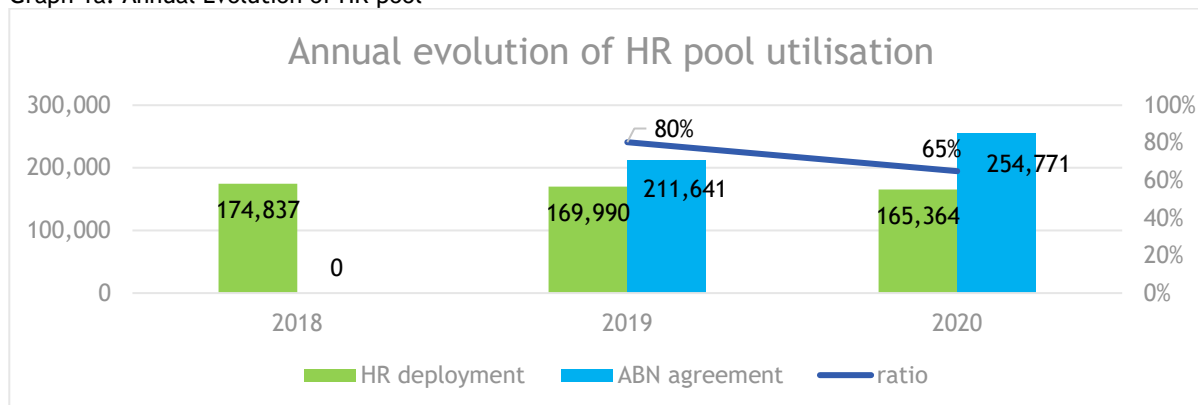
Operationalise Opera Evolution

#### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

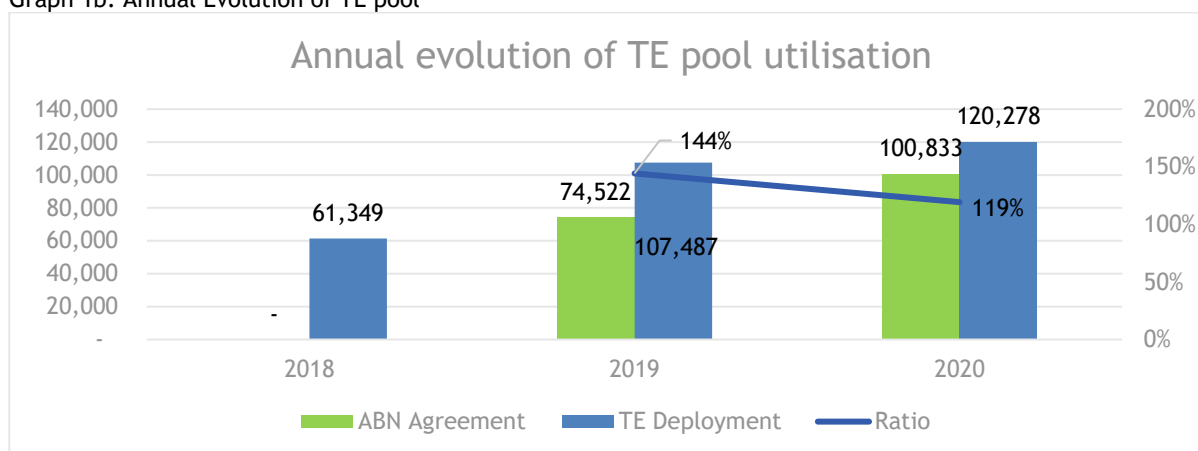
Fully operational revised pooling process

**Implementation of ABN 2020:** Given the outbreak of COVID-19 and the launch of two rapid border interventions while in parallel implementing the EBCG Regulation, it is assessed that the ABN 2020 should in overall be considered a success. Looking specifically at HR, deployments in comparison with what was agreed in the ABN was merely 65 % compared to 80 % the year before and this can be attributed to the pandemic. For TE the ratio is the opposite, the deployments exceeded what was agreed during the ABN. Nevertheless, when compared to the previous year the ratio was still lower. This can also be attributed to the pandemic.

Graph 1a: Annual Evolution of HR pool

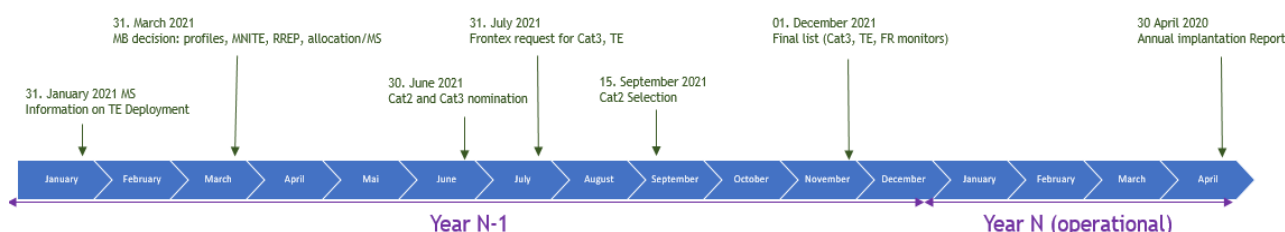


Graph 1b: Annual Evolution of TE pool



In preparation of 2021, two main pillars in establishing, making available and implementing the pools for operational activities in the upcoming operational cycle were developed.

The planning of capabilities, the establishment of the pools and making them available for operational activities: the process, for which the milestones are described in the EBCG Regulation, was elaborated together with Member States and resulted in the generic mapping against the following timeline.



The assessment and lessons learnt from the first iteration of the process for planning capabilities and establishing pools, following the milestones set out in the EBCG Regulation was carried out in the framework of the Pooled Resources Network. The feedback was positive and the established pools will be deployed for the first time starting on 1 January 2021, thus the lessons learnt exercise for the first iteration can only be completed once the experience of deployments in 2021 has been captured.

- Use of Opera Evolution for the planning of the 2021 operational activities
- Opera Evolution fully operational

The implementation of the Opera Evolution project, seeking to provide a comprehensive tool to manage the full spectrum of operational capabilities – planning, pooling, managing availability, deployment and financial management – was done successfully.



Given that the project was conceived in 2016 under the previous Regulation, the requirements have since been adapted to meet the strict deadlines for the implementation of the first steps of the new Regulation in the ambitious roadmap. As a result, the delivery of releases of Opera Evolution was adapted to the process of planning capabilities and establishing the pools, making the necessary capabilities and functionalities available just in time. This has necessitated the effective management of requirements and stakeholders while in parallel both developing and operating the system. Systems capabilities have been operational in a timely manner with the final delivery expected in April 2021. In overall the project was a huge success, with all functionalities under one software platform.

## Results on indicators

Revised pooling process agreed with MS/SAC

- Release 2 of Opera Evolution by February 2020
- All releases of Opera Evolution operational by end of 2020.

Target: Fully operational revised pooling process using Opera Evolution.

The new process for planning capabilities and establishing the pools was implemented successfully given the constraints of the pandemic.

Opera Evolution was implemented successfully. Although it experienced some delays, the critical capabilities and functionalities were made available on time, allowing the system to be used for the 2021 edition of planning the capabilities and establishing the pools.

## Focus Area 3.2. Provide trained and equipped standing corps to enable a response to current and emerging challenges

### Key Activity 3.2.1. Recruit, train and equip standing corps category 1.

Assess eligibility, interview shortlisted candidates and select those to be offered jobs.

Conclude employment contracts.

Provide on-boarding and basic and specialised training

Acquire uniforms and personal equipment and provide to recruits.

### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

#### Recruitment of the standing corps

Summary of the key facts and figures.

- The remarkable volume of applications received: over 7,500 applications.
- The complexity of the procedure:
  - Three calls were running in parallel with many candidates applying for two or three calls;
  - More complex selection process than with regular staff, i.e. additional English language, physical aptitude test and psychological aptitude tests;
  - More complex medical checks (including psychiatric and drug testing).
- Results:
  - Approximately 419 enrolled in training with some already deployed as of 1 January 2021;
  - Approximately 245 names on the AD7 reserve list for future 2021/2022 appointments;
  - Approximately 263 names on the AST4 reserve list for future 2021/2022 appointments (99 to be put for batch 3).
- COVID restrictions: impaired travel to physical aptitude tests, travel to medical checks, COVID tests, shift to online interviews.

#### Basic training programme for standing corps category 1 staff developed and delivered

In the area of training, in 2020 the focus was on establishing the tools and the capacity necessary to train the standing corps to ensure their operational readiness as of January 2021. The process entailed finalising the development of the content of the basic training programme for the European standing corps category 1, setting up the cooperation framework with training institutions in Member States for its implementation, developing the profile related specialised training courses for both category 1 and 2 staff and effectively training the standing corps. Particular emphasis was put on mainstreaming fundamental rights aspects in the training content so that standing corps will be provided with training relevant to their tasks and powers.

COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the implementation of the training plan 2020 hence the Agency mobilised all available resources and measures to ensure the continuity of the activities dedicated to the development and implementation of the training for the standing corps. While during the lockdown period all the activities foreseen to be organised 'face to face' were suspended and postponed, the efforts were shifted towards (re)designing the different

educational products to increase the availability of remote learning. The training development activities continued in an online environment, with the valuable support and contribution of the Member States' experts.

The basic training programme for the European standing corps category 1 (initially designed exclusively for contact learning over 6 months) was redesigned for blended learning, with a three-month online learning phase (OLP) followed by a three-month contact learning phase (CLP). In parallel with the work on (re)designing and developing the training content, an external expert contracted by the Fundamental Rights Office performed the review of the training materials pertaining to the basic training programme for the European standing corps category 1 and of the pre-deployment training package, contributing directly to fundamental rights mainstreaming into the content.

As a result the Agency launched on 18 June 2020 the basic training programme for the first batch of newly recruited European standing corps category 1 (260 staff members). The three-month online learning phase was implemented from 18 June until 4 September 2020 with the support of thirty-nine trainers from ten Member States. The three-month contact learning phase (CLP) of the basic training programme for the European standing corps category 1 was implemented from 14 September until 11 December 2020 in the two training centres selected for the purpose. 102 trainers from 17 Member States contributed to the implementation of the contact learning phase. As a result 252 graduates completed the basic training successfully in December 2020.

Furthermore, the second iteration of the basic training programme for the European standing corps category 1 commenced in October 2020 when 165 trainees were trained. It is delivered according to the initial six-month contact phase training programme and is expected to be completed in May 2021.

Specific specialised training products for border management and return, including specific training on the protection of vulnerable persons, including children, developed and delivered.

In parallel with the implementation of the basic training programme for the European standing corps category 1, a comprehensive development and (re)design process for the profile related specialised training was undertaken in 2020. The development process brought together content experts from Member States and Frontex operational units in a joint effort to formulate learning outcomes relevant to the tasks and powers defined for each operational profile and to translate into the training content the best practices identified in the different areas of border and coast guarding.

Building on the knowledge of experts nominated by the Member States, complemented by the highly specialised expertise provided by an external fundamental rights expert, and in line with recommendations presented by Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights, tailored fundamental rights online modules and contact sessions have been embedded as an integral part of all the profile-related specialised courses dedicated to the standing corps. Specialised sections on fundamental rights raised awareness and provided harmonised guidelines on respecting and promoting fundamental rights while performing duties of different border control stages and within the scope of various profiles. The 'Course manual for Frontex fundamental rights trainers' was distributed to the dedicated fundamental rights trainers, providing comprehensive operational guidelines. Following the objective of special attention to be paid to children's rights and ensuring that the best interests of the child are respected, 'Frontex course manual on the protection of children at borders' was published in 2020, aiming to support trainers in their in-depth analysis of risks faced by children at borders and the applicable counter-measures.

As a result, eight new profile-related specialised training courses dedicated to the standing corps (all categories) were created and 2 other profile-related specialised training courses were revised.

A total number of 123 European standing corps category 1 followed the specialised training course corresponding to their assigned operational profile in December 2020 and were trained for their first deployment. Due to the COVID-19 challenges and restrictions, the specialised profile-related training for the remaining 129 standing corps category 1 who completed the basic training programme was finalised in January 2021.

#### Learner records and training maps for standing corps

The activity foresees the establishment of the learner records pilot system and training maps for the standing corps. Training maps will reflect the learner path towards the achievement of operational competence related to Frontex profiles, from basic training to advanced specialisation, management and refresher training. Learner records will facilitate the implementation of the quality assurance system (QA) and tailored procedures and will support training life-cycle processes by capturing the evidence of learner achievement, enabling data monitoring and reporting.

In 2020, the concept design for learners' records related to the basic training for standing corps category 1 was implemented in the learning management system. The competency framework, learning plans and assessments completion models for the basic training for the standing corps category 1 were developed in Moodle.

#### Instructional design for border and coast guard training

The activity focuses on designing digital learning to increase the flexibility and effectiveness of border and coast guard training delivered by Frontex Training Unit (TRU). It entails designing and developing blended learning strategies using e-learning solutions, following a coherent and structured pedagogical approach, based on the European Sectoral

Qualifications Framework (SQF) design principles. Effective use of digital learning includes the development of e-learning materials, simulations, virtual reality in the context of border and coast guard education.

In 2020, the following activities were provided:

- expertise to ensure development of the courses in Moodle and support to all users in terms of learning management and administration;
- technical support in the development of the child protection e-learning tool;
- maintenance of the return e-learning course;
- finalisation of the development for the border-check simulator.

Training skills for standing corps category 1 trainers – the course was reviewed for online delivery. Five iterations were delivered last year and 53 participants certified as trainers for standing corps.

#### Technological solutions for training management

The activity supports training life-cycle processes with technical solutions and learning management technologies. Training activities and courses are managed through the Aula platform. Technical support is offered to all users of the system in terms of learning management and administration, including learning records. In 2020, Aula was expanded with new capabilities suitable for the online format, direct and real-time contact between Frontex and the border and coast guard community.

Aula 3.0 offers direct access to all information about Frontex training activities for border and coast guards while increasing the training management and delivery capacities. In 2020, the platform contributed to improved planning, management and evaluation of over 146 activities organised by Frontex involving 2,369 members of the border and coast guard community across Europe.

The main new capabilities of Aula 3.0 are:

- the digitalisation of the documents used for invitation and nominalisation of the participants in TRU meetings;
- capabilities to develop QA standardised and customised forms, centralised data is collected and analysed;
- online standardised curriculum development;
- enhanced data collection and reporting capacities through further customisation, using business intelligence;
- collaborative document management;
- enhanced user support through online helpdesk service.

Propose MB decision on uniform design and specifications for adoption by MB and launch acquisition project once MB decision has been adopted.

Adopted by the Management Board (MB Decision 20/2020) the Agency developed the design and specification for the uniform as a modular and layered design, allowing for appropriately combined several garments, suitable for all seasons and physical environments, which can cater to different gender and physical characteristics, and enable performance of tasks associated with many field and headquarters duties e.g. on foot, in vehicles, on ships and in aircraft, formal duties, training, ceremonial duties and sports.

The uniform of the EBCG standing corps category 1 shall have a dual purpose:

- strategic purpose to convey EU values, integrating the authority and the service to the Union citizens;
- tactical purpose allowing to carry out duties ensuring that it is wearable and provides protection in varied operational areas, climate conditions, the duty of care.

Furthermore, the established design and requirements are based on thorough research and engaging recognised experts in the field, i.e.:

- Mapping and benchmarking of European uniform concepts, such as:
  - Studying the latest implemented law enforcement uniform concept (Estonian border guard);
  - Studying technical specifications from recent public tenders for other types of uniforms (e.g. Swedish armed forces);
  - Consultations with academia (e.g. Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences, Germany, and Aalto University, Finland).
- Consulting the needs of the operational entities in the Agency;
- Studying recommendations and minimums standards established by the European Police Association, NATO, and other professional bodies;
- Surveying Agency staff (both Seconded National Experts and Temporary Agents) and deployed Team Members (from MS/SAC) regarding their experiences related to the use of uniforms;
- Soliciting the external consultancy service<sup>15</sup> in order to provide expert advice on design and technical requirements throughout all phases of the project.

<sup>15</sup> Focused on textile and garment manufacturing – in the context of textile use, service and production - with significant experience in the strategic market and business considerations, ranging from support to civil service at national and European level as well as networking, compliance, marketing, communications, sales, process optimisation, supplier audits, quality assurance, design, product development.

## Results on indicators

A number of recruited, trained and equipped category 1 staff operational by the end of 2020. Target: compliance with the EBCG Regulation.

Basic training for the European standing corps category 1: 252 graduates out of 260 learners enrolled. Profile-related specialised training for the European standing corps category 1: 123 European standing corps category 1 trained. Uniforms and personal protective gear were tendered.

### Key Activity 3.2.2. Provide pre-deployment induction and specialised training for standing corps category 2 and 3.

#### Specific Objectives

Provide pre-deployment induction and specialised training in accordance with operational needs.  
Further develop and deliver specialised training products related to integrated border management tasks.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Specialised training products related to integrated border management tasks delivered including to officers of the competent national bodies.
- Specific training products for border management and return, including specific training on the protection of vulnerable persons, including children, further developed and delivered.

In 2020, the objective related to providing pre-deployment training and specialised training for category 2 and 3 was three-fold:

- to deliver pre-deployment and specialised training to the European border and coast guard team members (EBCGT) deployed in Frontex operational activities;
- to further develop and align the pre-deployment induction training and the specialised training to the requirements of the EBCG Regulation;
- to deliver pre-deployment and specialised training to the standing corps category 2 and 3 members once these are made available by the Member States.

Pursuing these objectives, as of January 2020, the Agency continued the delivery of the pre-deployment induction training package pursuing its implementation on a systematic basis for the EBCGT members deployed for the first time in a Frontex operational activity. In total, 296 participants were enrolled in the pre-deployment induction training and 223 completed the training.

Furthermore, in the period January – March 2020, the Agency provided EBCGT members with specialised training relevant to their tasks and powers in the field and trained additional 109 participants for the rapid border interventions team.

As of March 2020, due to the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related prevention and restrictive measures imposed by the Member States, a considerable number of planned activities dedicated to training of the EBCGT members had to be postponed or cancelled.

However, the delivery of the pre-deployment induction training package continued in an online environment. The development activities aiming to align the pre-deployment induction training and the specialised training to the requirements of the EBCG Regulation were realised remotely, with the support of content experts from Member States and other Frontex operational units.

Given the relevance of training and the new responsibilities of Frontex deriving from the EBCG Regulation, and with consideration of the new operational profiles defined by Frontex Management Board for the deployment of the standing corps, necessary actions were undertaken by Frontex to enhance the development of fundamental rights components tailored to different profile-related and specialised training. The same approach towards fundamental rights mainstreaming was applied to the pre-deployment induction training.

Considering the impact of COVID-19 on the work of the border and coast guards working at the external borders of the EU, a specialised online training module on health and safety was developed and made available to 129 officers deployed in Frontex operational activities. The training module encompasses relevant aspects of COVID-19 prevention based on best practices identified by the WHO, the European Commission and the ECDC. Upon request, the module was further made available to the EASO staff deployed for operational purposes.

As of July 2020, upon release of some of the COVID-19 restrictions imposed by the Member States, the specialised training for EBCGT members was resumed on a limited basis, driven by the most urgent operational needs.

Furthermore, as of October 2020, upon completion of the Annual Bilateral Negotiations, the Agency launched the profile-related specialised training for the European standing corps category 2 to ensure their operational readiness as of January 2020. Despite making available the full capacity for ensuring the timely training, due to the COVID-19 challenges and restrictions, only 102 officers selected to be deployed as European standing corps category 2 were made available by the

Member States for training. These officers were trained by the end of December 2020 according to their assigned operational profile.

### Results on indicators

Coverage of operational needs not covered by category 1. Target: trained category 2 and 3 staff in accordance with operational needs.

In 2020, a total number of 461 officers of Member States followed the pre-deployment induction training package and 325 officers of Member States completed the different profile related specialised courses. Out of these, 102 officers were assigned as standing corps category 2 and trained accordingly.

**Key Activity 3.2.3. Ensure safe and healthy working conditions for deployed personnel in operational areas through the establishment and implementation of the duty of care mechanism.**

### Specific Objectives

Establish and implement the concept and capability requirements to be compliant with the legal obligations for the duty of care.

Establish and implement the necessary processes to manage e.g. occupational health and safety and system safety for the Agency's own equipment.

### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

Safe, secure and healthy conditions for the standing corps.

- A revision of the OSH policy, adapted to the new EBCG Regulation, has been put forward to Executive Management.
- The external stakeholders, in particular, include other Justice and Home Affairs Agencies such as Europol and EASO, with which Frontex updated the booklet on 'Deployment Information' for deployed staff members, taking on board guidance on protective measures for COVID-19.
- Active contacts with Public Health Authorities, including ECDC and national authorities around Europe, as well as medical experts supported the further development of the Agency's safety and health capabilities, adapting them to be able to protect personnel deployed in operations when faced with a pandemic.
- Cooperation with EU Institutions and Agencies ensured the successful launch of an inter-institutional procurement for personal protective equipment with Frontex in the lead.
- In parallel, the current contractor at the time enabled airlifting of replenishments of personal protective equipment stocks in the operational theatres.
- Before the full lockdown, Frontex OSH officer together with a contracted medical advisor visited Italy to better understand the implications of COVID-19, speaking both to the experts on public health as well as deployed personnel. Nevertheless, due to the subsequent internal mission restrictions and travel restrictions within Member States none of the planned workplace inspections and field visits could be performed in 2020, which compromised up to a certain extent the overall situational awareness on the sanitary conditions in the operational areas. The inspections are now planned to take place in 2021.
- The outbreaks of COVID infections in the training centres were contained through the establishment and implementation of a crisis management plan. It further saw the Frontex OSH officer intermittent presence in one of the training centres as part of the training command structure.

### Results on indicators

A number of occupational hazards. Target: No occupational hazards.

Incidents, i.e. number of occupational hazards, reported for deployed personnel are categorised as:

- Accidents involving personnel both on and off duty;
- Hospitalisation of personnel;
- Infections and diseases outbreaks in operational areas.

Compared to the previous years, the following trends have been identified:

1. The number of accidents and hospitalisations remained at a very low or almost insignificant level, with only two accidents (2019: six) for the total of 6,612 annual deployments registered in the OPERA system (2019: 7,436). In 2020 no accident was reported off duty (2019: one).
2. The number of cases of hospitalisations since the first report of 2016 remains at a low level (six in 2016, four in 2017, five in 2018 and 2019, four in 2020).
3. Cases of potential infections and outbreaks (other than COVID-19) remained at zero. Thus, no infections or outbreaks of contagious diseases in addition to COVID-19 were reported in 2020.
4. Alongside very few reported health incidents (accidents and hospitalisations), the medical evacuation was not needed.

The following accidents on duty were reported:

- **JO Poseidon 2020:** On 10 May 2020 a crew member of a Portuguese Coastal Patrol Boat (CPB) deployed to Lesbos while undertaking maintenance activities stumbled and fell, which lead to an injured leg. The crew member was unable to continue his mission, kept resting and finished his deployment as originally planned on 18 May 2020.
- **JO Themis 2020:** On 28 October 2020 an Italian team leader deployed in the hotspot of Lampedusa suffered a stroke. Although a medical evacuation was conducted and the patient was transported to the hospital in Palermo, the officer passed away on the same day.

No accident involving personnel ~~off duty~~ was reported in 2020.

No accident involving deployed personnel in operations **off duty** was reported in 2020, however one recruit of the standing corps category 1 in training had a fatal motorbike accident in December off duty.

The following hospitalisations were reported.

- **JO Themis 2020:** On 6 January 2020 a Dutch cultural mediator deployed in Catania was taken to the local hospital due to heart rhythm disruptions. After a successful surgery performed on 14 January 2020, he was released from the hospital on 17 January.
- **JO Rapid Border Intervention 2020 Evros:** On 12 May 2020, a Romanian border surveillance officer was hospitalised due to a pain in his belly. He was diagnosed with appendicitis.
- **JO Themis 2020:** On 30 August 2020, a sailing vessel with 18 migrants on board was intercepted and escorted by an Italian CPB towards Crotone harbour. Before entering the port, due to unknown reasons a fire broke out on board the sailing vessel which finally exploded. As a result, there were three missing migrants, five hospitalised ones and there were three fatalities amongst the migrants. Two Guardia di Finanza officers were hospitalised.

**Infections and outbreaks.** COVID-19 impact on operationally deployed HR in 2020:

Operation	COVID confirmed	COVID quarantined	COVID hospitalised
JO Themis 2020	1	15	
JO Indalo 2020	2	4	1
JO Poseidon 2020	3	45	
JO FOA Land 2020	7	14	
JO FP Land 2020		5	
JO FOA WB 2020	12	41	
MMO Black Sea 2020		2	
JO Minerva 2020	1	16	
Return Activities	1	3	
JO FP Air 2020		5	

Table 5: COVID-19 Impact

**Key Activity 3.2.4. Develop standing corps deployment models ensuring flexibility and effective achievement of operational goals.**

#### Specific Objectives

Establish the modalities for deployment taking into account e.g. rotation periods, composition of teams, relocation practicalities etc.

**Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

**Full operational capability of standing corps by 2021**

The modalities for the deployment of the category 1 and 2 of the standing corps have been established. Among them there: are deployment decisions, travel modalities, relocation practicalities and structured communication with other entities. Rotation periods will be planned during 2021, according to the operational needs and taking into consideration the conclusion of the training of next batches of Cat. 1.

The development of the supervisory mechanism started and it should be concluded in early 2021

Indicator: evaluation report on operational activities. The ratio between the average deployment duration and the full-time equivalent for standing corps category 2 and 3 staff. Target: achievement of operational goals: standing corps under category 2 and 3 should be deployed at 75% of their full-time equivalent

An evaluation report couldn't have been made since the deployments of category 1 and category 2 started from 01.01.2021. The evaluation reports for operational activities will be made in 2021 and will be available from 2022. An evaluation on the ratio between the average deployment duration and the full-time equivalent can be made from 2022 on.



Category 1 personnel have not been fully equipped in 2020. The process will be completed in 2021. Several temporary solutions have been proactively found to compensate for these deficiencies. For example, training uniforms are used, pending the acquisition of the service ones. Pending the provision of service weapons, it has been planned to use the ones provided by Member States for officers of category 1.

#### **Key Activity 3.2.5. Support development of Member States/Schengen-associated countries' and third countries capabilities.**

##### **Specific Objectives**

Provide advice and share best practices where relevant.

##### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Despite the heavy impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agency continued to assist the Member States with upscaling their national border management-related capabilities by delivering training in different IBM-related areas, pursuing with priority to bridge the gaps identified by the recommendations made under the vulnerability assessment or Schengen evaluation processes. The delivery of the specialised training courses was adjusted to enable remote learning. Amongst the **training activities** with the highest impact were:

**Course on Entry/Exit-System (EES) implementation:** further to a comprehensive training development exercise supported by Member States, the online self-study course on the Entry/Exit-System was launched in July 2020. This online course aims to familiarise the border guards and other officers performing border checks with the new elements introduced by the EES Regulation to the current border control process. The launch was complemented by an introductory webinar for Member States and Schengen Associated Countries' National Training coordinators (NTCs). In July 2020, the Agency organised a joint webinar together with eu-LISA, CEPOL, Europol and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) to explain the different EES business case for the different stakeholders and advertise the training offers of the Agencies to national multipliers from MS/SACs.

Frontex extended its support to Member States/SACs in the preparation of the implementation of the entry/exit system at the external borders with a series of EES residential courses focusing on the challenges and possible solutions for the EES implementation with a strong component regarding the exchange of experiences/best practices between the Member States. The residential courses, consisting of online self-study preparation as well as two days of intensive on-the-spot training for national multipliers at selected BCPs, involved trainers from eu-LISA, FRA, Frontex Research and Innovation Unit (RIU) and Member States. Due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions in place in many Member States/SACs, the second and third iteration of the residential training for national multipliers had to be carried out online. The feedback from the participants was very encouraging and the high number of nominations for the first course in 2021 shows both high demand from the Member States/SACs, as well as the recognition of the quality delivered by Frontex with the support of eu-LISA, FRA and selected Member States.

**Course for CIRAM analysts:** Frontex Training Unit assists the Member States with upscaling their national capabilities in the area of CIRAM based risk analysis through, among others, the delivery of the CIRAM intensive course. Designed to raise awareness on the Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model as foreseen by the EBCG Regulation (present also in the previous Regulation (EU) 2016/1624), the course has been successfully delivered over the years for the benefit of several Member States, including those that had to follow up on vulnerability assessment process and Schengen evaluations.

During the pandemic, in 2020 the course was adjusted for remote delivery with the support of the CIRAM dedicated team of trainers. As a result of their commitment and professionalism, a course based on live lessons and exercises delivered on-line were successfully implemented, which granted a high level of interaction between trainers and participants, minimising the limitations imposed by distance. Support training content was made available for the students on an e-learning platform to increase the learning efficiency. The combination of both type of learning, namely asynchronous and synchronous, turned out to be an effective solution. The course was delivered in the Netherlands and was already requested by several other MS.

**ETIAS training:** following a training need analysis carried out by Frontex together with Member States/SACs, Frontex initiated in September 2020 the development of training materials in the field of ETIAS. Frontex is supported in this endeavour by experts from a considerable number of Member States/SACs. It is foreseen to produce an online self-study training course on basic instructions on ETIAS by quarter three of 2021. The course aims to give all officers that need to deal with the new system a first introduction to Aula. The online course will be available in Frontex Aula for everyone from the law enforcement community who has a Frontex Aula account.

**Training on advance information and training on the border guard and customs cooperation advisers:** despite the ever-changing COVID-19 situation in 2020, the training unit carried out a series of development meetings together with the Member States experts, both in-person and online, to revise both courses and to update them in line with the latest EU legislation and good practices of the Member States.

**Harmonisation of border and coast guarding education in the EU (CCC implementation):** the Common Core Curriculum - Interoperability Assessment Programme (CCC-IAP) 2019–2020 was finalised. The CCC-IAP aims to evaluate how widely

the CCC Basic has been integrated into the national curricula of border and coast guard basic training institutions as well as the extent to which students have achieved the competence related to interoperability. Therefore, the CCC-IAP includes two main instruments, namely 1) the implementation status questionnaire addressed to the training institutions and 2) the online test addressed to the students, graduates of the CCC Basic-2017. The data collected was analysed and presented in the final report on the CCC-IAP.

Altogether 20 institutions from 19 countries (including 5 non-EU countries), out of the expected 29 institutions from 27 countries, responded to the implementation questionnaire. The participating countries included Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo\*, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

The student evaluation was completed in 15 institutions in 14 countries (four of which were non-EU countries). The countries included Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. A total of 642 graduates participated in the test. There were 12 cancellations of student assessment versus the planned 27 due to the COVID pandemic.

Despite the difficult situation, thanks to the great effort of the national instructors, members of the CCC Basic core group, national experts and trainers, it was possible to gather the necessary data for the successful analysis of the CCC-IAP, enabling the further update of the CCC Basic in 2021.

The report has been so far the only source of compiling data and information on national training systems for basic training of border and coast guards in and outside the European Union.

**European Joint Master's Programme in Strategic Border Management (EJMSBM):** besides the finalisation of the third iteration of the **European Joint Master's Programme in Strategic Border Management (EJMSBM)** in which students successfully commenced their dissertation writing period, a call for a new consortium agreement was drafted to launch the final preparations in 2021. Finally, the programme has also undergone a successful re-accreditation process, obtaining high appreciation from the international accreditation panel and will be receiving its final statement on re-accreditation in 2021 after a thorough scrutiny process.

**Training grants for Member States:** the support for the Member State cooperation through training grants for joint projects was severely affected due to the pandemic. On the request from the beneficiaries, the project duration of the grant agreements signed under the 2019 call for proposals 'Development and delivery of training activities for border and coast guards' was extended. Consequently, the call for proposal 2020 had to be postponed.

In 2020, the training quality assurance system was implemented in the majority of training courses managed by TRU. As a consequence, harmonised and cost-effective, quality-assured, border and coast training courses led to operational competences of border and coast guards deployed in Frontex operations or working at the national level. Specifically, support was provided to the quality assurance of the basic training programme for the standing corps, including feedback analysis, recommendations and measures for continuous improvement as well as assistance during the design process of the training programme.

## Courses

**Border and coast guard training delivery methodology:** the course was reviewed for fully online delivery. Two iterations were delivered in 2020 and 27 participants certified as Frontex trainers.

**English for border and coast guarding:** this activity integrates various actions related to English proficiency. English for border and coast guarding online courses and manuals aim at enabling the border and coast guard officers to develop effective communication skills in English for interaction with individuals and groups while performing border control tasks in line with national and EU border applicable legislation.

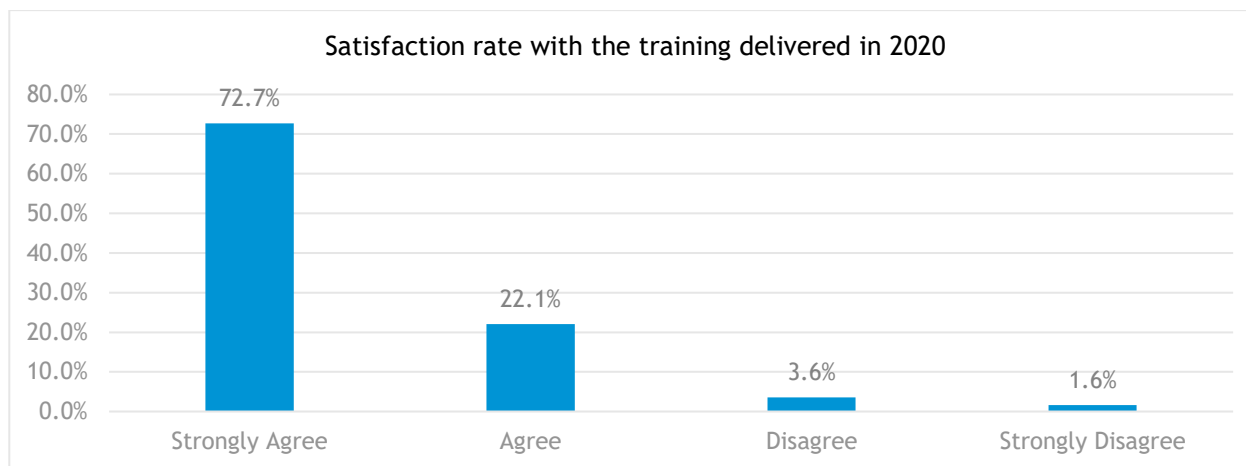
In close connection with the quality assurances processes, this activity also includes the management of the English proficiency assessment tool used for the selection of the members of the standing corps, as well as trainers and other learners. In 2020, 'English for border and coast guarding level 1 course' was operationalised for online delivery. Eight iterations were organised in which 2083 students participated.

## Results on indicators

Satisfaction score (CSAT) of the internal and external stakeholders running the processes and using the tools. Target: CSAT - level 4 on a scale from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Trainees' satisfaction rate with the training delivered in 2020 was 94.9% against the targeted 85%.

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status. It is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



Graph 1c: Satisfaction rate

### Focus area 3.3. Continue to develop and implement the strategy for acquisition of own technical equipment and establish decentralised logistics system

**Key Activity 3.3.1. Continue to deliver and to develop further Frontex own technical equipment and services providing operational activities with necessary capabilities to achieve desired operational effect.**

#### Specific Objectives

Specify and manage capability requirements; engaging in the procurement of systems, services, equipment and materials; managing commercial relationships and contracts.

Identify the general determinants of efficient and effective acquisition and through life support to major assets and analysing their applicability to specific systems and usage scenarios.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Supporting the analysis of continuous coherence between operational needs and business constraints (legal, financial, etc.).
- Implementing the acquisition procedures in line with the procurement plan and project/contract management.

Results have been constantly delivered throughout 2020 by integrating the operational needs ensured through a continuous communication with internal stakeholders. Consequently, out of 24 acquisition procedures for technical equipment/services, 16 were processed in accordance with the established priorities and the available resources.

#### Results on indicators

**1. Indicator: number of record of exceptions opened. Target < 5% of the overall number of acquisition procedures managed.**

The target was achieved. As regards the number or record exceptions open, out of 68 acquisition procedures managed (tenders and contracts), two records of exception (below 3% of all acquisition procedures) were opened in 2020.

**2. Indicator: number of tenders published with respect to the baseline procurement plan. Target ≥ 80%.**

Out of 24 acquisition procedures for technical equipment/services, as listed to the procurement plan related to acquisition effort for operational activities 14 were processed in a timely manner up to publication stage, as well as in accordance with the established priorities and the available resources. The percentage of number of successfully published tenders with respect to the baseline procurement plan was more than 58%.

However, catering to urgent acquisition needs in wake of rapid border interventions, COVID-19 pandemic and the establishment of the standing corps, overall number of 59 tenders was managed, 49 were processed up to publication stage or more, in accordance with the established priorities and the available resources. Taking that into consideration, the result achieved was more than 83%. Apart from the quantitative characteristics, it is worthy to be mentioned that certain published tenders were very crucial and important either in terms of complexity or in terms of volume or lack of precedent at EU administration level.

Particularly relevant acquisition procedures published, and managed:

- Mobile surveillance systems (4-wheel-drive vehicles with a system of surveillance sensors - thermal camera, day camera and surveillance radar installed on board, as well as a communication system).
- Medium altitude long endurance remotely piloted aircraft systems (aerial surveillance service including reliable close to real time live data streaming and data sharing capacity in the requested formats)
- Service uniforms (the first time for an EU Agency) for the standing corps
- Personal protective equipment (the largest interinstitutional framework contract ever led by Frontex: with participation of approximately 50 agencies and EU bodies)
- Frontex aerial surveillance (both scheduled and unscheduled surveillance missions in the areas of interest) characterised by the highest budget planned ever by Frontex for a single framework contract (+100 M€)

**3. Indicator: timeline control with respect to the contractual baseline measuring milestones deviations. Target  $\geq 80\%$ .**

A preliminary tool for establishing a baseline for each acquisition procedure is still under preparation, as regards the timeline control with respect to the contractual baseline measuring milestones deviations.

A tool for monitoring and controlling the evolution of the main milestones for the acquisition procedures (from conception to disposal), with respect to a specific baseline, was planned to be introduced and adopted in 2020 but the workload induced by the operational needs associated with the introduction of the standing corps and the limitation of human resources have caused the de-prioritisation of this project. It is planned that would be introduced in Q2 2021.

**Key Activity 3.3.2. Establish quality assured procedures and processes for acquisition management, considering system engineering and safety management, and ensuring transparency and accountability.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

Standardise the management of acquisition procedures.

Introduce processes for project/contract management based on system engineering, quality control and risk management.

Adopt control tools to enhance transparency and accountability.

#### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

##### **Consolidation and continuous improvement of the RASCI tool.**

A responsible accountable support consulted-informed matrix has been introduced and constantly adopted as a versatile tool for describing roles and responsibilities and increasing communication, collaboration, and teamwork. It is a living document that is continuously amended, commented and issued within the unit in accordance with the established priorities and the available human resources.

**Formal adoption of the pooled resources unit internal processes for project initiation, implementation and payments management.**

The processes for project initiation, implementation as well as for payments management was initiated in order to ensure that tasks are completed in a way that is systematic, and organised, by involving the relevant actors and producing all the expected outputs.

##### **Adaptation of the pooled resources unit MyFX structure to the acquisition processes**

The plan is to have all the processes finalised and introduced and to organise familiarisation sessions on all of them because logically interconnected and better to manage as an overall matter for all the involved stakeholders.

#### **Results on indicators**

**Indicator: introduction of the processes. Target Q1 2020.**

The process for payment has been formally introduced. It is planned that the remaining processes will be adopted within Q2 2021, and consequently the familiarisation workshops will start immediately after that and will last until the end of 2021.

**Indicator: MyFX structured and used for storing project/contract management data/documentation. Target: starting from Q1 2020.**

Migration started in 2020. Result 100%

**Key Activity 3.3.3. Manage technical equipment deployed in the operational areas through established capacities for maintenance, redeployment provision of associated services, as well as disposal management.**

### Specific Objectives

Technically manage systems, equipment and other materiel throughout the lifecycle, taking into account associated contractual obligations, upgrades, refurbishments and service life-extensions.

### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

Pool of Frontex own systems, equipment, services and other material.

In 2020 acceptance and order of heavy technical equipment commenced, which will gradually constitute the own fleet of assets to provide operational and technical assistance to EU Member States and certain other countries in the area of border control.

In addition to the leased patrol cars and related fuel services, the following equipment and services was procured:

- light technical equipment (compact magnifiers, document readers, thermal cameras, etc.),
- rented mobile offices,
- chartered planes for operational activities,
- interpretation and cultural experts' services,
- chartered vessels for readmission by sea, provision of air surveillances services (by planes, helicopters and MALE drones),
- purchase of training outfits,
- activation of brokerage insurance services,
- acquisition of non-lethal weapons, bullet proof vests, carrying belts, and accessories,
- rented rental of local warehouses, parking places and storage,
- the order of 15 mobile surveillance systems (MSS).

The Agency successfully finalised and approved the design of its first owned heavy technical equipment, the vehicle for migration management support (VMM). The first VMM prototype was formally accepted in November 2020 and then officially registered with a Polish plate number in December 2020.

### Results on indicators

Indicator: Agency's share of the pool for technical equipment. Target: the strategy for acquisition and leasing of technical equipment MB 28/2017 and the multiannual acquisition plan (to be established by end of 2019).

The Multiannual Acquisition Strategy is being developed using preliminary Life Cycle Cost Analyses (LCCA) for some specific types of assets: mobility vehicles for the standing corps, VMM and MSS, and vessels. LCCA is intended to become the main tool for taking decisions for sustainable acquisitions within the multiannual acquisition implementation plan.

The workload induced by the operational needs associated with the introduction of the standing corps and the limitation of human resources caused the de-prioritisation of this project. It is planned that it would restart in Q2 2021.

### Key Activity 3.3.4. Establish modular and scalable decentralised logistics capacity to deliver technical equipment and services to the operational areas.

### Specific Objectives

Manage information for improved operational availability (estimating, forecasting and modelling).

Optimise supply chains through better logistics and inventory control.

Manage efficient and effective support solutions to sustain diverse types of maritime, land, and air systems throughout their service lives.

### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Preparation of operational processes for logistics.
- Model agreement consolidation with Member States.

The Agency started elaborating the concept of developing an Integrated Logistics Support (ILS) Capacity that will ensure that the Agency is able to manage:

- the Agency-level supply chain for all ground systems: land equipment, weapons, uniforms, etc. Supply chain management is intended as the end-to-end integration of all inventory management activities of organic and commercial suppliers as to provide responsive, consistent, and reliable supply support to the joint operations.
- the maintenance for all ground systems and services. This includes end-to-end integration of all organic and commercial maintenance capabilities critical to the readiness and sustainability of operational activities.
- the overall process for all ground systems and services. This is focused on the end to end integration of all storage and transportation activities of organic and commercial providers as to provide responsive, consistent, and reliable support to the operational activities

- Supply chain management (deployment, inventory, transportation, etc.).
- Small logistics footprint.

Specific Integrated Logistics Support processes were identified to be developed and adopted. They will generate internal operational procedures that will allow a gradual adaptation of the workflows to the industrial standards expected to be followed to ensure the performances described within the model agreements under negotiation with EU Member States.

#### Results on indicators

##### 1. Bilateral adoption of the model agreement between Frontex and Member States. Target Q4 2020.

A preliminary version of the model agreement was prepared and negotiated with some Member States (Greece, Bulgaria and Hungary). It is planned that within Q2 2021 the process will progress towards its formal implementation.

##### 2. Introduction of the processes. Target Q3 2020.

Integrated logistics support processes were initiated. These processes will drive supportability and logistic support considerations into the design of systems or equipment, taking into account their life cycle. All elements of logistic support will be planned, acquired, tested, and provided in a timely and cost-effective manner.

##### 3. Timeline control with regard to the contractual baseline (to be adopted at signature) measuring milestones deviations. Target $\geq 80\%$ .

The preliminary tool for establishing a baseline for each acquisition procedure is still under preparation.

### Focus area 3.4. Research, technology development and innovation to effectively support capability development of the EBCG

**Key Activity 3.4.1. Deliver, in close cooperation with the Member States and the Commission, technical standards for the equipment to be included in the capability pools and to be deployed in the activities of the Agency.**

#### Specific Objectives

Develop technical and operational standards for technical equipment and assessment methodologies, among others for biometric technology.

Provide technical support to Member States and third countries in implementing new technology and in developing new capabilities (among others biometrics, advance information and traveller intelligence) for border management; and provide support to the EBCGA and to the European Commission for the implementation of EU policies in this area, including EES and ETIAS.

Deliver capacity assessment and capacity development in support of Member States and partner third countries.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

Minimum requirements for aerial and terrestrial equipment developed.

Technical standards for equipment related to maritime, aerial equipment, as well as land border surveillance and technical standards for EES equipment and document inspection were developed.

Performance assessment methodology for document inspection systems further validated, and a practical tool developed for the Member States to regularly test the performance of the system.

The further development of the performance assessment methodology was put on hold in the beginning of 2020, due to the prioritisation of the work on developing standards. It is now in the 2021 calendar of activities.

Regular end-user contribution to European and international standardisation bodies provided

Due to the pandemic and ensuing cancellation of events organised by European and international standardisation bodies, in 2020 Frontex contributions to standardisation bodies were limited.



Simulation and operational research conducted to support Member States with the implementation of an Entry/Exit System, and in support of other business units; with field visits organised to the BCPs in Member States and third countries.

The support provided to MSs regarding optimisation of resources at the border crossing points in preparation of EES has been transferred largely to virtual meetings instead of missions, while due to the COVID pandemic (e.g. lack of extra-Schengen flights and related data), support regarding a few border crossing points had to be postponed. Specifically, in 2020, 13 border crossing points (6 MSs) have been assessed, while 10 border crossing points (6 MS) remain to be assessed. In addition, two MS withdrew their request for support.

Study on advance information at land and sea borders conducted and a meeting organised to disseminate the study results; potential working group established to develop best practice guidelines on the use of advance information at land and sea borders.

The completion of the study on advance information has been delayed due to the COVID pandemic. It is currently planned to be finalised in 2021. Following amended planning for 2020, the meeting disseminating the results of the study on Advanced Information study results is postponed to 2021.

Study visits on advance information and traveller intelligence in selected EU Member States organised for Western Balkan countries to support them in the implementation of advance information systems.

Following a reprioritisation exercise at the end of 2019, the study visits on advance information and traveller intelligence in selected EU Member States organised for Western Balkan countries to support them in the implementation of advance information systems have been cancelled.

Support provided for the organisation of industry days on analytics systems for EU Member States (and potentially pre-accession Western Balkan countries).

Following the difficulties to organise physical meetings and shift to virtual industry meetings, the organisation of industry days on analytics systems for EU Member States was postponed to 2021.

In accordance with the IPA II phase II project implementation, develop the capacity of Western Balkan countries to identify and register migrants.

The Agency contributed to the implementation of the IPA II Phase II by developing the Terms of Reference for developing the Master Plans. The implementation phase of the project will happen during 2021.

Development and delivery of training contents and expertise on Automated Border Control (ABC), EES and Advance Information - tactical risk profiling and traveller targeting provided.

Development and delivery of training contents on ABC, EES and Advance Information has been aligned with the planning of the Training Unit in charge of the course delivery.

International Conference on Biometrics for Borders organised, and optional workshops on advance information and traveller intelligence organised for Western Balkan countries.

The International Conference on Biometrics for Borders 2020 with the thematic focus on the implementation of the Entry and Exit System EES was organised in virtual format, on 1-3 December 2021.

Needs assessment and plan of action with Member States in relation to the EES implementation. Actions with Western Balkan countries in the area of advance information and traveller intelligence.

Developing the capacity of the Member States in relation to EES implementation was provided through technical support activities, namely through the provision of operational research models and simulations for the optimisation of border crossing points processes, infrastructure and internal organisation. Also, support was provided in collaboration with MS and EU Commission, through the development of technical advice on minimum requirements for EES related equipment for border checks. The activities initially foreseen to take place with WB countries on advance information were not carried out due to the extension of the pandemic and a shift in priorities towards activities directed to support the MS.

## Results on indicators

1. Indicator and target: technical report on standards for aerial equipment delivered in Q1 2020; technical reports on standards for terrestrial equipment delivered in Q3-Q4 2020.

Technical reports on standards for aerial equipment were delivered in Q2 2021. Technical reports on standards for terrestrial equipment were delivered in Q3 2020. In addition, technical standards on border checks on EES related equipment and on document inspection equipment were delivered in Q4 2020.

2. Indicator and target: specific input provided to 75% of standardisation meeting in which participation is expected.

Input was provided on standardisation. In addition to the technical meeting involving selected MS, plenary meeting involving all MS was organised to review the standards on aerial equipment, EES, DIS, land border surveillance equipment.

3. Indicator: draft operational tool for performance assessment of document inspection systems capabilities.

4. Indicator: majority of Member States participating in performance assessment methodology for document inspection systems and its practical use

The SPD 2020 indicators related to the performance assessment activities could not be achieved as the activity was put on hold in 2020.

5. Indicator and target: development and implementation of three operational models for land, air and sea in relation to the EES by Q1-2020.

6. Indicator and target: at least five field visits and support delivered to Member States, in relation to the implementation of the EES, by Q4-2020.

7. Indicator and target: conducting of up to two field visits to non-EU countries in relation to the EES implementation during Q2-Q4 2020.

Operational models for land, air and sea borders in relation to the EES were developed according to MS request. No field visits were organised to MS or non-EU countries due to the travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Indicator and targets: delivery of the study by Q4 2020, according to contractual timeline; study shared with all Member States/Schengen-associated countries and relevant EU institutions and agencies by Q4-2020. 70% satisfaction survey on value added participation from MS/SACs during a meeting organised to present the results of the study in Q4-2020.

The completion of the study on advance information was delayed to 2021 due to the pandemic scenario. Following amended planning for 2020, the meeting disseminating the results of the study on Advanced Information study results is postponed to 2021.

9. Indicator: manage project IPA II implementation to achieve the objectives as set out in project plan.

The Agency managed the implementation of the IPA II Phase II by delivering the Terms of Reference for the development of Master Plans in 2020.

10. Indicator and target: organisation of at least two study visits throughout 2020 with 60% participation from Western Balkan countries in the study visits on advance information systems.

No study visits were organised for WB countries due to the travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic situation and a shift in priorities towards activities directed to support the MS.

11. Indicator: contributions as agreed provided to advisory group and other meetings organised by EU institutions and agencies in view of EES, ETIAS implementation and interoperability.

Frontex regularly participated in the AG EES-ETIAS meeting. In addition, Frontex took the lead in developing a list of EES equipment and developed minimum requirements for EES equipment that were presented to the AG for comments.

12. Indicator and target: expert support provided to one industry day/ event relevant to EES implementation. Target of 70% participation from Member States

The planned industry days on analytics systems relevant for EES were not implemented. Instead, along the International Conference on Biometrics for Borders 2020, a virtual exhibition of EES related equipment was organised.

13. Indicator: full update of the course content and provision of expert contributions during six training sessions in 2020 in the area of ABC/EES and advance information.

14. Indicator and target: International Conference on Biometrics for Borders with target participation from Member States and other stakeholders including industry; satisfaction rate and quality > 80%.

International Conference on Biometrics for Borders was organised in virtual format in Q4 2020. It was attended by over 470 participants from MS, industry, and research institutes. While the survey recording the overall satisfaction level

received a very low level of responses (6% of participants responded), rendering a credible assessment difficult, the surveyed level of satisfaction after each individual sections of the event showed an overall average 82% satisfaction level.

#### **Key Activity 3.4.2. Develop and manage a comprehensive research and innovation platform to enable research and facilitate the dissemination of research information.**

Establish a border security innovation platform which includes the development of a border management innovation centre (BoMIC) - a platform to test, demonstrate, simulate and showcase innovative technologies, tools and prototypes pertaining to the border security domain, and by entering into agreements with other similar innovation labs and sites.

Conduct and implement structured frameworks for dialogue with three communities critical for border security research: EBCG, academia and the research components of industry.

#### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Drafting of the terms of reference for the design of the BoMIC taking into consideration research and innovation needs. Develop a simulation and testing framework, making available to Frontex and EU Member States a platform for testing technical solutions and technologies, and enabling simulation and replica of real border control and border surveillance environments, where pre-acquisition testing can be made and industry-available solutions can be audited in a near-to-real context.

The business concept for the Border Management Innovation Centre/Frontex Innovation Lab was developed and presented to Frontex Management in spring 2020. Frontex continuously collaborated with internal and external stakeholders on research needs and priorities. Regular feedback on research needs was provided to the Horizon 2020 programme and to selected projects relevant for the border security domain.

- Establishment of the research for innovation network.
- Identify and assess common research needs.

The plans for the establishment of the Research and Innovation network have been seriously affected by the pandemic and ensuing travel restrictions.

#### **Results on indicators**

1. Indicator: develop the business case for the platform.
2. Indicator: identification of similar solutions to BoMIC worldwide.
3. Indicator and target: consultation on solutions by end Q4 2020, with a view to preparing technical documentation.
4. Indicator: scoping the architecture of the platform.

Following management feedback and internal consultations, it was agreed that the timing of documentation and other preparatory work for the Border Management Innovation Centre has to be aligned with the preparations for the new Frontex headquarters and strategic management decisions on its format. Pending the decision on the establishment of the Frontex Innovation Lab/Border Management Innovation Centre, the discussions on the possible composition of a comprehensive border security innovation platform continued.

5. Indicator and target: implementation of at least two meetings/workshops with the network, each with at least 20 MS representatives, by Q4 2020.

The establishment of the Research for Innovation Network was significantly impacted by the outbreak of the pandemic. Due to this multiple planned visits/meeting to MS/SAC national authorities dealing with Research and Innovation in the Border Security domain were cancelled. The cancellations took place also because MS/SAC authorities indicated they had to reprioritise their activities to be able to handle the pandemic situation.

6. Indicator and target: delivery of the list of research priorities for 2021, relevant for border security research, by Q3 2020

The difficulties in collaboration with the Research and Innovation Network affected the consultation possibility on the list of research priorities. As a result, feedback on research priorities for 2021 was delivered to the EU Commission in meetings organised within the framework of Horizon 2020 programme.

#### **Key Activity 3.4.3. Steer EU-wide border management research through the development of the Senior User role of Frontex in the implementation of the EU framework programmes for research and innovation.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

Implement the senior user role of Frontex in EU-funded border security research in close collaboration with academia, EU agencies, international organisations and industry partners to stimulate and support border security innovation. Conduct and manage technology and general research for the border security domain.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

##### Inputs to the European Commission for border security research topics and sub-topics.

In Q1 and Q2 2020 Frontex contributed to the themes and ideas for research topics in the field of border security, supporting the EU Commission in defining the portfolio of topics for the next programming period.

##### Evaluation of Horizon research proposals by experts selected from the Frontex pre-pool of evaluators.

Six Frontex experts contributed with the evaluation of 24 project proposals under Horizon 2020 relevant for border security.

Regular workshops and meetings with selected projects and the EBCG community to check the continued relevance of the conducted research taking into account capability roadmaps and providing advice and support progress and results.

Frontex operational and research experts participated and provided contribution to 15 events related to Horizon 2020 (projects' presentations/kick offs, technical reviews, tests, workshops, brainstorming sessions, webinars, Horizon 2020 Programme Committee meeting, etc.).

##### Contribution to the project progress review process, making available experts when indicated by the Commission.

Pursuant to the request of the Commission, Frontex participated and contributed to the technical review meeting of one project under Horizon 2020 (PERCEPTIONS).

Develop awareness and collaboration with existing border security research capabilities, within the EU (with special attention to the cooperation with DG JRC and other EU bodies, such as EUISS) and with key international partners.

Frontex collaboration with existing border security research capabilities within the EU was in the format of online meetings, due to the pandemic outbreak:

- Regular exchange with DG JRC was implemented and exchange was continued with EDA, EU SATCEN and EU ANSA.
- Frontex made regular contributions to and actively participated in the definition, setting up and design of the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security.

Implementation of a technology foresight methodology for the regular assessment of the future of technology and science with the aim of identifying the technologies that will most impact the EU borders and the EBCG community in the mid and long term.

The implementation of the technology foresight methodology was de-prioritised. A foresight methodology is planned to be developed in 2021, as part of the work within the Research Study on Technology Foresight on Biometrics for the Future of Travel.

Implementation of a border security research framework contract providing the capability to manage Frontex own research.

As regards the conduct and management of technology and general research for the border security domain, Frontex implemented the following:

- The tender for framework contract for border security research services was successfully published and finalised with contracts signature.
- The contracted research study on Artificial Intelligence-based capabilities for the European Border and Coast Guard was delivered in 2020.
- Further, Frontex conducted its own research activities to support the development of ETIAS and European border and coast guard standing corps.
- Also, Frontex contributed to the Study on Opportunities and Challenges for the use of Artificial Intelligence in Border Control, Migration and Security contracted by EU Commission DG Home.

#### Results on indicators

1. Indicator and target: delivery of input (proposals) for border security-related topics and subtopics, to the European Commission in Q2/Q3 2020.

Frontex provided European Commission with continuous feedback, upon request, including on research topics.

2. Indicator and target: evaluation of all border security relevant proposals by experts selected from the Frontex pre-pool of evaluators - October 2020.

In 2020, Frontex experts participated in the evaluation of all 24 project proposals under Horizon 2020 relevant for border security.

3. Indicator and target: at least one workshop with MS on EU-funded projects, covering at least five projects under Horizon 2020 - by Q2/Q3 2020.

Due to the travel restrictions during the pandemic, it was not possible to organise a workshop with MS on EU funded projects. Instead, MS received written information on EU Horizon 2020 projects kicked off in 2019, relevant to border and external security domain. In addition, a dedicated section on Frontex website was established informing on Frontex role within EU research programme, and the border security related projects followed by Frontex.

4. Indicator and target: at least two meetings with key EU research players (relevant EU/international research institutions) - by Q4 2020.

The following meetings with key EU research players took place in 2020:

- Three meetings with DG JRC discussing and updating each other on possible cooperation areas.
- Multiple meetings with EDA with technology foresight as the focus of discussions.
- Regular meetings with the JHA agencies and other stakeholders engaged in the conceptualisation of the EU Innovation Hub.

5. Indicator and target: publication of procurement for the technology foresight methodology services - Q1 2020; start of contract implementation - Q3 2020.

Following de-prioritisation, the procurement for the technology foresight methodology services was not published in 2020. Instead, the tender for a Research Study on Technology Foresight on Biometrics for the Future of Travel was published and completed in 2020.

6. Indicator and target: publication of a tender for a security research framework contract - Q2 2020.

With regards to the planned publication of a tender for a security research framework contract, the contract notice was published on 31 July 2020. The tender procedure was completed in the following months, with all framework contracts under this procedure signed in 2020 as planned.

7. Indicator and target: publication and distribution of results of research study on AI (launched in 2019) - Q3/Q4 2020

The research study on artificial intelligence-based capabilities for the European border and coast guard was delivered in 2020, however the dissemination of results has been postponed to Q1/Q2 2021.

#### **Key Activity 3.4.4. Pilot border management-related technological solutions and research findings fostering further development of EBCG capabilities.**

##### **Specific Objectives**

Implement technology pilot projects focusing on innovative solutions at the level of operational prototype or above: the pilot projects concern surveillance equipment and processes (platforms, sensors, integration, communication); border checks (biometrics, checks equipment, integration, communications); and analysis-decision support tools and capability tools necessary for border checks.

Manage industry relations as key stakeholders in the area of innovation insertion (in-market or near to market products and services), following procedures under transparency and open competition principles, specifically in support of standing corps including innovation to be used in training newly recruited officers.

##### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Three innovation cells (specialised teams with MS and internal units' participation) will be set up, covering respectively: surveillance, border checks and analysis/tools for border management capabilities (e.g. training).

In 2020 the work with the innovation cells has been tested in practice through the joint elaboration of the scope and use cases for the EES pilots. Due to staff turnover, and travel restrictions caused by the pandemic, the formal set-up and proof of concept of the innovation cells have been postponed to 2021.

Increased Frontex and MS hands-on awareness of available technologies for border control achieved by the implementation of one to two pilot projects carried out by each of the innovation cells.

The definition and preparatory work for pilot projects on EES in Spain and Bulgaria was conducted jointly by Frontex experts and MS, based on inputs provided by MS (definition of scope, use cases, and land border checks processes/scenarios). As requested by MS and in line with budget available, the definition and preparatory work was undertaken and successfully completed for contracting an additional pilot project concerning maritime surveillance Aerostat II, building on the results of a precedent technology pilot. The implementation of these pilots in 2021 will increase awareness on innovative surveillance and border checks (EES) technology solutions for the EBCG.

Management of innovation relations with the industry through the organisation of new technology demonstrations, exhibitions and industry days, with the participation of MS, Frontex internal units, EU bodies and institutions.

In 2020 Frontex implemented a new process based on greater transparency and equal opportunities, streamlining industry dialogues. Due to the pandemic, all industry meetings (i-days) were organised online. I-days organised in 2020, enabled the presentation of more than 60 solutions by 50 companies, with the participation of 430 representatives of Frontex, MS and EU partners as well as international organisations. In addition, an online demonstration of technological solutions relevant for the implementation of EES was organised back-to-back to the International Conference on Biometrics for Borders, showcasing over 100 solutions, with 23 industry presentations to over 470 conference attendees.

Technical advice and revision of Frontex own assets specifications – procurement documentation and technical advice to MS and third countries on technological plans and solutions, including invitation to non-EU countries regarding innovation activities.

As regards the provision of technical expertise and advice to build Frontex capabilities, regular technical advice on procurement files, terms of reference and others were provided to enable the acquisition of services related to airborne maritime surveillance, including MALE RPAS and Frontex surveillance aircraft services. In 2020 non-EU countries were not invited to innovation activities, due to the impact of the pandemic and priority given to solutions on EES for EU MS.

Under this key activity, Frontex managed the innovation service testing combined time and area satellite observation, financed under the Copernicus Delegation Agreement. The testing was completed, and report finalised in 2020.

#### Results on indicators

1. Indicator: timely set-up and execution of the pilot projects.
2. Indicator and target: implementation of pilot projects foreseen for 2020, completed by end Q4 2020, at a stage of at least trial planning.
3. Indicator: timely deliverable of the corresponding evaluation report for each of the pilot projects executed.

The preparatory work for the maritime surveillance Aerostat II pilot project was implemented in line with the planning. The preparatory work for the two EES pilots was slightly delayed due to the complexity of the pilots and workload, including the effort on the preparation of an additional pilot project in 2020 (Aerostat II). The implementation of the pilots planned for 2020 (EES land border pilot projects) reached the stage of trial planning/contracting by the end of 2020. The pilot project on maritime surveillance Aerostat II was contracted by the end of 2020.

4. Indicator and target: evaluation reports completed and accepted within 60 days of the pilot project finishing.

The evaluation reports for the 2019 pilots due in 2020 were prepared as a complete draft. Comments following consultation have been received very late in 2020, which in combination with the workload on new and current activities, has led to a slight delay in the final completion and approval of the reports.

5. Indicator and target: industry event with at least 15 MS represented and non-EU countries invited

As regards industry events: in 2020 two online i-days meetings were organised, during which more than 60 solutions were presented by 50 companies, to participants of 17 MS and 14 EU partners. In 2020 non-EU countries were not invited to innovation activities.

## 1.4. Horizontal Objective 1:

### Implement and support European integrated border management to ensure safe and well-managed EU external borders



## Focus area 4.1. Establish and develop mechanisms for operational cooperation to implement the concept of European integrated border management

### Key Activity 4.1.1. Support the establishment of the multiannual strategic policy cycle.

#### Specific Objectives

Provide strategic risk analysis.  
Provide lessons learned from the implementation of the technical and operational European integrated border management strategy.  
Provide technical support to the establishment of the multiannual policy cycle.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

Given the adoption of the first ever Technical and Operational European IBM Strategy in March 2019 and the entry into force of the EBCG Regulation in December 2019, strategic IBM related activities at the European level have sought to commence the implementation of the 2019 Regulation. As a first step, this comprises establishing the first ever Strategic Risk Analysis, which has since provided the backdrop for the preparations by the European Commission to implement the first iteration of the policy cycle and more importantly the first multiannual policy under the new regime.

#### Results on indicators

Indicator: satisfaction Score (CSAT) of the internal and external stakeholders running the processes and using the tools.  
Target: CSAT - level 4 on a scale from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Strategic Risk Analysis was delivered as planned.

### Key Activity 4.1.2. Translate strategic steering provided by the Commission into the technical and operational European integrated border management strategy achieving the interoperability with the concept of integrated planning.

#### Specific Objectives

Revise the technical and operational European integrated border management strategy.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

IBM related activities at the strategic level are dependent – on the Agency's side – on the establishment of a policy and cycle under the new regime by the European Commission. Once this is in place, the Agency can commence on e.g. revising the Technical and Operational Strategy for subsequent implementation.

#### Results on indicators

Indicator: state of revision of the technical and operational European integrated border management strategy in relation to what is prescribed by the policy cycle. Target: 80% implemented actions.

Since the development of the policy by the Commission has only commenced during 2021, the Agency has not been able to provide support in 2020. This, however, is expected to change in 2021.

### Key Activity 4.1.3. Facilitate and foster the implementation of TO EIBM across the EBCG.

#### Specific Objectives

Execute the implementation of integrated border management at European level.  
Support implementation of integrated border management at national level.  
Promote the concept and best practices of European integrated border management in third countries.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

The implementation of the EBCG Regulation has in itself fostered European IBM as it is at the very core of the Regulation. Not only is this valid to the specific IBM related activities in the context of the policy cycle, policy and Technical and Operational Strategy, but also the actual implementation of the other cornerstones of the new Regulation, from a capabilities perspective. This includes the developments of the concept of Integrated Planning (including Capability Development Planning and Contingency Planning), the establishment of the pools including the establishment of the standing corps and the development of its training as well as the development of the equipment portfolio of the Agency and its ability to complement the equipment capabilities of Member States. Moreover the supporting activities of the Agency on research, innovation and standardisation are also part of the process.

## Results on indicators

Indicator: ratio between implemented and planned actions. Target: 80% implemented actions

Through the implementation of the EBCG Regulation, European IBM has been fostered. On the Agency side, this report constitutes a measure of the indicator at the European level. Although this has not been explicitly compiled, judging by the content of this report one can assume that the target has been reached. For Member States, and the corresponding indicator at National level, this has not been monitored during 2020.

## 1.5. Horizontal Objective 2:

**Reinforce the external dimension aimed at multiplying Frontex operational impact through cooperation with the European Commission and EEAS, as well as through partnership with Member States, EU entities, third countries and international organisations.**

**Focus area 5.1. Strengthen resilience of priority third countries and promote European IBM standards**

**Key Activity 5.1.1. Enhance partnerships with priority third countries within the framework of the external action policy of the European Union, in order to promote operational cooperation with EBCG, including through structured cooperation frameworks and deployment of Frontex liaison officers to third countries**

### Specific Objectives

- Strengthen engagement with priority third countries.
- Develop and update structured cooperation frameworks with competent authorities of third countries.
- Further develop and maintain the network of Frontex liaison officers in third countries, working in complementarity hand-in-hand with the European network of immigration liaison officers.

### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Enhanced contacts with priority third countries and their increased engagement with Frontex, in line with the international cooperation strategy 2018-2020 [sections 3.2/4].
- Enhanced awareness of Frontex's mandate and role among third country authorities.
- Increased opportunities for dialogue among international border and coast guard authorities through Frontex events and other fora.
- Support to the Commission in negotiating and reviewing status agreements.
- Assessment of existing working agreements that require an update under the new Regulation and developed roadmap for their update.
- Initiated/concluded working arrangements on the basis of new Commission template.
- Initiated/concluded cooperation plans and other instruments of structured cooperation with selected third countries.
- FLO network in third countries, effectively contributing to Frontex strategic and operational priorities.
- Enhanced coordination with the European network of immigration liaison officers.
- Participation of the FLO back-office in the ILO steering board ensuring complementarity of actions and deployments.
- New FLOs recruited, trained and deployed.
- Appropriate legal frameworks for FLO deployment concluded/reviewed.
- Effective back-office function: monitoring, guiding, supporting FLOs, and facilitating their interaction with internal stakeholders.
- Reviewed FLO concept and defined specific profiles, including on return

In 2020, Frontex continued to strengthen its engagement in the external dimension. The Agency invested into dialogue and trust-building measures with priority third countries, and where possible, engaged partners to develop or update structured cooperation frameworks.

### Western Balkans and Turkey

The Western Balkan region remained of utmost priority. Cooperation continued across all areas of the Agency's mandate, from joint operations with executive powers under the status agreements, to joint risk analysis, engagement under the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT, cooperation on returns as well as capacity building.

In 2020, Frontex continued to strengthen its operational presence in the Western Balkans. Following the entry into force of the status agreement between the EU and Montenegro on 1 July 2020, the Agency launched fully-fledged operational

activities at the land border between Montenegro and Croatia (since 15 July 2020) and at the sea borders (since 14 October 2020). Joint operational activities also continued in Albania, where the Agency had launched its first joint operation with executive powers outside the EU in 2019.

Frontex also supported the Commission in elaborating the model Status Agreement, as envisaged in the revised EBCG Regulation. The model will allow the EU to open negotiations on new generation of status agreements with third countries, which upon their entry into force will widen the geographical scope of operational activities with executive powers in third countries, among others including activities at the borders between two third countries.

To support operational engagement, Frontex also worked to strengthen institutional ties and frameworks for structured cooperation. The Agency finalised negotiations with the Albanian Ministry of Interior to renew the bilateral working arrangement setting a framework for cooperation between Frontex and competent authorities of Albania, with a view to signing the arrangement in early 2021. The deployment of the Frontex liaison officer to Tirana will further strengthen day-to-day engagement with authorities in Albania, Kosovo\* as well as North Macedonia.

In the area of capacity building, work continued under the EU-funded IPA II project on 'Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey, Phase II'. The project continued reinforcing migration management capacities of the beneficiary countries in the areas of identification, registration, referral, asylum, and return. It also supported the development of national registration systems in the Western Balkans, with a view to facilitating their eventual interoperability with EURODAC in the future, upon their possible EU accession.

In January 2020, Frontex signed a cooperation plan with Turkey covering the period 2020–2022. The engagement with the Turkish authorities continued through the Frontex Liaison Officer deployed in Ankara.

## Africa and the Middle East

Throughout 2020, the Agency continued its efforts to build dialogue and cooperation in Africa and the Middle East. In the framework of the Commission funded EU4BorderSecurity project, Frontex continued its engagement with authorities in the Southern Neighbourhood through a set of familiarisation and capacity building activities, namely:

- On 9–11 March 2020, representatives of four Southern Neighbourhood border management authorities participated in study visits to the Estonian Maritime Academy and to the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences and attended a workshop on the Common Core Curriculum in Tallinn, Estonia. The objective of the study visit was to introduce the representatives of the Southern Neighbourhood countries to the national training institutions for border and coast guards in the EU.
- The Agency also facilitated participation of representatives of Morocco and Egypt at a coast guard boarding exercise organised on 28–29 January in Malta.
- On 30 November–1 December, in cooperation with EUBAM Libya, Frontex organised a webinar on IBM principles and lessons learned for 15 representatives of the Libyan National Team on Border Management and Security. The workshop involved contributions of IBM experts from four EU Member States and focused on risk analysis methodology.
- In the run-up to the 14th EU anti-trafficking day in October, Frontex and IOM co-organised a webinar entitled 'Countering trafficking and smuggling of children across borders in the EU, the Middle East and North Africa Region'. The webinar gathered over 150 participants from a variety of regional and institutional backgrounds, including representatives of governments, regional entities, law enforcement agencies and international organisations. Panellists discussed challenges and priorities as well as instruments and initiatives in the areas of countering trafficking and ensuring child protection, before opening the floor to other participants.

At the bilateral level, cooperation with Morocco continued in the framework of the *Comité Mixte* established in 2019. In this regard, the Agency implemented a number of workshops and technical meetings related to border management to fulfil the Joint Roadmap for 2020. In October, Frontex' Executive Director and the Director of Migration and Border Surveillance of Morocco's Ministry of Interior chaired the second meeting of the *Comité Mixte* and agreed on a Joint Roadmap for 2021.

The Agency also pursued cooperation with priority third countries in West Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Horn of Africa. In this regard, the Agency concluded working arrangement negotiations with Guinea, with a view to sign the working arrangements in 2021. Bilateral contacts also continued with Senegal and Niger through the Frontex Liaison Officers deployed to both countries.

## Eastern Partnership

Cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries continued through bilateral initiatives. Frontex supported the national authorities of Ukraine in the implementation of the new IBM Strategy and Action Plan. In Ukraine, the Agency also took up the role of a member of the Steering Group for the EU4IBM project in the country, funded by the Commission

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status. It is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

and administered by ICMPD. The Agency also began to contribute to the evaluation of grant applications under the MPF, in an observer capacity.

In addition, the Agency worked to strengthen bilateral relations with Georgia and Moldova. Negotiations on a revised working arrangement were concluded with the Ministry of Interior of Georgia, with the arrangement signed in the beginning of 2021. In Georgia, the Agency also collaborated with IOM in organising webinar dedicated to combatting trafficking in human beings in border control setting from both fundamental rights and law enforcement perspectives. The training was developed in close coordination with the Ministry of Justice of Georgia and delivered to participants from the Georgian Patrol Police Department and the Revenue Service. Over two days, through presentations and practical exercises, expertise and good practices in the identification of potential victims of trafficking, interview techniques and referral mechanisms, were shared. Particular attention was paid to the treatment and the rights of potential child victims of trafficking.

Exchange continued with Moldovan authorities to conclude a new Cooperation Plan for 2021–2023. The Agency worked closely with the Commission services on the future programming of deliverables and activities in the Eastern Partnership region beyond 2020. Finally, the Technical and operational European IBM Strategy was translated into Russian for the benefit of the countries in the region.

### **Silk Routes countries**

In 2020, Frontex also worked to advance cooperation with the Silk Routes countries. The Agency maintained its role in the Advisory Board of the project on IBM in the Silk Routes region, funded by the Commission and administered by ICMPD. With the support of Delegation of the EU to Pakistan, Frontex continued to explore possibilities for closer engagement with the relevant Pakistani authorities.

### **Strategic partners**

Frontex continued to strengthen collaboration with strategic partners. The Frontex Task Force for the implementation of the European Travel and Information Authorization System (ETIAS) paid a visit to the relevant counterparts in Canada and the US. The visit was a valuable opportunity to learn from the experiences of the Canada Border Services Agency and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada in running ETA, as well as the US Customs and Border Protection expertise and good practices in the development and functioning of ESTA. Exchange of expertise and good practices in the area continued throughout the year. With Canada, negotiations on a new cooperation plan continued.

In follow-up to the signing of the Joint Declaration of Intent between Frontex and the Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) of Australia in October 2019, the Agency co-organised a workshop with the Australian Border Force (ABF) and Home Affairs to explore cooperation in areas of mutual interest. Around 70 officials attended the virtual sessions providing updates on operational and technical matters relevant to border management, including responses to COVID-19, and identifying opportunities for further engagement.

### **Latin America**

The Agency started exploring dialogue and exchange with law enforcement counterparts in Latin America, particularly in view of strengthening cooperation on cross-border crime, such as drug smuggling. To that end, Frontex engaged with relevant authorities through several Commission funded projects in the region, such as EUROFRONT and SEACOP.

### **Response to COVID-19 pandemic in 2020**

The Agency was able to adapt rapidly to the situation and managed to maintain effective working relations with its key stakeholders at EU and Member States levels, as well as with third countries and international organisations. Frontex took several mitigating measures in order to maintain regular contacts with its EU and international partners to the best extent possible. The majority of cooperation activities transferred to the online environment, while a smaller number of higher-level events had to be postponed to 2021. The International and European Cooperation Division also piloted the use of two online interpretation platforms.

### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

**The Agency further consolidated and developed the network of Frontex liaison officers in third countries, working in close cooperation with the European network of immigration liaison officers.**

In 2020, the Agency operated a network of four Frontex liaison officers (FLOs) in third countries, covering the Western Balkans region, Turkey, Senegal and Niger. The FLOs continued enhancing coordination and two-way communication with third country authorities in charge of border management and return, in close coordination with EU Delegations, CSDP missions as well as other European Immigration Liaison Officers.

In parallel, Frontex continued to plan and prepare future deployments, covering other priority countries and regions, namely:

- In March, second Liaison Officer to the Western Balkan countries joined the Agency and started her pre-deployment phase in view of her posting in Tirana, Albania.

- The Agency also started preparations for the FLO to the Eastern Partnership region, with the main seat in Kiev, Ukraine. The recruitment procedure was launched in 2020 with an intention to finalise the deployment in the course of 2021.

To ensure a coherent approach and enhance better coordination among all European immigration liaison officers, the Agency actively contributed to the ILO Steering Board chaired by the Commission.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

1. Indicator: percentage of partners considering cooperation activities useful/relevant. Target: satisfaction level: 90%.

Due to the pandemic, the majority of cooperation activities were transferred to the online environment and some of them had to be cancelled. Lacking face-to-face contact, the Agency was not able to collect consistently feedback on stakeholder relevance/usefulness.

2. Indicator: number of third country participants in dedicated visits and events/number of external meetings attended, visits, (scoping) missions. Target: attendance level: at least 60% of the invitees.

The majority of cooperation activities took place in the virtual environment which allowed ensuring a high level of participation among various interlocutors, reaching up to 90% of all invitees.

3. Indicator: balanced coverage of key priority regions. Target: 70%.

The Agency engaged with the majority of the priority regions set in the Frontex International Cooperation Strategy for the 2018–2020 period [sections 3.2/4], among them the Western Balkans, Turkey, North Africa and the Middle East, West Africa, the Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Partnership countries, Silk Routes countries and strategic partners. Somewhat less engagement was possible in the Horn of Africa.

4. Indicator: number of structured cooperation instruments concluded or reviewed (e.g. working arrangements, cooperation plans, or other cooperation instruments). Target: completion level: 20% of ongoing negotiations concluded.

Negotiations concluded for **three** working arrangements (Guinea, Albania, and Georgia). Further negotiations with third countries could not be initiated pending the model working arrangement to be drawn up by the Commission.

5. Indicator: policies, guidelines and workflows steering the work of the FLOs in place. Target: Completion level: 100% of envisaged policies/guidelines developed.

The back office continued to implement and further develop guidelines and policies, amongst others on the acquisition and use of service cars for FLOs, periodical gatherings at the headquarters, possible assistance to FLOs.

6. Indicator: number of FLOs deployed/number of structured cooperation instruments concluded or reviewed (administrative arrangements, SLAs): Target: deployments prepared/finalised for 1–2 FLOs in third countries.

- One FLO deployed (Senegal, January 2020); 2 FLO deployments prepared (FLO Western Balkans, and FLO Eastern Partnership region).
- Two administrative arrangements between Frontex and EEAS concluded for the setup of the FLOs on the premises of the EU Delegation in Senegal (January 2020) and in Albania (May 2020).

7. Indicator: number of meetings of the ILO steering board and of regional and local ILO meetings attended. Target: attendance level: 100% of meetings of the steering board and 90% of meetings of regional and local ILO meetings.

- Attendance of ILO Steering Board meetings by the HQ representatives at the level of 100%.
- The FLOs in third countries attended almost all the regional and local ILO meetings that they were invited to, reaching a level of participation of almost 90%.

8. Indicator: number of periodic and ad-hoc reports of FLOs. Target: monthly reports by all FLOs + ad-hoc reporting.

Throughout 2020, the back-office received and further processed all regular and ad-hoc information provided by the FLOs posted in third countries for the follow-up of the relevant business entities

9. Indicator: number of tasks and requests processed by LOU (back-office)/number of briefing notes and other documents supporting the executive management and other business entities. Target: 100% of all requests handled or referred further.

Throughout 2020, FLOs were also associated to the preparation of briefing notes, Frontex positions, preparation and discussion of technical assistance projects, negotiation of working arrangements and other activities coordinated or launched by Frontex in third countries, including the support to monitoring migratory crisis in cooperation with other Units all of which were processed by the back-office.

**Key Activity 5.1.2. Strengthen capacities of priority third countries to effectively deal with migration and cross-border crime through technical assistance and capacity building activities, in close coordination with the European Commission and the EEAS.**

### Specific Objectives

Promote the European IBM through Frontex-funded capacity building activities in third countries.  
Develop and implement EU Commission-funded technical assistance projects.

### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Technical assistance activities in priority regions, as defined in the international cooperation strategy 2018-2020 (section 4), among them:
  - Libya (within the overall framework of EU foreign and security policy through the operational platforms established by the EEAS, e.g. EUBAM Libya);
  - Western Balkans, including in support of Frontex operational activities in the region;
  - Silk Routes region;
  - Eastern Partnership region.
- IPA II phase II (DG NEAR/IPA) regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey - phase II - contract 1/end date 30.6.2021.
- EU4Border Security (DG NEAR/ENI) Enhancing border security in the Southern Neighbourhood by fostering bilateral and regional cooperation/end date 30.11.2021.

### Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey

The Agency continued the implementation of the Commission-funded project 'Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey, Phase II'. The project is implemented in cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

Due to the pandemic, the project had to be revised and its work plan for the year adapted. Majority of the project's governance meetings were carried out online, however, communication and coordination with beneficiaries in fact intensified when compared to 2019. The most important project events in 2020 were the Regional Steering Committee that took place online on 6 July 2020 and the National Steering Committee meetings with all six Western Balkans Beneficiaries in the September-October period. To facilitate adaptation to the pandemic, a round of extraordinary consultations were also held in April.

Towards the end of 2020, the project also started the development of the so-called 'masterplans' for Montenegro and North Macedonia, done as a follow-up to the study 'Assessment of the IT and communication infrastructure to support the identification and registration process of mixed migration flows in the IPA II Western Balkan Beneficiaries'. The aim of this project is to develop detailed roadmaps for each of the two beneficiaries to ensure that the respective national systems for identification and registration of mixed migration flows have interconnectivity and interoperability with EURODAC at the time of their EU accession.

The project's capacity building component was most significantly affected by the pandemic as all training activities that were scheduled for the post-March period were deferred to 2021.

### EU4BorderSecurity project

The EU4Bordersecurity project completed its second year of implementation on 30 November 2020. The pandemic and the resulting heightened awareness of the importance of health security in border management prompted Frontex to explore cooperation in the domain of health also in the external dimension. This led to the introduction of a set of activities under a new thematic dimension on health and safety at the border as part of a project top-up (from EUR 4 to 6.5 million) and extension until 2023 as granted by DG NEAR.

Despite the limitations due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the project managed to increase the awareness about Frontex, cooperation opportunities, and IBM operational concepts and practices with at least six countries of the Southern Neighbourhood.

The project successfully consolidated the structured dialogue with Morocco as the number of bilateral technical activities shows. In addition, the project helped to establish regular exchange with Lebanon and Jordan, and to involve other countries of the region in general awareness events. The project activities had a positive effect on the engagement of Frontex in the region, particularly considering that at the beginning of the project in 2018 the Agency had no structured dialogue or any direct activities in the Southern Neighbourhood.

### Other technical assistance and capacity building initiatives

Frontex continued contributing to initiatives co-sponsored by EUBAM-Libya and regularly participates in the meetings of the Libyan Border Management Working Group and the Maritime Sub-Working Group with the aim to promote EU IBM



standards and practices. In December 2020, Frontex and EUBAM Libya jointly organised a webinar on IBM and risk analysis with the objective to provide to the Libyan National Team for Border Security and Management an overview of the different ways EU Member States implement IBM principles in their national strategies.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

1. Indicator 1: outreach of capacity building activities and their geographic coverage (number of activities; number of external participants). Target: attendance level: at least 60% of the invitees.

The majority of capacity building activities took place in virtual environment, which allowed ensuring a high level of participation among various interlocutors, reaching up to 90% of all invitees. A number of capacity building activities requiring physical presence had to be postponed to 2021.

2. Indicator 2: project implementation levels against the set targets (to be reported on annually against indicators in the project log frame).

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, both technical assistance projects had to be quickly adjusted to the new reality. Further details on the implementation of the EU4Border Security and IPA II projects are available in their progress reports submitted to DG NEAR in line with the reporting requirements of the Grant Agreements.

### Focus area 5.2. Develop the architecture for effective interagency cooperation on IBM at EU level, ensuring the most efficient use of resources and complementary implementation of mandates

**Key Activity 5.2.1. Establish and maintain appropriate frameworks for cooperation within the EU and with international organisations, in order to make full use of the EBCG mandate.**

#### Specific Objectives

Enhance cooperation and mutual coordination with EU institutions, offices, bodies and agencies.  
Maximise synergies with relevant international organisations and provide operational and technical expertise of the European border and coast guard community in select international fora.  
Support further development of the EBCG capabilities, situational awareness and operational response through strategic and ever closer relations with competent national authorities, supported by Frontex liaison officers in EU MS/SAC, liaison officers deployed by the Member States to the Agency, as well as exchange of LOs with other EU entities.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Evidence-based contributions to relevant EU policy processes.
- Effective interagency cooperation in the areas of law enforcement, customs, coast guard functions, migration management (including through the migration management support teams) and fundamental rights.
- Structured cooperation through working agreements, cooperation plans, SLAs and other instruments.
- Interagency cooperation in multilateral fora, including through the preparation for the chairmanship of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies' network in 2021.
- Initiated dialogue and exchange with further international organisations in light of the tasks envisaged in the Regulation.
- Structured cooperation with international organisations through working agreements (existing and new), cooperation plans and other instruments.
- Synergies with the work of international organisations in third countries.
- LO network in EU MS/SAC, effectively contributing to Frontex strategic and operational priorities.
- New FLOs recruited, trained and deployed to relevant EU agencies and other entities.
- Effective back-office function monitoring, guiding, supporting FLOs, and facilitating their interaction with internal stakeholders.
- Developed rules and conditions for the deployment and functioning of MS/SAC liaison officers to Frontex.
- Policy for receiving liaison officers from EU agencies, international organisations and third countries.

In the course of the year, the Agency, through the Institutional Partnership Unit, continued to enhance the cooperation and mutual coordination with EU institutions, offices, bodies and agencies as well as to maximise synergies with relevant international organisations and provide operational and technical expertise of the European border and coast guard community in select international fora.

In 2020, Frontex enhanced the already established good cooperation with its current EU and international partners. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, regular working-level contacts in a remote manner were maintained. Negotiations on working arrangements and discussions on cooperation frameworks progressed, while contacts with new partners were initiated and intensified.

Frontex continued its close cooperation with the EU's Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies, including through the JHA Agencies' Network. In particular, extensive work took place for the preparation of Frontex' Presidency of the

Network in 2021. This involved drafting and consultation of the Frontex Presidency programme and taking over the activities from Eurojust Presidency.

### **Structured cooperation with the EU partners**

In addition to the working arrangement with CEPOL, Frontex continued negotiations for a working arrangement with Eurojust, with an aim to renew the established framework for cooperation and to reflect both agencies' new regulations, in particular in view of enhancing exchange of information, including personal data.

Contacts with EU entities outside of the JHA remit, such as the European Defence Agency, the Joint Research Centre and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) also continued, reflecting Frontex' broad, multidisciplinary approach to security. Frontex also progressed negotiations with EASA on a working arrangement and requested European Commission's prior approval on the draft text. Moreover, discussions with the SatCen on a working arrangement were initiated, in order to enhance existing cooperation, which is based on a Service Level Agreement.

Under the EBCG Regulation, the Agency received an explicit mandate to cooperate with CSDP missions and operations with the aim to ensure the promotion of EU IBM standards as well as for situational awareness and risk analysis purposes. In this regard, Frontex launched and successfully concluded negotiations on a working arrangement with EUNAVFOR MED IRINI. Initial discussions on the cooperation framework with other CSDP missions and operations were also been initiated in order to reflect the scope of cooperation foreseen in the EBCG Regulation.

### **Fostering the long-standing cooperation with the Agency's partners and pursuing new avenues for collaboration**

Frontex concluded a liaison agreement with Europol in which both agencies committed to exchange liaison officers. The agreement is part of the Joint Action Plan signed by the Executive Directors of both agencies, aimed at strengthening their joint effort in enhancing the security of EU citizens. The cooperation between Frontex and Europol covers many areas including operational activities, information sharing, training as well as research and development.

In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, Frontex developed preliminary contacts with European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), European Medicines Agency (EMA) and European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), to explore avenues of cooperation. In particular, a constructive bilateral meeting took place between the Executive Directors of Frontex and ECDC, where both side identified early warning systems an area where cooperation could be reinforced.

### **Contributing to the EU's external action policy and its fora**

The European External Action Service, alongside the European Commission and its relevant services, continued to be the key interlocutor for the Agency's external engagement. Cooperation at institutional level, through remote staff-to-staff meetings, as well as in the operational theatre, through close engagement with EU CSDP missions and operations.

The Agency provided strategic input to EU policy documents such as to the Commission's Consultation on the new EU action plan against migrant smuggling, and actively participated in the consultation process of the Civilian CSDP mini concepts, led by EEAS.

Frontex intensified the interaction with and ensured regular and active participation in the Customs Cooperation Working Party (CCWP). Moreover, strategic talks with DG TAXUD were started and maintained including enhanced relationship with the Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border Expert Team (CELBET). Such activities reflect the increasing efforts to enhance synergies between border and customs authorities and provide support on customs to the Commission and the Member States.

### **Cooperation and coordination with international organisations**

In 2020, Frontex further developed relations with international organisations, among them UNHCR, IOM, INTERPOL, UNODC, ICAO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. Frontex sought to build upon the existing working arrangements, explore new possibilities through strategic dialogues, and ensure the voice of the European Border and Coast Guard community in relevant international fora.

Cooperation with international organisations covered in particular the fields of migration, border management and the fight against cross-border crime. In the context of COVID-19, particular attention was dedicated this year to cooperation in the remits of health and border management. In this regard, Frontex and IOM held an expert meeting on health, border and mobility management to learn about each other's good practices. Frontex also consulted several international organisations for the development of its International Cooperation Strategy for the 2021–2023 period.

Following the conclusion of the working arrangement with the OSCE in 2019, Frontex and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights adopted an implementation document to put into practice the Frontex-OSCE Working Arrangement in the areas of fundamental rights protection at the border and gender equality in border security and management. The Agency also advanced on negotiations for a working arrangement with IOM and initiated negotiations with ICAO.

In the course of the year, the Agency, through the Liaison Officers Networks Unit, continued to support further development of the EBCG capabilities, situational awareness, and operational response through strategic and ever closer relations with competent national authorities, supported by Frontex liaison officers.

### FLOs in EU Member States

In 2020, Frontex continued consolidating the already established network of Frontex Liaison Officers (FLOs) in the MS. The eleven FLOs further consolidated their roles in their country clusters, supporting the cooperation between the Agency and the respective counterparts at national level. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the FLOs maintained regular working-level contacts in a remote manner.

Supporting the monitoring of the migration flows as well as taking part in the vulnerability assessment processes is an important task for the FLOs. This implies that the FLOs act as an important source of information for the assessment of the MS border management capacities. All FLOs deployed had the chance to contribute to the VA in 2020, their reports constituting part of the assessment. The FLOs supported the collection of information, provided clarifications, jointly verified certain information, and proposed follow-up by Frontex. Furthermore, in the context of the pandemic, FLOs also played a critical role in relaying much needed information to the Frontex Headquarters in relation to the measures taken at the borders and the restrictions put in place by the MS.

The deployment of the FLOs has already proven to be of benefit in a number of areas. Supporting the implementation of the EBCG Regulation, FLOs continued to engage national authorities on various elements of the Agency's new mandate. For example, in September 2020 the FLOs were essential in the organisation of the regional meetings with the MSs on the operationalisation of the standing corps. The meetings served as a unique platform for the Agency's Executive and Senior Management to exchange views with the Heads of the relevant national authorities, including border management, police, and coast guard, customs, and migration management services. The FLOs have also facilitated and supported Frontex' visits to the Member States on topics across the Agency's, as well as bilateral meetings with national authorities – most of them in virtual format.

### Policy on hosting liaison officers in Frontex

In 2020, the Agency worked to develop a concept that would enable the Member States to deploy liaison officers to Frontex headquarters, as envisaged in Article 13 of the Regulation. Following extensive internal consultations, the draft concept was presented during the 81<sup>st</sup> Management Board meeting. Based on the input provided by the Member States, the Agency translated the concept into draft rules and conditions for the deployment of MS LOs, with a view to present it for MB decision in 2021.

The Agency also continued to host EASO liaison officer in Frontex headquarters and prepared the ground for the exchange of Liaison Officers with EUROPOL.

### Results on indicators and targets:

1. Indicator: percentage of partners considering cooperation activities useful/relevant. Target: satisfaction level: 90%.

Due to the pandemic, the majority of cooperation activities were transferred to the online environment and some of them had to be cancelled. Lacking face-to-face contact, the Agency was not able consistently collecting feedback on stakeholder relevance/usefulness.

- Positive assessments received - 67 %

2. Indicator: number of partners on dedicated visits and events/number of external meetings attended, visits, (scoping) missions. Target: attendance level: at least 60% of the invitees.

The majority of cooperation activities took place in the virtual environment which allowed ensuring a high level of participation among various interlocutors, reaching up to 90% of all invitees.

3. Indicator: proportionate engagement with key priority partners. Target: 70%.

As mentioned above, the Agency through Institutional Partnership Unit, maintained good cooperation with all current EU and international partners and continued identifying new ones.

4. Indicator: number of structured cooperation instruments concluded or reviewed (e.g. working arrangements, cooperation plans or other cooperation instruments). Target: completion level: 20% of ongoing negotiations concluded.

- Working arrangements concluded with CEPOL and Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI.
- Second Service Level agreement with FRA and implementation document with OSCE ODIHR concluded.

5. Indicator: number of periodic and ad-hoc reports by FLOs. Target: monthly reports by all FLOs + ad-hoc reporting.

Throughout 2020, the back-office received and further processed all regular and ad-hoc information provided by the FLOs posted in MSs for the follow-up of the relevant business entities.

6. Indicator: number of FLOs deployed/number of structured cooperation instruments concluded or reviewed (administrative arrangements, SLAs). Target: deployments prepared/finalised for one other EU entity.

- Two arrangements with Member States for the deployment of FLOs, respectively Hungary and France, were revised in order to update some provisions.
- Liaison agreement was concluded with Europol on the exchange of liaison officers.

7. Indicator: number of tasks and requests processed by LOU (back-office)/number of briefing notes and other documents supporting the executive management and other business entities. Target: 100% of all requests handled or referred further.

FLOs were also associated to the preparation of briefing notes, Frontex positions, joint operations plans, and other activities coordinated or launched by the Agency in the MSs, including the support to monitoring COVID-19 related developments in cooperation with other units.

8. Indicator: policies, guidelines and workflows for receiving MS LOs and steering the work of the FLOs in place. Target: completion level: 100% of envisaged policies/guidelines developed.

Draft policy on receiving MS LOs to the Frontex Headquarters, including the related rules and conditions for deployment of MS LOs to the Frontex Headquarters have been developed and presented to the MB.

**Key Activity 5.2.2. Further develop cooperation with other EU entities in the external dimension, thereby facilitating coherent implementation of IBM standards and synergies with Frontex operational activities**

#### Specific Objectives

Assume the role of the EU's centre of expertise for promoting European IBM standards in the external dimension. Facilitate coherence and coordinated approach in third country cooperation within the framework of the European Border and Coast Guard. Contribute to ensuring coherence in the Agency's engagement with EU and external partners.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Advice and support to the Commission in its role ensuring coherence and quality of the EU-funded IBM projects in third countries.
- Guidelines, good practices and other tools developed to promote EU IBM standards in third countries.
- Support to EU delegations, CSDP missions and operations.
- Support to EU MS/SAC in their bilateral engagement with third countries.
- Annual reporting mechanism on cooperation with third countries within the scope of the EBCG.
- Regular dialogue within the EBCG on engagement in priority regions (round tables).
- Internal evaluation of the international cooperation strategy 2018-2020.
- International and European cooperation strategy 2021-2023 developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.
- International cooperation round table established to ensure cross-divisional coordination within Frontex

#### IBM Standards

The EBCG Regulation mandates the Agency to promote a coherent set of European IBM standards in third countries, a task that requires close coordination with the Commission, the EEAS, and the Member States. While waiting for the launch of the multi-annual policy cycle on the European IBM, the Agency has initiated a number of steps to support this process. The concept of IBM has been at the centre of all capacity-building projects carried out by Frontex, most notably the EU4BordersSecurity in the Southern Neighbourhood, where Agency is promoting dialogue on IBM through a set of activities, such as awareness raising workshops and a development of an IBM glossary.

In order to promote a coherent approach to the European IBM, the Agency has also been supporting the Commission in programming and implementing IBM related interventions in third countries. In this context, Frontex has been providing advice and expertise to several Commission funded technical assistance projects in the Southern Neighbourhood (e.g. EUROMED police, CT-MENA), the Western Balkans (SeaGate), the Silk Routes countries (e.g. IBM project), the Eastern Partnership region (e.g. IBM support in Ukraine) as well as in Latin America (e.g. EUROFRONT, SEACOP). The Agency contributes to the Steering and Advisory Committees of the projects and supports with its advice and expertise.

The Agency also continued supporting a number of cooperation initiatives of the Member States, particularly those in priority regions in the EU's neighbourhood. For example, in August 2020, Frontex supported the German EU Presidency in hosting the Heads of Border Police videoconference, with the participation of EU Member States, the Western Balkan

partners and JHA Agencies, and later contributed to the Joint Coordination Platform, initiated by Austria. Frontex supported relevant Member States' projects in African countries. For example, in 2020, the Agency contributed to activities of the TIPSOM project (action against trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants in Nigeria) implemented by FIAPP (International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies) in Nigeria with the provision of experts on trafficking in human beings, and committed to support the Common Operational Partnership Project (COP) implemented by Spanish National Police in The Republic of The Gambia.

### **Facilitating dialogue and exchange within the European Border and Coast Guard**

In response to several Member States calling for a more coordinated approach in the external dimension, Frontex invested further to promote dialogue within the European Border and Coast Guard on third country cooperation. To kick-start the process, in December 2020 Frontex brought together Member States representatives to discuss how to enhance regular exchange and coordination in capacity-building initiatives. The Agency also continued to consult Member States on their priorities and specific activities in the external dimension, such as done in meetings dedicated to the Southern Neighbourhood in January 2020 and the Frontex International Cooperation Strategy in July 2020.

The Agency also collected information from the Member States on third country cooperation as part of the Article 7 Reporting Mechanism. An online platform developed for this purpose continued to offer a tool to gather information and help avoid duplication on activities in the external dimension as well as facilitate the coordination among MSs/SACs. In 2020, 28 MSs/SACs contributed to the online platform on their cooperation activities with other MSs/SACs and with third countries in the field of border management and related matters.

### **Frontex International Cooperation Strategy**

In 2020, the Agency carried out a comprehensive consultation process to review its priorities for cooperation with third countries and international organisations, as set in the International Cooperation Strategy 2018–2020. The Strategy has been renewed following thorough internal and external consultations, including the relevant Commission services, the European External Action Service, experts from the EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries and the Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights. Internal reflections were based on the evaluation and lessons learned implementing the first iteration of the Strategy for the period 2018–2020.

#### **Synergies with EU and Member States partners in the external dimension**

Frontex international cooperation is set in the overall framework of the EU's external action, and therefore implemented in close coordination with EU institutions, officers, bodies and agencies, as well as EU Member States. In that spirit, the Agency continued to coordinate its work in third countries with respective EU Delegations, and where available, CSDP missions, among them EUBAM Libya, EUAM Ukraine/Moldova, EUCAP Sahel Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger, thereby exploring synergies in the implementation of the CSDP compacts.

#### **Results on indicators and targets:**

1. Indicator 1: number of programmes/projects reviewed; activities contributed to. Target: active engagement in three to four projects in priority regions.

- Frontex contributed to more than four projects in priority regions in third countries.

2. Indicator 2: number of regional round tables organised. Target: up to three dialogues with the MS/SAC on priority regions

- January 2020: consultation with MS on cooperation in the Southern Neighbourhood;
- July 2020: consultation meeting with MS on international cooperation priorities;
- December 2020: webinar on capacity building in third countries.

3. Indicator 3: implementation level, policies, and workflows in place, supporting material developed, engagement of internal stakeholders. Target: international cooperation strategy 2021-23 adopted.

The Frontex International Cooperation Strategy for the period 2021–2023 has been adopted by the Management Board together with the Single Programming Document 2021-2023.

## 1.6. Horizontal Objective 3:

### Develop an upgraded management system aimed at ensuring accountability, regularity and legality of all Frontex activities

#### Focus area 6.1. Provide a management framework for sound administration of resources

**Key Activity 6.1.1. Design and implement a comprehensive system for programming, monitoring and evaluating the Agency's activities and underlying expenditures through establishing a set of processes that are integrated and adaptable to evolving risk universe.**

##### Specific Objectives

Adapt Frontex programming and assurance set-up and processes to be fit for the mandate under the new Regulation. Adapt the Agency management framework (including processes definition and management) gradually to challenges stemming from the new Regulation and compatible with quality certification standards. Programme and monitor resources, their effectiveness and efficiency enhanced.

##### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

Critical review of EBCGA assurance and management framework concluded by Q2 2020.

The ex-ante policy was adopted on 25/03/2020. The main scope of it was to make ex-ante and ex-post controls as a complimentary process and also to reflect the lessons learnt from the use of unit costs in grants.

Transformation of the programming and assurance system to accompany growth and findings of review adopted by Q3 2020 (including switch to activity-based management and delegation framework review).

In order to enhance the monitoring of deviations between the planning and the implementation of the activity, the budget structure was revised from a cost-centred approach to an activity-based approach.

The risk-based review of the delegation framework established a link between the threshold and the financial actor role for commitments and streamlined the delegations for payments by removing the thresholds, applicable from January 2021.

##### Results on indicators and targets:

1. The Agency operates a proportional control framework delivering assurance of legal and regular use of resources at its disposal.

Ex-ante policy was adopted on 25/03/2020. Also Finance and Budget Portal development and roll out. Expenditure lifecycle online courses introduced - there were 14 expenditure life cycle e-certificates obtained. There were 23 knowledge refreshment e-courses on ABAC undertaken.

2. Minimal financial management threshold defined by the European Commission met or exceeded.

Threshold for verification for payments increased from 5k to 15k.

3. Reducing the risk of bottlenecks in the workflow of the financial circuit -

Adopted ED Decision entered on 16/12/2020 and introduction of a paperless financial circuit- design and implementation, as well as provision of training to all financial actors during spring 2020.

4. Ex post evaluations operated by the end 2020 and the outcomes included in the future activities design.

Input to single programming documents, procurement plans, annual and quarterly activity and financial reports were provided timely and targeted to relevant audience.

New budget structure revised with a particular focus on the Agency's activities.

5. Single programming documents, procurement plans, annual and quarterly activity and financial reports produced timely to expected standards, improving strategic focus of the Agency activities.

The programming documents including procurement plans were timely elaborated and adopted. Regular reporting - quarterly and annual - was completed enhancing quality standards and adding value as tool contributing to effective decision making in strategic decision making.



**Key Activity 6.1.2. Develop human resources management system aimed at building strong human capital through a set of modern HR policies allowing the Agency to deliver its mission**

**Specific Objectives**

Develop and maintain an integrated manager-led system of HR policies, tools and processes designed to empower and contribute to achieving Frontex mission and stakeholders' expectations.

Increase Frontex attractiveness as an employer and employ and retain the best, diverse and geographically balanced talent whose competences are further developed through diverse learning and career opportunities and effective performance assessment.

Deliver qualitative and service-oriented HR support to maximise an effective performance-oriented culture in partnership between HR professionals and managers

**Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Frontex managers together with HR professionals build on and actively develop talent under their responsibility using HR policies, processes and tools commensurate with the new Regulation requirements, and are able to efficiently respond to the changing environment related to the new Regulation implementation.

The managers are prepared for the participation in the recruitment, selection interviews and performance management, including specific requirements as regards the management of the standing corps. The training courses on the performance management were offered to all reporting officers in the versions tailored for headquarters positions as well as for those managers dealing with performance management of the standing corps.

The induction training is delivered in customised versions for different target groups, including a separate edition for the standing corps newcomers. The on-boarding process for the standing corps staff ensures smooth transition from the recruitment process, through the induction training, to the mandatory basic training in the training institution.

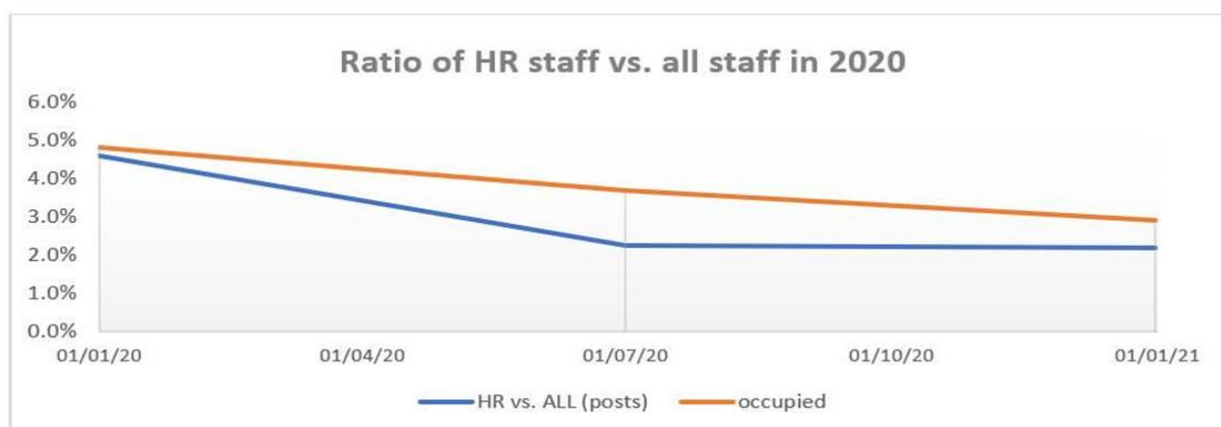
Support was provided to TF DEPLOY in developing guidelines, policies regarding the standing corps, for instance on reporting lines, career management or appraisal for standing corps.

HR processes have been adjusted to the specific needs and features of the standing corps.

Right talent attracted, selected and employed at the right time and right place in line with the expected scale of growth and specificities of the new mandate. They stay motivated to further develop their competences to live up to the new opportunities, challenges and needs of the service.

Diverse publication channels for vacancies were used to achieve maximum and targeted outreach (Frontex website, EU Agencies network extranet, EPSO website, LinkedIn, Permanent Representations and NFPoCs, EEAS; depending on the type of profile sought, the publication of a job vacancy was placed on EuroActiv/EuroBrussels and specialised professional websites and these processes were supported by targeted campaigns produced together with the Media and Public Relations Office (MPR). Frontex LinkedIn profile, together with the Frontex career webpage, was further developed in cooperation with MPR in order to strengthen the employer value proposition.

Despite the record-breaking number of newly recruited staff in 2020, the complexity of the COVID-19 situation and the lack of HR resources as well as of advanced planning and recruitment tools hindered and delayed the timely engagement of new staff, creating a significant recruitment backlog which is being addressed in 2021.



Graph 1d: Ratio HR staff vs. all staff

Temporary or indefinite career development opportunities are announced for volunteers having certain knowledge, skills and experience and wishing to learn new tasks and acquire new competencies; thus boost their growth.

Mobility requests submitted by individuals in view of their development and professional growth are assessed taking into consideration also the business needs and available resources (posts).

The new format of e-learning packages are prepared as a support for all staff during the COVID-19 outbreak, next to tailor-made packages for the standing corps to encourage them to benefit from the corporate e-learning platform to additionally develop their essential skills while following basic training.

Effectively equipped HR experts and systems to qualitatively and efficiently fulfil roles in a dynamically evolving environment, including service provision for the staff of category 1 of the standing corps.

- Basic modules of SYSPER (the EC Human Resources and Management Information System for managing the employees' data, staff rights and obligations, time management and others features for career management and organisation charts) and SYSTAL (recruitment) were rolled out for Frontex.
- SYSPER MIPS (mission management) module was implemented, including financial management of standing corps category 2 deployments in MIPS.
- TiMa mobile app was launched facilitating registration of time management.
- SYSTAL (e-recruitment tool) was initiated though the implementation of it was delayed due to the need to assure data protection and security concerns.

### Indicators, targets and baseline

In line with the timeline of EBCG 2.0 implementation roadmap and the requirements concerning the standing corps:

1. Indicator: amended HR policies, specific implementing rules and legal framework to fit the standing corps specificities.
2. Indicator: HR tools and systems: available, up-to-date and scaled to the growth.
3. Indicator: managers trained in change and leadership. Target: 100% of current managers and at least 75% of the new trained.
4. Indicator: 70 new recruitment procedures (outside standing corps 'executive power' staff) launched in 2020. Target: at least 80% of vacant posts filled by the end of the year.
5. Indicator: average length of recruitment procedure from the vacancy announcement publication to the appointment. Target: fewer than 15 weeks.
6. Indicator: a ratio of training offered vs. taken up. Target: at least 70%.
7. Indicator: transitional measures to speed up the appraisal process in 2020 (pilot project).
8. Indicator: strategic workforce planning prepared for HQ positions in 2020.
9. Indicator: developed a career development strategy focused especially on sensitive posts mitigations.
10. Indicator: rights and entitlements and working conditions for deployed (outside HQ) standing corps staff of category 1 established and implemented in line with the EBCG 2.0 roadmap.
11. Indicator: 'HR to staff': HR is sufficiently staffed to deliver the expected services in the transition period to EBCG 2.0. Target: ratio is within 4-4.5% margins (of 2000 posts in EP 2020).
12. Indicator: HR staff properly trained to face new challenges. Target: at least 75% of HR staff trained.
13. Indicator: medical services managed from HQ (new framework contract managed by HR).

- 1) During 2020, the following new implementing rules were adopted, relating to: middle management, annual appraisal of middle management and temporary occupation of management posts.
- 2) Implementation of the new e-RCT tool SYSTAL was delayed until 2021 due to data protection concerns in view of Schrems-II judgement by the Court of Justice of the European Union and EDPS recommendations published in December 2020.  
The following SYSPER modules were rolled out in 2020: identity management; JIS; organisational chart (ORG); job quota management (DOT); personnel data management (PER); career (CAR); document management (DOC); 'Numérisation Dossiers Personnels (NDP payslips)', basic time management (TIM).
- 3) The training activities for managers slowed down in 2020 due to other priorities related to the implementation of EBCG 2.0 and the effects of COVID-19. All middle managers participated in the training recommended for their positions (with leadership and change elements included). There were no new middle managers recruited in 2020.
- 4) The effects of COVID-19 pandemics (the first wave in March-June, the second wave as from September 2020) impacted negatively most recruitment activities in 2020, many of which needed to be postponed and a majority of actions had to be re-programmed to be carried out via on-line tools or at a later stage. Despite the negative impacts, 49 new external selection procedures were published in 2020 and 68 % of post vacant (and allocated) as of December 2019 were filled in 2020.
- 5) The average length of recruitment procedure target was difficult to measure in 2020 again due to the severe impact of COVID-19 but also due to the specific three selection procedures for standing corps category 1 with more than 7,700 applications received. More internal resources than anticipated had to be re-programmed for a longer time to handle these large-scale procedures. In 2020, there were 10 procedures that were completed within the target timeframe.

- 6) When comparing the number of participants enrolled for training vs. effective attendance in the in-house and external courses (except for recurrent events like language courses), the result achieved for 2020 was at the level of 99 %.
- 7) In 2020, during the annual appraisal exercise (assessment of performance in 2019), the Executive Director used the possibility to apply exceptional measures regarding the reporting lines. As a result, reporting lines were shifted to the level of heads of entities.  
However, the accomplishment of the expected speeding up of the appraisal process has been disturbed by the outbreak of COVID-19. The process in 2020 slowed down in March as the result of which, only 31 % of reports were completed by the time the whole process should have ended as foreseen in the indicative timetable. Further to the agreement between Frontex management and the staff committee, the process was re-boostered in June 2020. As a result, in October 2020 the ratio of finalised reports was comparable to that in October 2019 and oscillated around 80 % of the total number of reports.
- 8) The 2020 workforce planning for the headquarters positions was launched, input was collected from the entities and the aggregated overview was prepared for management decisions. As the majority of requests were for TA-AD positions for which the possibilities were very limited (25 % of the requests), combined with the need to build the structure of standing corps top-down, the Agency started negotiations with the European Commission requesting to have additional posts of TA-AD in exchange of TA-AST and CA. The reason for this situation is the fact that 102 TA post were cut in the establishment plan of the Agency in 2019 and replaced with 102 AST without any warning or consultation. The Agency asked the Commission in writing in November 2019 how the new establishment was to be interpreted and got the reply in May 2020 after the recruitment procedures for the standing corps category 1 had been launched. The negotiations on the request were not concluded by end of the year, thus delaying the implementation of the workforce planning 2020, except for identified high priority posts. Moreover, the Agency submitted a revised organisational structure which was adopted by the MB in December 2020.
- 9) The elaboration of an HR career development strategy needs to consider the direction given by a policy on sensitive posts which is currently pending the re-assessment of related risks.
- 10) Financial entitlements were paid on time and according to the rights established by PMO for standing corps category 1 staff. Working conditions and leaves (leaves, working time, sick leaves) were managed according to the applicable rules. Personal files of staff members are complete and kept according to the Personal Data Protection Regulation.
- 11) At the end of the year, the ratio of the HR team (FTEs) to the overall staff decreased to 2.8 %, due to the high increase of staff during the year (+ 485 staff including standing corps category 1) versus no increase of HR staff. At the moment, the HR team is not sufficiently staffed, and temporarily supported by a significant number of interim staff.
- 12) In 2020, 76 % of HR staff attended training courses and other learning sessions. Training sessions were mainly focused on preparing HR staff for using new IT systems and tools (SYSPER, SYSTAL, MyFX), while the other training was initiated as an immediate response to the urgent needs after the COVID-19 outbreak (Webex platform for the purpose of online training, online presentation skills for induction presenters).
- 13) In 2020, the new contract for pre-employment medical checks in Warsaw was fully implemented with more than 500 medical checks performed. The Agency was informed after Summer 2019 that the Commission Medical Services would not ensure its support anymore for the standing corps. Frontex had thus to conclude unexpectedly a contract to perform in 2020 statutory medical checks as part of the regular recruitment procedure of EU staff. The remaining part of the medical services is delivered by the Commission Medical Services in Brussels as per the SLA signed with DGHR.

## Focus area 6.2. Provide scalable, efficient and secure infrastructure for the Agency's developing requirements, including partial decentralisation of functions

**Key Activity 6.2.1. Develop and maintain permanent physical infrastructure providing for the Agency's growing functions.**

### Specific Objectives

Provide the physical infrastructure in a timely manner to ensure efficient and effective data collection and exchange (SO1), sufficient space for steering and meeting (SO2), support decentralised and additional premises required to develop a well-functioning border and coast guard (SO3).

Deliver innovative facility services with clear KPIs, service level agreement and service desk.

### Delivered results:

Analyse and adjust the current building premises and movable property including associated costs, taking into account business needs and specific requirements

As part of the reconstruction of the premises, two fully furnished office floors: 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> were re-opened for use with 119 additional workspaces and the ground floor was refurbished in response to security needs. Fit-out works on three floors were advanced. At the end of 2020, a total of 1,153 workplaces were available in the Agency.

Temporary facilities for the recruitment of the standing corps were made available at the beginning of the year, then due to the COVID-19 pandemic the increased recruitment team was transferred from the temporary facilities back to Frontex headquarters where space had to be provided for additional recruitment staff.

Offices and storage capacity in the Headquarters were assigned, as far as possible, to accommodate staff growth and deliveries of goods necessary for the build-up of the standing corps.

Revise and adjust the scope and level of corporate services according to corporate standards which consider the growing and evolving needs

Support the strategic direction of the Agency concerning physical needs for warehousing, decentralised offices and training and research facilities.

Along with the entire Agency, the Corporate Services were heavily affected by the pandemic crisis. To respond to the COVID-19 and ensure a safe working environment a number of new services had to be conceptualised and delivered within a very short time, in addition to business-as-usual work. A range of health and safety measures was deployed and enhanced sanitary protocols were enacted, including: provision of personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, individual sanitisers etc.), the introduction of all-building disinfection scheme, massive deployment of hands sanitisers, body temperature measurement equipment, specific canteen safety measures, Plexi protections in close contact areas, a sanitary regime in the testing rooms, in the meeting rooms, online interpretation of meetings, reimbursement of costs of taxi for transfers to the office, flu vaccination and PCR tests.

The headquarters remained fully functional despite the COVID-19 pandemic, maintenance and operation was adjusted to the sanitary protocols and work in shifts. To ensure safe return to the office a workplace recovery assessment was performed resulting in application building signage reminding on rules of safe behaviour and rearrangement of workplaces where necessary to ensure social distancing.

Put in place measures enabling the provision of corporate services in a proactive way

A customer-oriented service delivery approach resulted in a few improvements in daily work. The stationery e-shop was rolled out. Submission of reimbursement claims was transferred to digital format. Development of an online visitors' register and tax refund tool took place. The unfolding pandemic has forced the re-orientation of efforts towards response to COVID-19 threats.

To anticipate the pressures related to the spread of COVID-19, hands sanitisers and masks were provided to the Headquarters before the state of pandemic was announced. To facilitate teleworking and contribute to creating appropriate working conditions for staff in the exceptional circumstances linked to the COVID-19 outbreak, all Frontex staff (as well as external personnel in case of justified business needs) was allowed to take home certain office and ICT equipment they normally use at the office. Possibility to come to work by car was increased by the temporary opening of Frontex parking spots to all interested staff.

All requests for personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, hands sanitisers, surface sanitisers etc.) which were feasible for acquisition were delivered to the satisfaction of requesting business entities. Out of the total reimbursements, 6.7% of the claims had to be rejected but most of such rejections were caused by non-compliance with the respective ED decisions. Only 9% of stationery products were delivered after the standard time of 3 days but this includes products that were either not available at the moment the order was placed or products that were not included in the standard catalogue, of which the clients were aware.

- Manage, update and monitor the offices in the current building premises and transfer HQ function to new permanent premises.
- Prepare and implement the new permanent premises in Warsaw including a joint operational centre. Deliver ETIAS CU premises including alternative office facilities.

#### Frontex Permanent Premises

- In line with the originally assumed timeline, consultancies were concluded to ascertain legal, contractual and financial aspects of the new HQ development as well as the performance requirements for the new building(s).
- The Workplace Concept was finalised and will form the basis for the design of the future administrative space within

the new HQ.

- Feasibility study was completed, indicating the optimal financial/contractual and tendering modalities.
- Contact was maintained throughout 2020 with Ministry of the Interior and Administration and the Polish Police HQ (formally responsible for the Raclawicka land plot) to discuss the transfer of the ownership of utility connections and the soil remediation.
- Application for receiving non-objection on zoning plan was confirmed by Mazovian Directorate for Environmental Protection.
- The Public Purpose Investment zoning conditions were approved by the Voivodship.
- Liaison was maintained with Internal Security Agency (owner of the adjacent plot) to discuss issues relating both allotments (relocating transit of the city heat pipeline)
- Management Board Advisory Group (MBAG) was established to receive project status update on Frontex Permanent Premises and ETIAS CU/AOF premises.

#### **ETIAS CU premises/AOF: Tender procedure:**

- A prospection of the local market was completed.
- A Negotiated Tender procedure without prior publication of a contract notice was launched in Q3 2020 and is set to be concluded on Q1 2021 with the building selection.

1. Indicator and target: delivery of permanent premises expected by end of 2024 while (temporary) ETIAS CU available by mid-2021.

- Due to the COVID pandemic and finetuning the timeline based on the results of the feasibility report, delivery of the permanent premises is expected to be later than the end of 2024. Evaluation of the measurements to be taken is ongoing.
- Due to lower-than-expected recruitment rate, no need arose in 2020 for complementary facilities in Warsaw. In agreement with TF ETIAS the (temporary) ETIAS CU will be made available at the start of 2022.

2. Indicator and target: other facilities available depending on the development in the build-up phase of the standing corps.

Facilities available on the premises were adequately put in use for the Agency in order to respond to growing needs resulting from the implementation of the new mandate and the build-up phase of the standing corps:

3. Indicator and target: satisfaction rate of corporate services at least above 90%.

The overall satisfaction rate is above 90%. Corporate services processed over 880 payments for more than EUR 11 million. In relation to two payments (0.23% of the total number), late interest was paid, in the total value of EUR 506.11 (0.0045% of the total amount). The rate of clients that can be deemed dissatisfied ranges from 1.5% to 9% depending on the type of service. It should be noted that this also includes clients who did not comply with the requirements/guidelines known to them in advance.

#### **Key Activity 6.2.2. Develop sound and integrated ICT systems' structure supporting the European Border and Coast Guard functions.**

##### **Specific Objectives**

Integrate ICT infrastructure based on two operating models: to support both operational and horizontal activities. The new ECN will be designed to support operational activities in the perimeter defined in the regulation including the standing corps. The unclassified network will be transformed in line with the modern digitalisation concept using cloud technologies and services.

##### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

- Adapting the current EUROSUR network architecture to cover strategic objectives while waiting for the new ECN.
- New Frontex operational secure network designed, built, deployed, accredited, operated, maintained 365/24/7. Proposal to outsource such capacity. Full operational capability in 2025.
- Maintain an interim solution to support standing corps development and deployment beginning of 2021.

In 2020 ICT unit activities were extensive, in line with the ICT OPLAN 2020-2025 and the Frontex Cloud Implementation Plan 2020-2025.

Several outputs were performed successfully:

1. Agency business continuity was ensured in a secure teleworking model due to the COVID-19 situation.



2. Support provided to the standing corps onboarding in using cloud technologies despite COVID-19 crisis.
3. Support provided to the process of standing corps field deployment in providing the necessary equipment and connectivity.
4. Development of the digitalisation and modernisation in using cloud technologies for the unclassified operating model in full respect of personal data rules.
5. Improvement of automation with the integration of European communication administrative tools and applications.
6. Merging of the EUROSUR communication network with the Frontex secure network in one EU restricted communication network.
7. Renewal of the Authorisation to Operate of the EU Restricted communication network (accreditation).
8. Preparation of the EUROSUR communication network modernisation plan.
9. Validation of the Frontex cybersecurity action plan 2020-2025.
10. Development of the investment plan for the new communication network requested in Article 14 of the EBCG regulation. Nevertheless, due to the reduction of the budget in the MFF the implementation is postponed and aligned with the new Frontex headquarters (2025) development.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

1. Indicator: validation of the ICT strategy 2020-2025 by the ICT governance board. Target: by Q1 2020.
2. Indicator: annual planning linked with the ECBG 2.0 roadmap; the procurement plan and the budget plan must be clearly defined and discussed during the ICT governance board. Target: by Q4 2020.
3. Indicator: KPIs will be defined for each ICT function based on ITIL best practices as soon as the ICT strategy is validated. Target: deadline mid-2020.

1. The ICT OPLAN was validated on 25 March 2020.
2. Main activity postponed in 2025 due to COVID 2019 crisis validated by COM letter as regard due to MFF adjustment Ares(2020)3094272 of 15 June 2020.
3. Postponed at the end 2021/22 based on current development done with Deloitte support

**ICT support performance statistics for 2020:** The total number of service requests and incident created in 2020: 38,131 which shows an increase of +35% in comparison to 2019: 28,193.

**Cybersecurity incidents in 2020:** The total number of incidents 289. Nine percent of them were considered as critical and 69% as important.

ICT Budget spent and committed in 2020: EUR 28,563m in total, divided in EUR 17,398 m under title 2 and 11,165 m under title 3.

#### Key Activity 6.2.3. Ensure a secure working environment for the Agency's staff, including ICT security challenges.

##### Specific Objectives

Establish ICT SEC as one of the pillars of a global security approach.

Implement physical security of Frontex premises, both for current premises inside and outside the host state, including ETIAS and armoury so as to ensure the security of staff, visitors and assets based on qualitative security risk analysis following recognised and established security risk analysis models.

Implement personnel security for all staff, including new security measures for the staff categories under the new Regulation, by timely initiating vetting procedures and efficient follow-up of the outcome.

Ensure correct handling of European Union classified information, including classified communication and information systems, the establishment of the related required roles in line with Commission's Decisions 2015/444 and 2017/46 and ensure specialised training for all categories of staff.

Establish a central service for health and safety of Frontex headquarters staff.

##### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Development of an SEC strategy including an ICT SEC strategy with a clear roadmap of ICT SEC enhancement (deadline December 2020).
- Development of Frontex internal security framework based on the relevant legislation and new requirements under the new Regulation, including a specific roadmap.
- Timely delivery of proportional, up-to-date physical security risk assessment, travel advice and establishment of a coherent, integrated security approach providing appropriate levels of protection for persons, assets and information commensurate with identified risks and ensuring efficient and timely delivery.
- All staff to be considered trustful, reliable and compliant in the application of the relevant clearance and vetting processes (light procedures under the new Regulation) in the application of the relevant security framework, in full liaison with specific managers.
- A scalable and interoperable secure digital and physical environment to support operational and administrative tasks is deployed, operated and maintained.



Despite the outbreak of COVID-19 and the related limitations, SEC delivered services in ensuring the security of headquarters, staff, visitors and information. Information: unclassified, sensitive non-classified, classified was protected at the required level to ensure the operational capacity of Frontex. European Union security standards were applied in all aspects of SEC deliveries.

Frontex security guards were tasked to enforce COVID-19 limitations at the headquarters in coordination with the COVID-19 crisis cell.

The Frontex internal security framework was updated and fine-tuned with different internal and external stakeholders. The arrival of standing corps recruits and the related additional requests for personnel security clearances were efficiently handled.

Physical security risk assessments for ETIAS and new headquarters were executed, taking into account the impossibility to conduct on-site visits to the new plots. Specific counterintelligence and terrorism risk assessments were executed.

Security training in person had to be limited and are under transfer to on-line training.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

1. Indicator: KPIs will be defined based on ITIL best practices.
  2. Indicator and target: internal security framework delivered by Q3 2020.
  3. Indicator: physical security assessments delivered within 30 days after an assessment visit; translation of assessment into requirements and implementation of those into security measures reviewed continuously.
  4. Indicator: transferring the personnel security clearance requests to COM within one week and enabling access to EU classified information within a maximum of 30 days after the receipt of COM opinion.  
Target: Transfer of one week, access within 30 days.
  5. Indicator: policy and process development regarding the handling of EU classified information in cooperation with all stakeholders.  
Target: achieved by Q1 2020.
  6. Indicator: response process to possible security incidents developed with the help of a monthly overview of security incident handling in cooperation with all stakeholders.  
Target: by Q2 2020.
  7. Indicator: accreditation of classified communication and information systems in accordance with the new Regulation.  
Target: by Q4 2020.
- 
1. In 2020, the first Frontex cybersecurity implementation plan 2020-2025 was validated. Enhancement of internal cybersecurity capacity was enforced with limited HR resources. Between 2019 and 2020 the cybersecurity team was created and it consists of 10 security specialists (5 staff and 5 contractors). New technologies were implemented for improving the security such as double factor authentication for mandatory VPN access, mobile device management tool, and hybrid authentication using cloud technology. In 2020, the cybersecurity team registered 288 incidents, performed 12 risk assessments and 12 penetration tests. In 2021, Frontex will continue to improve the cybersecurity potential deployment of an outsourced Hybrid Security Operational Centre and additional security products to protect Frontex data and information.
  2. Internal security framework: the lengthy review process by external and internal stakeholders slightly delayed the approval of the draft of Frontex security rules (policy and process development regarding the handling of EU classified information) which is now ready and scheduled for presentation at the MB meeting in March 2021.
  3. Physical security assessments delivered within required timeframes, including continuous review and update of those assessments.
  4. Personnel security clearance procedure were transferred to EC within one week and enabled access to EU classified information within a maximum of 30 days after the receipt of EC opinion. Future new recruitments, including standing corps to be handled within set deadlines. CLIMB (Classified Information Mandatory Briefing) was delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions on training in group and in-person). Training for handling RESTREINT EU/EU RESTRICTED was digitalised (online format), CLIMB training in the process of being digitalised.
  5. Policy and process development regarding the handling of EU classified information in cooperation with all stakeholders. Process of review, update and establishment of existing and new policies and processes regarding the handling of EU classified information ongoing and linked to the approval of the draft Frontex security rules as all policies and processes are based on these Frontex Security Rules. Approval of policies and processes planned for Q3-Q4 2021 and related to the approval of the Frontex Security Rules.
  6. Response process to possible security incidents developed with the help of a monthly overview of security incident handling in cooperation with all stakeholders. General security incident management i.e. breaches of security and compromise of classified information was followed-up on continuously.

7. Security accreditation of classified Communication and Information Systems (CIS) files were reviewed and renewed before the expiration of existing accreditation decisions. Future new classified CIS security accreditation requests are to be received within two months before expiration to allow a thorough review of parameters and allow timely preparation of new (Interim) Authorisation to Operate (ATO) for classified CIS.

### Focus area 6.3. Ensure accountability, regularity and legality of all Frontex activities through a comprehensive inspection and control system to guarantee the effectiveness of internal business processes

**Key Activity 6.3.1. Develop and implement the strategic planning mechanism in line with the applicable legal framework.**

#### Specific Objectives

Contribute to the development of activity-based budgeting/management principles (and translation of these into a fully-fledged system by 2021).  
Enhance planning, monitoring and reporting activities at the corporate level.  
Improve current methodology for planning, monitoring and reporting.  
Ensure regular monitoring activities at the corporate level.

**Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020 (including results on indicators and targets):**

Budgetary planning and reporting amended with ABB aspects.

1. Indicator and target: ABB/ABM principles developed by Q12020 and subsequently translated into the budget process 2021.

A concept note developing an activity-based costing model for the Agency was elaborated and the consultation took place with internal relevant stakeholders. The project was placed on hold due to conflicting priorities of the main stakeholder i.e. Budget and Finance focused on adjusting its business model to a new structure of the operational title of the budget to better align it to the EBCG Regulation and its many implementing (cascading) features.

Planning and reporting products SPD, CAAR and their amendments are accurately produced in a timely manner and transmitted to stakeholders.

2. Indicator: SPD, CAAR documents are produced and submitted in a timely manner. Target: 100% delivered on time.
3. Indicator: annual benchmarking to improve current methodology in planning, monitoring and reporting activities are performed, and improvements are identified and integrated into a report.

Corporate documents SPD, CAAR were timely elaborated and adopted by the MB following an iterative process where all relevant stakeholders were adequately engaged. During 2020, four amendments to the SPD were required, mainly focusing on updating the budget of the Agency and the annual procurement plan.

The benchmarking process was performed in 2020 under the umbrella of the new EC guidelines to elaborate the SPD and the CAAR. During the benchmarking process, Frontex actively participated in the Performance Development Network (PDN) work clarifying new requirements and defining common grounds for its harmonised implementation across EU Agencies. All new and adjusted elements were duly taken into account following the requirements received.

Current methodology for planning monitoring and reporting is assessed vs peer agencies' practices through a benchmarking exercise.

4. Indicator: number of awareness sessions, workshops on planning, monitoring and reporting conducted annually

Planning process at the corporate level was improved during 2020 by means of consolidating the overall planning process setting clear milestones, deliverables and stakeholders including enhancing overall transparency of the process. During 2020 a visible gain in terms of engagement of all parties involved was achieved. It should be noted that the Agency was required to adjust its SPD 2021 – 2023 three times due to the evolution of the political negotiations on the MFF 2021 – 2027 impacting, in particular, the Agency's budget. Frontex is one of the very few Agencies which has not yet achieved 'cruising speed' that is, has not yet reached a baseline in terms of resources.

During 2020, an ED Decision setting clear internal guidelines for the elaboration of the SPD and CAAR was drafted, internally consulted and submitted for adoption. In view of the change of the structure of the Agency (December 2020) and the fact that a new MB Decision on the Working Group Budget and Accounts is being finalised, the proposed guidelines were placed on hold and expected to be adopted by mid-2021. Once this ED Decision is in place, the awareness sessions on the elaboration processes for SPD and the CAAR will commence as envisioned i.e. three iterations per year.

Quarterly monitoring activities are conducted in a timely manner and progress report is drawn up.

5. Indicator: quarterly monitoring reports are submitted to stakeholders in a timely manner.
6. Indicator: gradual implementation of a performance monitoring system for the Agency.

## 7. Indicator: performance indicators are introduced/revised/updated as needed.

The envisioned monitoring activities were performed throughout 2020, quarterly monitoring reports were produced and its results swiftly disseminated to all stakeholders including the Management Board through its Working Group on Budget and Accounts.

During 2020 performance measurement towards the indicator 'Flexibility' was introduced in the context of the second annual survey among Frontex stakeholders. A summary of the annual report on performance management indicators is presented as an Annex 2 to this document.

### Key Activity 6.3.2. Develop and implement a comprehensive system for internal control, inspection and audit functions.

#### Specific Objectives

Contribute to the overall assurance framework from the perspective of ex-ante controls.  
Ensure the internal control framework is in place and functions as intended.  
Continuously improve through timely completed actions following audit observations and recommendations.  
Enhance quality management.  
Corporate anti-fraud strategy is in place and updated regularly.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020 (including results on indicators and targets):

Delivery of a comprehensive ex-post control plan for 2020/2021 (ex-post controls kick off in Q2 of the year and are completed in Q2 of the following year).

Indicator: the ex-post controls established in the plan 2020/2021 are initiated and in process. Portugal, France, Italy and Norway have been/are being subject to ex-post controls. Target by Q4 2020: 80%. Result 80%.

Closure of the implementation of the ex-post controls plan 2019/2020.

Indicator: the ex-post controls established in the plan 2019/2020 of Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Latvia, Sweden, Romania, Malta, and Poland are completed. Target by Q2 2020: 100%. Result 100%

Delivery of a new ED Decision on ex-post controls policy.

Indicator: the new ED Decision on ex-post policy is adopted on 29/11/2020. Target: 100%. Result 100%

Implementation of audit observations/recommendations is monitored; the improvement log and IAS issue track are updated on time.

The implementation of audit observations/recommendations was monitored:

- the improvement log and IAS issue track TeamCentras was timely updated;
- the monitoring was performed and reminders to business units responsible for the implementation of the recommendations were timely delivered;
- the reports to the Management Board informing about the status on the implementation of the recommendations prepared and presented. To note: the implementation rate for the IAS recommendations is 19%.

Indicator: timeliness of implementation IAS recommendations. Target: 80% implemented on time. **Result:** 19%

Indicator: timeliness of implementation of ECA observations. Target: 85% are reported as implemented in the report to the Discharge Authority (DA)/ **Result:** 47%

Indicator: number of critical recommendations identified in the IAS audit reports. Target: none. **Result:** No Critical recommendations issued in 2020.

The annual report to the discharge authority was timely prepared.

Audit engagements are prepared and coordinated in a comprehensive and timely manner.

Regarding the audit liaison function, ICO prepared and coordinated nine (9) audit engagements, two (2) follow-up audits, one (1) review and one (1) risk assessment exercise of the Agency which will serve as a basis to create the Strategic Internal Audit Plan of audits for the years 2021-2023.

The works performed included: at the beginning of the year the preparation of on-the-spot audit visits, since the pandemic the preparations of the remote/online audit engagements, collection of documents prior and after the engagement, making the documents available to the auditors, scheduling interviews, coordinating collection of comments, replies and inputs into draft and final audit reports, clearing letters, preliminary observations, questionnaires and surveys, coordination of adversarial procedures, translation of Agency's official replies into all official EU languages.

ICO successfully re-opened the competition using the DG Budg framework contract and was able to conclude a contract with a private audit firm that will perform audits of Agency's accounts 2020-2021.

All audit liaison function activities were performed in a comprehensive and timely manner, safeguarding the good, professional relationship of the Agency with the auditing institutions.

ICO enabled the auditors to give the overall assurance on the functioning of the Agency's operations and the legality and regularity of its transactions. As a result, the audit liaison function contributed to the improvement of the Agency's internal control framework.

Assessment and revision of quality management-related documents.

Indicator: the current elements of the quality management system are assessed and a proposal for the concept of an integrated management system in Frontex is made.

Enhance quality management - the objective is not implemented. This activity was de-prioritised in view of the limited human resources available.

Quarterly/annual internal control assessments are performed including an up-to-date log of corporate risks

Indicator: monthly/quarterly update of Frontex risk register and related risk escalation and convening and following up on Frontex risk management meetings.

Register of exceptions is monitored, reports are prepared on time.

Indicator: ratio (percentage) of the amount covered by the exceptions and the total payment made during a given quarter (period).

Ensure the internal control framework is in place and functions as intended.

- Quarterly reports on exceptions and non-compliance events were prepared;
- Annual internal control assessments were performed;
- Corporate risk log was updated;
- New policy on registration of exceptions and non-compliance events was adopted.
- Automated workflow for registration of exceptions and non-compliance events has been introduced.
- The exception ratio in 2020 was at 3.47%.

Indicator: timeliness of the anti-fraud strategy implementation. Target: 85% of actions implemented on time.

Corporate anti-fraud strategy is in place and updated regularly.

- The reports on the implementation of the AFS prepared and presented to the management board.
- 81 % of actions are implemented at the end of 2020

**Key Activity 6.3.3. Develop and implement the system for monitoring and evaluating the EBCG's operational deliverables to support sound operational decision-making processes.**

#### Specific Objectives

Contribute to the overall monitoring and evaluation exercises from a resource perspective, if need be supported by a semi-automated monitoring tool for operational activities.

Ensure ex-post control policy and annual work programme is in place.

Ensure central services (counselling, anti-harassment and whistleblowing) policies are in place and are annually reviewed.

Ensure inspection (complaints, EO inquiries, administrative enquiries, disciplinary procedures) policies and implementing rules/guidelines are in place and are duly implemented.

Ensure compliance with the financial regulatory framework and update where necessary

**Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020 (including results on indicators and targets):**

Gradual development of a monitoring tool (starting with operational deployments) to be extended in the coming years to other operational activities.

Indicator and target: Q2: concept developed for the requirements from resource side of the monitoring tool.

During 2020 the monitoring and reporting process was performed using MS office suite. The work was streamlined for all actors providing input based on the capacities of such standard IT facility. During last quarter of 2020 an evaluation of this process in the framework of the performance management system was initiated and expected to yield during 2021 with the definition of a new set of performance indicators paving the way for the introduction of custom-tailored IT solution automating the reporting.

Ex-post controls are implemented and the draft, revised and final reports are produced as a result of each step of the adversarial (contradictory) procedure in relation to the selected MSs and institutions.

Ex-post controls are planned annually based on a risk assessment. The underlying risk assessment is carried out taking into account the entire population of the Member States and Schengen Associated Countries benefiting directly or indirectly from Frontex grants.

The historical criteria take into account the countries ex-post controlled in a year N-5. Consequently, the final plan is created and implemented via the controls that have a form either the desk reviews or on-the-spot missions. The controls are initiated with the announcement letters sent to the selected Member States and their institutions. The contradictory procedure is closed via the final reports agreed between Frontex and the institutions controlled. At the level of the draft final report, the reports are approved by the Head of the Cabinet and by the ED who fulfils the role of the authorising officer.

Central services processes are mapped and periodically reviewed.

- In September 2020, after successfully going through selection process and completing the required training modules – as acknowledged by the trainer – seven confidential counsellors were appointed by the Executive Director.
- On 4 January 2021 – in accordance with Frontex Anti-Harassment Policy – the Manual of Procedures for Frontex Confidential Counsellors was adopted by an Executive Director Decision.
- On 3 December 2020, based on the initiative of the Central Service in Inspection and Control Office, to ensure exchange of good practice and points of view of the members of the network of confidential counsellors, an informal knowledge sharing session was organised between the appointed confidential counsellors of Frontex and EFSA (European Food Safety Authority).

Indicator: number and type of awareness-raising initiatives performed during the years and number of participants of awareness-raising initiatives.

- An ethics training course based on the EC e-learning model was made available to all Frontex staff. Followed by a communication campaign encouraging staff to participate. The ethics modules are presented to the standing corps during their induction training. All modules are uploaded in the Virtual Aula.
- As of 2020, pre-deployment induction training started together with other operational training in which a module on ethics and code of conduct was included. In total, 249 staff members enrolled in the course.
- In the course of induction training, information provision on anti-harassment policy implementation within the mandate of ICO.
- In 2020 two Articles are published to raise awareness on how Frontex appointed Confidential Counsellors will assist the Agency's staff in finding an amicable solution for serious conflicts through conciliation.
- In the framework of awareness-raising initiatives, an external expert was contracted in 2020 to conduct a session for the executive, senior and middle managers of the Agency in the course of 2021.

Ensure inspection (complaints, EO inquiries, administrative enquiries, disciplinary procedures) policies and implementing rules/guidelines are in place and are duly implemented.

Indicator: number of cases opened per type (counselling, harassment, whistleblowing, complaints, EO inquiries, administrative enquiries, disciplinary procedures).

- EO - complaint cases: 9; informal inquiry: 1; strategic Inquiry: 1; strategic Initiative: 1
- OLAF - notification based on own initiative: 4; request for information: 1; Investigation: 1
- Whistleblowing - 0
- Harassment - anonymous: 10; informal procedure: 2
- Administrative inquiry: 2
- Fact-finding mission: 2
- Reports, notifications on possible/alleged criminal activities received from the public: 20

Indicator: number of cases closed per type (counselling, harassment, whistleblowing, complaints, EO inquiries, administrative enquiries, disciplinary procedures).

- EO - complaint cases: 8; informal inquiry: 1; strategic inquiry: 1; strategic initiative: 1
- OLAF - notification based on own initiative: 3; request for information: 1; investigation: 0
- Whistleblowing - 0
- Harassment - anonymous: 10; informal procedure: 2
- Administrative inquiry: 0
- Fact finding mission: 1
- Reports, notifications on possible/alleged criminal activities received from public: 20 - channel is closed due to lack of legal basis for processing personal data.

Indicator: average time of handling per case.

The average time handling cases varies significantly in view of its complexity on average between one to three months.

Inspection processes are mapped and periodically reviewed.

The objective was not implemented. No priority was given to the process and quality management function in general due to conflicting priorities and limited human resources available.

Ensure compliance with the financial regulatory framework and update where necessary.

**Indicator:** all transactions subject to financial ex-ante verification are processed in a timely manner. Target: 100%.

In 2020, BFCS ensured that all budgetary and legal commitments and other financial operations were subject to at least one financial ex-ante verification and were financially verified within the prescribed period (5 days). This maintained the financial management controls in accordance with the agency policy of ex-ante in line with the provisions of the financial regulations of the EC institutions and the financial regulation of the agency, thus ensuring financial assistance and advice on the regulatory framework of the agency.

**Key Activity 6.3.4. Develop and implement the system aimed at preserving legal conformity of all Frontex activities with applicable legal framework.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

Ensure that the legal risks in Frontex activities are minimised through LEG governance and operational legal support.

Further streamline the effective and efficient processing of PAD (public access to documents) applications, including risk mitigation to avert European Ombudsman and Court of Justice involvement in EU cases.

#### **Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020**

Provide a legal helpdesk service for internal stakeholders for both operational and governance matters; provide quality control of Frontex decision-making processes; develop creative legal solutions.

In 2020, the Legal Services Sector has functioned as a legal helpdesk by providing input to the gradually augmenting needs of the Agency regularly working at a short notice. Extensive support has been provided on operational matters (e.g. legal compliance of operational plans with particular focus on the EBCG Regulation, legal support for coast guard functions and law enforcement, reviewing SOPs, MoUs related to Frontex liaison officers, extensive legal advice on Agency's extended mandate concerning the standing corps, etc.) and non-operational/governance matters (legal review of documents, inter alia, of ED and MB Decisions).

Particular merit shall be given to challenging legal aspects handled by the Legal Services Sector in relation to the standing corps needs. The good quality of Legal Services Sector services is reflected in the satisfaction of the business entities measured by the smooth and timely implementation of the respective processes, activities and agreements.

Updated ED decision on PAD; new ICT tool; implementation of proactive measures such as awareness-raising and PAD-compliant drafting of documents

Processing application for Public Access to Documents in line with Regulation (EC) 1049/2001 and implementing related proactive measures such as awareness raising and PAD-compliant drafting of documents.

Throughout 2020, the Transparency Office, housed within LPU handled a total of 266 cases for Public Access to Documents, all of which within the provisions and the legal deadlines set in Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001. No maladministration has been identified by the European Ombudsman regarding the complaints submitted relating to the processing of PAD applications on behalf of Frontex, both in the initial and the confirmatory stage. To raise awareness and ensure that the relevant documents are PAD-compliant, the Transparency Office organised multiple in-house training sessions on PAD processing addressed to the specific needs and remits of the respective business entities. Detailed information is provided in the Annual report on public access to documents (Annex 10).

#### **Efficient performance of ex-ante verification**

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown that followed in 2020 across the continent, resulted in a reduction in the number of financial transactions of the agency in comparison to 2019. In 2020, approximately 11,450 financial transactions; 2,610 budgetary commitments and 9,140 payment orders went through ex-ante financial verification.

During the same period 336 new grant agreements were initiated. The grant agreement to Member States constitute the major part of Frontex budget, additional ex-ante requirements exist concerning the submission of supporting documents proving the costs incurred introduced in 2019 and during 2020, the agency continued the efforts to improve and update the ex-ante control framework.

In 2020, the agency total amount in grants to Member States for their participation in operational activities equalled EUR 149,331,497. The total payments are EUR 70,711,708 with EUR 57,568,283 or 81% subjected to ex-ante verified supporting documents of which EUR 19,916,515 were paid in the form of final payment. The open final payment amounts due EUR 78,619,789 (covering 52% of the total amount) are due for request for final payments from March 2021.

#### **Results on indicators and targets:**

1. Indicator: Quality and satisfaction level.



Delivery of high quality, client-focused legal advice by LEG and providing options to business units within realistic deadlines. The satisfaction of our clients would be measured by means of anonymised surveys\*.

Necessary advice and support by PROC to business units in the procurement process, in a client-oriented approach; identifying potential non-compliance with the applicable regulatory framework related to procurement rules and assessing and mitigating relevant risks. The satisfaction of our clients would be measured by means of anonymised surveys.

In 2020, the number of total requests for legal advice was 788. There were 785 completed requests which convert into a nearly 100% completion rate.

The vast majority of the requests in 2020 were the requests concerning ED Decisions/Administrative Notices. In addition to the requests received in 2020, there were (i) other unrecorded requests in writing; (ii) oral requests; and (iii) requests that need redirecting as they contain no issue on which legal advice is required, nevertheless those also needed legal analysis before being re-directed to the responsible business unit.

Requests (completed vs not completed)	
Number of requests	788
Completed requests	785
Completion ratio	100%
Ongoing requests	0%

Litigation	Total numbers	Ratio
All cases	4	-
Won legal case	4	100 %
Lost legal cases	0	0 %

2. Indicator: timely replies to PAD applications (i.e. within the deadlines set by Regulation 1049/2001) and PAD-related EO requests (i.e. deadline set by the EO) and deadlines regarding court proceedings (statutory deadlines and deadlines set by the Court) - measured by statistics. Target: 100% of cases.

Detailed information provided in the Annex 2.

#### Focus area 6.4. Provide a management framework designed to uphold EU values

**Key Activity 6.4.1. Ensure comprehensive fundamental rights framework throughout all Frontex activities, with strong focus on implementing the additional FR elements under the Regulation, including partial decentralisation of functions in the context of the fundamental rights monitors.**

##### Specific Objectives

Support and advisory capacity on fundamental rights-compliant IBM.  
Strengthened FR monitoring system in all Agency's activities.  
Enhance strategic cooperation with the Consultative Forum (CF) on FR.

**Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020 (including results on indicators and targets):**

Process of FR strategy and action plan supported in alignment with EBCG Regulation and implementation monitored.

Throughout the year, the **FRO supported the consultative drafting process of the Fundamental Rights Strategy**. Multiple rounds of reviews by Frontex business units, partner Agencies, Member States and the Consultative Forum were followed by the analysis of the changes by the FRO, including substantive editing of the draft. In December 2020, the new Fundamental Rights Strategy was submitted for approval and adopted on 14 February 2021 by the MB.

FR included in the relevant training curricula and embedded in Agency's culture

Throughout the year, the cooperation between the Agency and the Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights has been continuously supported and reinforced. The FRO participated in regular meetings with the Consultative Forum to update on the developments and potential support to be provided by the Forum. In addition, the **Consultative Forum has been consulted on numerous policy and knowledge products of Frontex and the FRO**. This included the Fundamental Rights Strategy, the Management Board decision establishing a supervisory mechanism, the concept paper on Frontex International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2023, the MB Decision on the Rules of Independence of the FRO. Its expert advice has been considered by the FRO as well as relevant entities within Frontex.

Special rules to guarantee independence of FRO in place.

In 2020, the Agency produced multiple documents with fundamental rights-relevant content, further embedding fundamental rights into the Agency's systems and processes. The FRO has developed an analysis of the impact of the EBCG Regulation on fundamental rights, proposed a Fundamental Rights Due Diligence Procedure, provided opinions on the operational plans and opinions on working arrangements as well as input into the developed Management Board

Decisions. The FRO has contributed to the Agency's special rules to guarantee the independence of the Fundamental Rights Officer. **The Management Board Decision instituting the Rules of Independence of the FRO was issued in Q4 of 2020.**

Consultations on operational plans, as well as assessments and analysis in view of their compliance with FR.

The Fundamental Rights Officer was consulted by the Agency with regard to operational plans in view of their compliance with fundamental rights. In this context, the FRO reviewed and provided constructive recommendations to eleven (11) operational plans, including the two (2) rapid border interventions (RBI) that took place in 2020, namely RBI Aegean and RBI Evros including a supplementary observation. In addition, the FRO team supported the Frontex training unit in the development of the training curriculum for the standing corps and has delivered several training sessions for the standing corps in Poland and Italy. The FRO contributed to the initiatives in the field of return, to the establishment of the pool of forced-return monitors and revision of profiles as adopted by MB Decision 40/2020.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the FRO's work, particularly in its on-site monitoring role. General travel restrictions and the closure of EU borders limited the FRO in conducting direct monitoring of Frontex operational areas. In fact, only one field mission (Italy) was completed in 2020. Monitoring was thus conducted exclusively through other means: maintaining contacts with Frontex Operational Response Division and Situational Awareness and Monitoring Division, accessing briefings provided to deployed officers and incoming reports, gathering information from the media, cooperating with the Consultative Forum and other international organisations.

In 2020, the FRO formally registered ten (10) Serious Incident Reports (SIRs), for which the FRO was nominated as a coordinator. Currently three Final FRO Reports were issued closing the pending SIRs as of 2020 and three (3) others are considered to be closed pending issuing FRO Reports. The SIRs involved alleged violations of fundamental rights in the course of operational activities (including return operations) coordinated by the Agency (i.e. relating to MS and Agency staff). An overview on SIRs has regularly been presented by the FRO to the Management Board. FRO participated partially in the FRaLO working group and provided fundamental rights compliant assessments.

Furthermore, the FRO has received a total of twenty-four (24) complaints in 2020. After the FRO performed an admissibility review of these complaints, seven (7) of them were declared admissible and they were forwarded to the relevant MS authorities and ED. Case handling and closure of a complaint depends mostly on timely engagement of MS with the FRO. The admissible and inadmissible complaints (regarding land, air, sea and return activities) are regularly reported by the FRO in the Management Board.

In its advisory role, the FRO also contributed to the draft of the new Rules on the Fundamental Rights Complaints Mechanism, developed in accordance with Article 111(10) of the EBCG Regulation. These included case management and effective follow-up processes. The draft is currently under discussion within the Agency and will be shared with the Consultative Forum for their consultations before the final adoption. In addition, the FRO has been working on the drafting of new complaint forms as well as a new tool for the online submission of the complaints, as required by the EBCG Regulation.

Nomination FRO and Deputy FRO.

Adequate staffing corresponding to its mandate and scope to support FRO and Deputy FRO.

Pool of FR monitors (FROMs) established, effective mechanism and monitoring tools in place and their deployment.

Staffing in the Fundamental Rights Office remained a challenge in 2020. With the composition of the team remaining largely unchanged, certainly not corresponding to the expanded mandate of the office in line with the EBCG Regulation. In particular, the recruitment of the Fundamental Rights Officer has been delayed due to external factors. However, the vacancy notice for the post was issued in Q4 of 2020. Once the Fundamental Rights Officer is recruited, the vacancy notice for the Deputy Fundamental Rights Officer will be issued.

The pilot project between Frontex and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has been on-going with the goal of establishing the new function of the Fundamental Rights Monitors (FROMs). The vacancy notices for the FROMs (different levels) were posted in Q4 of 2020, with their envisaged on-boarding in Q1/Q2 of 2021.

**Key Activity 6.4.2. Design and implement the framework for legitimate personal data<sup>16</sup> collection and processing throughout all Frontex activities.**

### Specific Objectives

Awareness raising on DP obligations.

<sup>16</sup> The implementation of measures related to exchange of personal data with Eurojust and Europol requires a working arrangement (WA). The specific content of the WA is dependent on the issuance and approval of new MB implementing rules for the processing of personal data. Note that consultation of WA with the EDPS is only mandatory for the conclusion of WA with international organisations.

Data protection consultancy and advice is provided.  
Data protection coordination is ensured.  
Administrative personal data

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Provision of ad-hoc training courses tailored to the specific needs of specific units.
- Drafting legal instruments for adequacy to new DPR.
- Liaison with the EDPS.
- Maintain an updated register of records.

The DPO provided three types of training:

- continuing with the induction training of newcomers (duration 1.5 h);
- dedicated training for Field Deployment Unit on data protection requirements for the OPLAN and data protection report for operations in third countries (duration approximately 3h) and for the training unit on personal data breaches (duration 2h).
- Organised and provided, in cooperation with Maastricht University, dedicated training to all staff on Data Security on the occasion of European Data Protection Day 2020;
- Delivered training to LOU (1.5h);
- Created and delivered the data protection training of the standing corps, divided in two modules, one general and one specific on law enforcement and data protection, that amounted to more than 25h of training delivered.

In relation to the expected output of drafting instruments for the adequacy to the new DPR, the DPO delivered the following documents in relation to adequacy:

- created templates for international data transfers for third countries,
- created a template for joint controllership agreement,
- created a template for data processing agreement,
- introduced the DPIA methodology template for the Agency,
- introduced the compliance check template,
- amended the records template.

As an expected outcome, it was intended to have the implementing measures. The DPO produced the first draft for the DPO's implementing rules and discussed it with Legal and Procurement Unit (LPU). This process led to the redrafting of several provisions. Consequently, and also due to the new needs of the Agency in particular tied up to ETIAS, the DPO re-initiated the drafting introducing new elements such as data protection coordinators and having had clarification from the ED in relation to controllership of data subject requests.

In relation to liaising with the EDPS, the DPO together with the EDPS, initiated a round of dedicated meetings to discuss Frontex issues in November 2020. The intention is to provide an introduction on Frontex legal framework and an overview of the data processing activities conducted by Frontex, which then will be formulated into formal meetings between the EDPS and the DPO. The EDPS expressed his intention to exercise further scrutiny over Frontex data processing activities in relation to the newly created sector at the EDPS on supervision of JHA Agencies. In addition, the DPO attended all EDPS-DPO meetings, which took place in December 2020, in July (the Hague Forum on Cloud Contracting), in June (EDPS Strategy Launch), and in May 2020.

In 2020, the EDPS concluded three remote inspections to all EUIs: one related to the cloud computing, one related to the Public Register of Records and one related to the usage of Tik Tok. Frontex does not use, to the DPOs knowledge, Tik Tok. The outcome of the Public Register investigation was positive for Frontex, resulting in Frontex being one of the 15 EUIs, out of 67, that conducted its activities related to the register in full compliance with the DPR. What concerns cloud computing activities, the EDPS opened a specific investigation.

In relation to the obligation to cooperate with the EDPS on their requests for information, the DPO responded to the requests for information in relation to existing, planned or ongoing DPIAs, on the international data transfers performed by Frontex and on the Agency's activities to address COVID. Finally, the DPO kept improving the public register of records, updating it to the requirements of the DPIA. The DPO has initiated the transformation of all the Agency's notifications into new records in accordance with the data protection regulation.

#### Results on indicators and targets:

1. Indicator and target: three ad-hoc training courses to be provided.

Target is fully met.

2. Indicator and target: model clauses for international transfers; two MB decisions implementing the new DPR.

Target is partially met. International data transfers clauses were created. The DPO MB implementing rules were redrafted and the MB implementing rules on operational personal data drafting has been initiated.

3. Indicator: establishment of a first proposal for data subject rights under ETIAS.

Target is partially met. The DPO provided numerous comments and advice to ETIAS TF on the draft implementing acts and different data processing operations in ETIAS. The DPO held numerous discussions in respect to preparation of the DPIA. The DPO reviewed the business case and project charter for the establishment of Central Unit and advised on the aspects requiring further attention. Discussions continued throughout 2020 with EDPS and eu-LISA on the allocation of responsibilities and controllership within ETIAS, which is a key element in respect to DSARs management. However, Commission's implementing decision on measures for accessing, amending, erasing and advance erasing of data in the ETIAS Information System, pursuant to Article 73(3)(b) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 of the European Parliament and the Council has not yet been adopted, and Frontex has not received from eu-LISA the ETIAS Data Protection Impact Assessment. Both documents are the basis for the preparation of DSAR management process.

4. Indicator and target: participation in all DPO-EDPS meetings and organisation of dedicated visit of EDPS (2/year). Reporting.

Target partially met. The DPO participated in several EDPS meetings and dedicated working groups, but the COVID outbreak cancelled the EDPS visit. The EDPS had an interaction with the ED on the occasion to the Microsoft Cloud computing investigation.

5. Indicator and target: publish five new records on the register

Target: Fully met. The DPO published 14 Records of processing activities.

## **Focus area 6.5. Establish a sound mechanism to interrelate all Frontex strategic functions and to ensure the consistency of Frontex exchanges with external stakeholders**

**Key Activity 6.5.1. Develop and implement a model for organising and harmonising the delivery of all Frontex functions at strategic and executive level, including Frontex relations with external stakeholders**

### **Specific Objectives**

Ensure cross-divisional coordination of the Agency's tasks, including operational coordination, protocol function, document management and executive management support functions, including executive advisory function to the EM.

Ensure smooth functioning of the Frontex Management Board and its supporting functions.

Provide for coordination with and timely reporting to the EU institutions and other relevant EU bodies based in Brussels.

### **Expected Results, Main Outputs/Actions, Key Deliverables**

- Implementation of Agency-wide coordination processes and mechanisms.
- Coordinate the preparation and reporting related to MB meetings planned for 2020.
- Timely reports on political and legal developments relevant to the Agency.
- Preparation of relevant meetings and events with Frontex external stakeholders in the Brussels office.

### **Delivered results:**

Horizontal coordination of the Agency's tasks has been strengthened throughout 2020 by regular organisation of cross-divisional meetings at different levels, starting from the Operational Board and Directors' Briefing (chaired by the ED and attended by the DED and all Directors of divisions) where strategic issues and current affairs were discussed, to more technical meetings including focus group on the implementation of the Regulation as well as cabinet coordination meetings, which have provided space for brainstorming as well as alignment with wider objectives of the Agency.

To enhance cross-divisional cooperation and improve document management and well as Executive Management support functions, collaborative tools available through MyFX platform were extensively used to store and share documents across different entities, allowing for better exchange of information and teamwork. Moreover, the centralised approach towards the taskings has given an opportunity to involve relevant entities and ensure cross-divisional cooperation whenever necessary. To improve quality of the products and effectiveness of the processes, the preparation of dossiers for the Executive Management, regular feedback and follow-up were ensured by the centralised coordination mechanism aimed at breaking historic silos.

The digital and hardware ICT tools implemented previously by Frontex proved crucial when operating under the COVID-19 pandemic. All workflows were fully maintained in paperless form (including the establishment of specific paperless workflows, e.g. financial circuit) and cross-divisional coordination was ensured even when the Agency has moved into teleworking and subsequently into shift work. As of March 2020, all internal and external meetings were organised in a hybrid format combining limited physical presence of staff in the HQ with the videoconferencing connections.

As regards the meetings of the Frontex Management Board and its supporting bodies, namely the Executive Board, the Working Group on Budget and Accounts and the Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations, the Agency supported the coordination and preparation of their meetings and activities having in mind not only the regular business of the Agency but also implementation of the new Regulation setting up the standing corps and two Rapid Border Interventions in Greece.

The Agency continued to provide the Secretariat of the Management Board, as mandated by the Regulation. With the new Rules of Procedure of the Management Board adopted in July 2020, the tasks of the Management Board Secretariat were enhanced and re-defined to facilitate and support the Management Board's decision-making processes, including the intensified planning and reporting cycle. Furthermore, in line with the gradual implementation of Frontex amended organisational structure adopted by Management Board Decision 43/2020, the internal procedures for the Agency's input to the work of the Management Board were decided to be reviewed and strengthened in 2021.

Frontex provided for timely reporting and coordination with the EU institutions and other relevant EU bodies based in Brussels. Although the pandemic-related challenges reduced the physical presence in different Working Groups, Councils and Expert Groups coordinated by the Council, European Commission and European Parliament, Frontex managed to provide for timely presence in the videoconferencing format, interacting with Member States experts and corroborating the results of the technical discussions with more operational and hands-on approach in the application of the EU policies, as per the Agency's mandate.

At the same time, Frontex interacted with the counterparts in the European External Action Service and provided for regular coordination on positions with sister Agencies' Liaison Offices in Brussels (Europol, EASO, CEPOL, Interpol, eu-LISA) on technical files, mitigating the resources allocated and further explaining the Agency's mandate in the review of operational processes (i.e. new Interoperability systems, ETIAS, SIS, law-enforcement cooperation, Innovation Hub, digital criminal justice, CSDP cooperation, migration flows, border management and returns).

Regular meetings with the international organisations (UNHCR, IOM Brussels-bureaux) took place and provided for further coordination on the provisions of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum.

During 2020, Frontex was recognised as an important actor for the legislative and policy in the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) domain. As 2020 was marked by the negotiations of the Multiannual Financial Framework, which determines the budgetary ceilings of the EU annual general budgets during the 2021-2027 period, Frontex Brussels Office timely reported to the Executive management of the Agency on the dynamics and reviews of this financial act, as well as its specific components (BMVI, AMF, ISF).

#### **Results on indicators and targets:**

##### **1. Weekly reporting on the implementation of the horizontal functions through the Director's briefing meetings.**

Implementation of the horizontal functions was ensured through the regular Directors' Briefing meetings organised every week, usually on Mondays (48 meetings). Operational matters as well as issues related to the implementation of the new mandate were discussed at a bi-weekly Operational Board meetings – 24 meetings took place in 2020. In addition, approximately 20 cross-divisional focus group meetings as well as weekly coordination meetings took place, normally taking place every Wednesday (circa 48 meetings). All meetings were organised in a hybrid format.

##### **2. Number of MB meetings and advisory group meetings.**

As regards the Frontex Management Board meetings, only two meetings in February and in March took place in physical format whereas the other 6 meetings were organised via videoconferencing system (3 regular meetings and 3 extraordinary meetings). The Working Group on Budget and Accounts met regularly throughout the year (7 bi-monthly meetings), while the Executive Board and the Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations commenced their work only in December 2020 and consequently held less meetings (Executive Board - 1 meeting, Working Group - 3 meetings in 2020). The work of the Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations was divided into 3 sub-groups which met more often, but with limited support from the Agency.

##### **3. Number of reports produced.**

##### **4. Number of meetings and events organised in the Brussels office.**

Frontex Brussels Office provided for timely reporting and attendance of Working Parties in the Council of the European Union (COSI, COSI SG, SCIFA, IMEX, IXIM, Frontiers, False Documents, CCWP, LEWP, FoP EUMSS, JAIEX, JHA Counsellors on Migration Situation, TWP), supported the attendance of Executive management in the Justice and Home Affairs Council. In constant cooperation with the European Commission, the Frontex Brussels Office provided for timely reporting and attendance in the expert groups and thematic discussions organised by DG HOME, DG JUST, SecGen and Commissioners' Cabinets. At the same time, the Office provided for timely reporting on the outcomes of discussions and thematic sessions in the European Parliament (LIBE, AIDA, Schengen Scrutiny, EP Plenaries). On average, almost 30 meetings per month were covered during the entire year, adding up to approx. 350 meetings attended and reported in 2020.



In addition to that, the Agency prepared several non-papers related to the new legislative proposals offering Frontex's reflections on potential areas of synergies or further developments needed.

**Key Activity 6.5.2. Design and implement a comprehensive and consistent communication model<sup>17</sup>, involving internal and external communication functions and providing for partial decentralisation of the Agency's functions.**

#### Specific Objectives

Ensure consistent communication on major themes which fall under the umbrella of cross-border mobility to external audiences and the Agency's staff, including in the context of the new Regulation.

#### Actual results delivered vs expected results included in the AWP 2020

- Regularly updated intranet content and organisation of a variety of internal events.
- Production and dissemination through various channels of high quality, relevant communication products, including recruitment materials.
- Transparent and proactive engagement with key international media.

In 2020, the Frontex Media and Public Relations Office provided coherent, relevant and timely information on the Agency's work to its internal and external stakeholders. MPR used different communication channels to reach various audiences, including website, social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube), the Agency's intranet and publications. In addition, the press office actively communicated with a number of European and international media outlets and researchers.

In 2020, MPR published 60 press releases and organised numerous interviews with the Agency's management and spokesperson. This included a monthly analysis of the migratory situation at Europe's borders. The press office responded to questions from media and researchers, an average of 15 questions per day. Every week, the press office provided an updated info pack to media and different stakeholders.

The Frontex Executive Director gave 27 interviews last year, including with El Pais, Die Welt, Die Zeit, Kathimerini, Le Figaro, Funke, Real News, RFI, Romanian Hotnews, Greek To Vima, Radio Tok FM, Hungarian National Radio, France 24 (in French and in English), Digi24. The spokespersons gave around 300 interviews and briefings last year.

In November, the press office organised a virtual spokespersons meeting with representatives from nearly all authorities participating in Frontex operations and gathered 35 participants.

On top of that, the press office produced a weekly press review with highlights from Frontex activities and news mentions.

When it comes to publications, the Fake News Detection Manual produced by MPR is worth highlighting. Its objective is to help the Agency's staff spot disinformation, particularly related to COVID-19. The manual was disseminated to all staff, other EU agencies, and press departments of border and coast guard authorities and press officers of EU representations. MPR also organised four training sessions for staff to help spot disinformation. All in all, MPR was involved in the production of 156 publications including manuals, reports, catalogues, brochures, leaflets, infographics etc. MPR also managed to produce 22 videos shared on all communication channels.

The Agency was very actively communicating with its online community, posting 3-4 times per week on the Frontex social media channels with various institutional and operational updates.

MPR office continued working closely with JHA agencies. Last year, the JHA agencies joined efforts in supporting the Member States and EU institutions in meeting the unprecedented challenges resulting from the outbreak of the virus. The agencies' individual and joint efforts to deal with the impact of the pandemic have been captured in a Joint Paper on the COVID-19 response by the JHA agencies and promoted externally and internally.

#### Regularly updated intranet content and organisation of a variety of internal events

In 2020, intranet became a very active institutional communication platform, providing staff with news articles, informative practical announcements, a corporate calendar and photo-galleries. Most of the COVID-related information to staff was disseminated via MyFX - articles and announcement. MPR created a separate area on the main page of MyFX only devoted to information on COVID-19, including guidelines, reports and articles. Last year, a total of 161 articles were published on the intranet ('We All').

As demonstrated by a staff satisfaction survey conducted in October 2020, Frontex staff is regularly visiting the agency's intranet and finds the information presented there informative and useful.

<sup>17</sup> The communication office of the Agency performs its duties in coordination with its peers within the EC and other EU institutions, in particular JHA agencies. The office strives to deliver coherent, relevant and timely information related to the scope of the EBCG Regulation.



As regards events, due to the pandemic it was difficult to organise events to integrate staff. Christmas party was organised online as well as regular welcome address to new comers by the Executive Director.

#### **Results on indicators and targets:**

##### **1. Staff satisfaction with Frontex intranet**

In October 2020, MPR conducted a staff satisfaction survey on the quality of intranet. More than 200 users participated in the survey.

**Main findings:** Target: 50% - Satisfaction Result: 63.2%

##### **2. Number of page views and downloads from the Agency's website**

In 2020, we reached 2,801,361, a 10% rise compared to the previous year (2,544,296). The increased traffic on our website was due to several factors including the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the standing corps recruitment and training. In 2021, our goal would be to keep the page views on the current level.

##### **3. Number of mentions of Frontex in the media and the tone of the coverage (positive, neutral and negative) of these mentions**

2020 was a year with a significant number of media mentions for Frontex. The agency's visibility increased last year with the recruitment and training of the standing corps, Europe's first uniformed service, and related communication activities. The peak in the news mentions was March with more than 6000 news articles, when the news items on Frontex increased significantly due to the launch of the rapid border intervention on Greece's external borders.

The Agency was mentioned in news articles around the world about 50 000 times last year, with most articles having a neutral tone. At the end of the year, there was an increase in articles critical of the agency with about 8000 news mentions in December.

##### **4. Number and impact of social media posts (engagement)**

On Facebook, popular posts reached around 30 000-40 000 users, while the most popular one (video showing standing corps uniforms) more than 100 000 users. The average engagement rate per post was about 3000.

On Twitter, every week MPR published 30-40 posts with more than 500 new followers ever month. Only in March, the account drew more than 2000 new followers. Every month, there were around 3000 mentions of Frontex on Twitter and 300 000-400 000 tweet impressions.

On LinkedIn (LN), the average engagement rate in 2020 reached 6.13% (compared to 6.25% in the previous year) with the average engagement rate for organic LinkedIn content at 3%. Therefore, keeping up the engagement rate in 2021 at 6% will be considered a success.

##### **5. Number and annual increase of social media followers**

In 2020, Frontex continued to expand its presence on three social media channels: Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn with 43 000, 30 000 and 38 000 followers respectively. The annual increase (compared to 2019) was as follows:

**Twitter - 33% - Facebook - 87.5% - LinkedIn - 56%.**

## Part II - Management

### 2.1. Management Board

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a significant challenge for the work of the Management Board, both in terms of substance and of the working methods that had to be swiftly adjusted to the new situation. It was necessary to provide for the continuation of discussions in order to ensure that the vital decisions were taken and that the operational functioning of the Agency, including the strategic steering and oversight by its Management Board, were not critically hampered. This has been even more important as the year 2020 was considered crucial for the full implementation of the EBCG Regulation.

In line with the decision on the annual planning for 2020, five Management Board meetings have been planned, of which four took place, while the one in March was cancelled due to the pandemic and replaced by Management Board special measures for the adoption of urgent Management Board decisions. In addition, four extraordinary sessions were organised in March, October, November and December 2020. The extraordinary meetings were dedicated to strategically important matters in relation to the implementation of the Regulation and to the inquiry by the Management Board to the alleged involvement of the Agency in violation of fundamental rights at the EU external borders. Due to the pandemic related restrictions, it was necessary to make a decision on holding Management Board meetings via videoconferencing, which has been the practice since June.

After intensive work by a special group under the leadership of the Management Board's deputy chair, new Rules of Procedure of the Management Board were prepared and adopted in July 2020. In line with the new rules, the Management Board agreed on the establishment and the composition of the Executive Board of the Management Board, which began its work at the end of the year. The Executive Board should assist the Management Board and facilitate its work, thereby also improving the efficiency of the Agency.

The year 2020 was decisive for the preparations required for the effective set up of the standing corps, which was planned by the Regulation for the beginning of 2021. Consequently, the Management Board held extensive discussions on the topic and took necessary steps for the relevant decisions to be adopted. Among others, the following Management Board decisions have been taken:

- on adopting the profiles to be made available to the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps,
- on standing corps annual planning for 2021 and indicative multiannual planning of profiles,
- on adopting the profile and determining the number of forced-return monitors to be made available to the pool of forced-return monitors,
- on the rules on the secondment of category 2 of the standing corps,
- on financing deployments of operational staff category 3 and category 4 of the standing corps.

The decision establishing the design and specifications for the uniforms of the statutory staff in the standing corps also falls into this context.

Additionally, the Management Board discussed intensively about the appropriate regime of executive powers, including the use of weapons, for the newly created category 1 of the standing corps. This has made it possible to prepare several necessary decisions, which will enable the standing corps, and specifically its category 1, to become operational. These Management Board decisions (including the decision establishing an appropriate supervisory mechanism to monitor the application of the provisions on use of force by statutory staff) could consequently be taken in early 2021.

Throughout the year (both at regular and extraordinary meetings), the Management Board held intensive exchange of views on the most appropriate new organisational structure of the Agency, which would allow for the proper implementation of the Regulation. A compromise solution acceptable for the Management Board, the Commission as well as for the Executive Director was found by the end of the year and the amended organisational structure of the Agency was adopted.

Another issue that the Management Board dealt with at length at its regular as well as specifically convened extraordinary meetings, was the fundamental rights framework of the Agency.

Due to unfortunate circumstances, the Management Board was compelled to open an invalidity procedure for the Fundamental Rights Officer and - following the adoption of an implementing decision to the Staff Regulations on the temporary assignment to a managerial post - to appoint a Fundamental Rights Officer *ad interim*.

Following an extensive exchange of views on legal aspects between the Executive Director and the Commission, the Management Board subsequently adopted the decision on middle management staff. Consequently, it was possible to approve the publication of the vacancy notice for the new Fundamental Rights Officer, who will exercise managerial tasks, including appointing authority powers, regarding his/her staff, among which the fundamental right monitors. Preparatory work has been done also for drafting the special rules to guarantee the independence of the Fundamental Rights Officer and his or her staff, which were finally adopted in the beginning of 2021.

In the last months of the year, the Management Board was intensely involved in the discussions on the alleged so-called pushbacks in the Eastern Mediterranean and the accusations of Frontex involvement in the incidents. As a result, the Management Board Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations was established with the mandate to conduct inquiries into those allegations, review the implementation of the existing Serious Incident Reporting mechanism and examine relevant legal issues.

Due to several circumstances, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic and despite extremely intensive work, tasks related to the establishment of the standing corps and fundamental rights framework scheduled for 2020 and provided for in the Regulation and the related Roadmap for its implementation have not been completed in full.

In particular, 424 out of the 700 category 1 (statutory staff members of the Agency) were recruited by the end of 2020 for the European standing corps. Out of these, 251 were deployable on 1 January 2021, whereas the remaining 173 officers were continuing their training.

Finally, the 40 fundamental rights monitors provided for under Article 110 of the Regulation and the legislative financial statement submitted with the 2018 Commission proposal, could not be recruited by the legal deadline of 5 December 2020. However, the recruitment process was initiated and is expected to be concluded in spring 2021. For these reasons, the Management Board urged the Agency that all 700 operational statutory staff required by the Management Board Decision of 3 April 2020 are available for deployment as team members as soon as possible, and all 40 fundamental rights monitors are recruited without any further delay as provided for in the Regulation.

**During 2020 a total 44 Decisions were taken by the Management Board,** hereunder summarised those of particular relevance.

Number	Title
01/2020	Decision of MB on adopting the profiles to be made available to the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps
02/2020	Decision of MB authorising the Executive Director to request the agreement of the European Commission for the non-application of general implementing provisions on the conduct of administrative inquiries and disciplinary proceedings
03/2020	Decision of MB on endorsing the launch of an open call concerning actions of common interest to support the implementation of the Basic Training Programme for the European standing corps category 1
04/2020	Decision of MB amending Management Board Decision 29/2019 of 2 December 2019 on the composition of the Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights
08/2020	Decision of MB adopting the preliminary annual work programme for 2021 and the final draft estimates of the Agency's revenue and expenditure, including the draft establishment plan for 2021
09/2020	Decision of MB adopting standing corps' annual and multiannual programming, including, operational needs for 2021, allocation of profiles per Member State and indicative planning of profiles for next years
10/2020	Decision of MB adopting rules relating to technical equipment to be deployed in Frontex coordinated activities in 2021; including a rapid reaction equipment pool and MNITE
11/2020	Decision of MB on the approval of the deployment of a Frontex Liaison Officer to the Eastern Partnership region
12/2020	Decision of MB authorising the Executive Director to consult the Commission on the draft Management Board Decision establishing an appropriate supervisory mechanism to monitor the application of the provisions on use of force by statutory staff, including rules on reporting and specific measures, such as those of a disciplinary nature, with regard to the use of force during deployments
13/2020	Decision of MB adopting the opinion of the Management Board on Frontex's final accounts for the financial year 2019
14/2020	Decision of MB adopting the annual activity report 2019 and its assessment
16/2020	Decision of MB adopting Rules of Procedure of the Management Board
17/2020	Decision of MB on Ireland's request to participate in, and contribute financially to, Frontex activities in 2020
19/2020	Decision of MB adopting by analogy the European Commission Decision C(2016)7270 amending Decision C(2013)8985 laying down general provisions for implementing Article 43 of the Staff Regulations and implementing the first paragraph of Article 44 of the Staff Regulations
20/2020	Decision of MB establishing the design and specifications for the uniforms of the statutory staff in the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps
25/2020	Decision of MB adopting the priority regions in 2020 for the deployment of liaison officers to third countries in 2021
26/2020	Decision of MB on the appointment of an ad interim Fundamental Rights Officer
27/2020	Decision of MB on the approval of the Working Arrangement between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Albania
28/2020	Decision of MB on the approval of the Working Arrangement between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia
30/2020	Decision of MB adopting the rules on the secondment of cat. 2 of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps
31/2020	Decision of MB on financing deployments of operational staff, category 3 and category 4, of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps
34/2020	Decision of MB on middle management staff
35/2020	Decision of MB approving the publication of the Vacancy Notice "Fundamental Rights Officer"
37/2020	Decision of MB on the composition of the Executive Board of the Management Board
39/2020	Decision of MB on the establishment of the Management Board Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations
40/2020	Decision of MB adopting the profile and determining the number of forced-return monitors to be made available to the pool of forced-return monitors
41/2020	Decision of MB adopting amendment N4 to the Single Programming Document 2020 - 2023
43/2020	Decision of MB adopting the Agency's amended organisational structure

## 2.2. Major developments

The Agency entered the year 2020 fully aware of the enormous challenges it was facing with the implementation of the new, enhanced mandate, most notably the need to create the specific measures in the legal and regulatory framework for the establishment of European uniformed service and in particular enabling the discharge of their tasks i.a. specific deployment entitlements, rules for the use of force or related to the acquisition, storage, transport and use of fire arms while ensuring adequate disciplinary measures.

Moreover, a major recruitment exercise implemented to identify and select hundreds of candidates worthy of wearing an EU uniform, elaborate a training curriculum to ensure that the recruits are well prepared to represent the Union at its external borders, train and equip them. All this had to be done within one year, a challenge that has no equivalent in the history of the EU. Such a major endeavour is further diffculted by the fact the Agency is to activate the corps bearing in mind the parallel development and adoption of supplementary legislative measures which need to be synchronized with the legal corpus of Member States in all aspects related to the service weapons to be made available to staff with executive powers.

In late February, while the multi-layered work on the establishment of the standing corps engaging all entities of the Agency were in full swing, heightened tensions in the Aegean Sea prompted Greece to request Frontex to launch two rapid border interventions, at sea and on land. The entire European Border and Coast Guard had to react quickly and mobilise additional, unplanned resources within days. This was the moment when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Within hours, the Agency set up a crisis management structure (COVID-19 crisis cell, strategic crisis cell, exit strategy project manager) and established communication lines. It was paramount to ensure that the headquarters operated without disruption regardless of the lockdown and that communication with the operational areas remained uninterrupted.

The response to the pandemic proved to be an accelerator of some initiatives and an impediment to others. It required the reprioritisation of resources to focus on critical functions and objectives, redesigning of existing processes and expediting digitalisation. The pandemic also had a profound impact on the operational activities of the Agency, forcing it to look for new and innovative ways to support the Member States and implement its mandate. Not all initial targets, however, could be achieved.

In parallel, Frontex continued intensively working on the establishment of the standing corps and other elements of its enhanced mandate, such as the new fundamental rights framework, new activities in the field of returns, acquisition of its own equipment. These activities, despite the Agency's best efforts, were hampered by the lack of clarity on the budgetary and human resources at its disposal and apparent gaps in the existing legal framework. Prolonged negotiations of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-27 hampered strategic planning. The establishment of the legal and regulatory framework, indispensable for the execution of the new mandate, saw considerable delay related to the consultation and agreement of some elements of the new framework with the services of the European Commission.

The time and effort required by the Commission's services on these engagements are clear evidence of how groundbreaking and unprecedented the tasks assigned to the Agency were. The delayed and sometimes inconclusive support by these services highlighted also the legal gaps brought about by the new Regulation which did not initially include many elements necessary for the implementation of the expanded mandate.

As only one example of the many stumbling blocks on the way to the establishment of the standing corps, the Staff Regulations which govern the rules of employment of all servants of the EU were developed for office workers and are considered inadequate for the working conditions and needs of law enforcement officers deployed in the field with service weapons. The legislation adopted did not foresee this, but also remained hesitant to grant Frontex the necessary exceptions to create more tailor-made solutions, seemingly not fully recognising some particular features related to an operational formation with executive powers and a working model based on rotational deployments. In this regard, the Agency was required to devise possible solutions to cover the legal gaps however, adopting implementing rules covering such matters in considered by the Agency above the level of authority received by the Legislator.

These gaps had to be filled in during an especially difficult year with COVID-19, the tense geopolitical situation in the Aegean and intense operational response in an even more volatile and unpredictable reality, with travel restrictions and the Member States often reluctant to deploy their staff because of the pandemic.

All these developments resulted in some regretful delays in the establishment of the standing corps and the new elements of the fundamental rights monitoring framework which according to the Regulation should have been in place by the end of 2020. The practical and legal challenges proved to be unprecedented and, in many instances, unforeseen by the legislator. It must be, however, emphasised that throughout the year, the Agency was working tirelessly to develop all these instruments, laying the groundwork for their implementation early in 2021.

Starting in autumn 2020, Frontex was confronted with allegations of involvement in fundamental rights infringements in its operations in the Aegean Sea. These accusations undeniably continue to be difficult not only for the Agency but for the entire European Border and Coast Guard, with additional resources committed to inquire into the incidents and to fully explain all circumstances and decisions taken by all actors. This is seen, however, as a chance to reflect on the procedures in place, and to improve the monitoring and reporting protocols.

The crisis in the Aegean in 2020 also highlighted the geopolitical tensions and hybrid threats faced at the external borders of the European Union. These circumstances had an enormous impact on the operational activities of Frontex and brought focus to the fact that Frontex needs political clarity in the operational environment in which it operates to carry out its mandate.

## 2.3. Budgetary and financial management

### 2.3.1. Implementation of appropriations

Table 6 - Summary overview of 2020 implementation per fund source

Fund source	Budget (EUR)	Total commitments (EUR)	Ratio	Total Payments (EUR)	Ratio
	A	B	C = B/A	D	E=D/A
C1 Regular budget	364 432 655	360 683 276	99%	201 628 635	55%
C4 Internal assigned revenue	3 968 494	475 575	12%	390 949	10%
C5 Internal assigned revenue carry over	1 121 929	1 091 707	97%	1 083 584	97%
C8 Automatic carry over	102 075 029	92 701 737	91%	92 701 737	91%
Sub-total:	471 598 107	454 952 295	96%	295 804 905	63%
R0 Earmarked expenditure	20 508 465	18 207 779	89%	8 993 160	44%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>492 106 572</b>	<b>473 160 074</b>		<b>304 798 065</b>	

The initially adopted budget of EUR 460 million was amended twice during the year, resulting in the final budget of EUR 364.4 million.

In 2020, 99% of the C1 appropriations were committed and 55 % were paid. Committed but not yet paid appropriations of EUR 159.1 million from the 2020 budget were carried forward to 2021 (44 %). These commitments will be paid during 2021 with the final delivery of the goods or services or the completion of operational activities.

A significant amount of the funds carried forward i.e. EUR 142.7 million (90 %) were related to title 3 of the budget 'Operational expenditure' with EUR 58.1million for joint operations, EUR 26 million for acquisition and leasing of technical equipment and EUR 12.7 million for return operations.

EUR 12.4 million (8 %) of the funds that were carried forward concern Title 2 - 'Administrative expenditure' and EUR 3.9 million (2%) of the funds concern Title 1 'Staff related expenditure'.

The funds automatically carried over from 2019 amounted to EUR 102 million (31 %). At the end of December 2020, the payment level of the carried forward from 2019 funds reached 91 %, with EUR 9.4 million of what was not paid and had to be cancelled. A total of 88 % of the cancellations came from Title 3: EUR 2.3 million from joint operations, EUR 2.3 million from leasing of technical equipment, EUR 1 million from training activities, EUR 0.8 million from the European Centre for Returns.

Internal assigned revenue concerns the amounts reimbursed from the funds used from Frontex regular budget (C1) – voted by the budgetary authority. Internal assigned revenue amounted to EUR 4.2 million (C4), 17 % was committed and the rest was carried over as C5 funds. Recovery orders which were carried over from 2019 (C5) amounted to EUR 1.1 million, 97 % was committed and 3 % were cancelled.

Table 7 - Regular budget (C1) implementation per budgetary title

Title (EUR)	Budget	Total commitments		Total Payments	
	A	B	C = B/A	D	E=D/A
A - 1 Staff	76 355 983	75 780 297	99%	71 855 627	94%
A - 2 Other administrative expenditure	33 425 240	32 959 979	99%	20 572 984	62%
A - 3 Operational activities	254 651 432	251 943 000	99%	109 200 024	43%
	<b>364 432 655</b>	<b>360 683 276</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>201 628 635</b>	<b>55%</b>

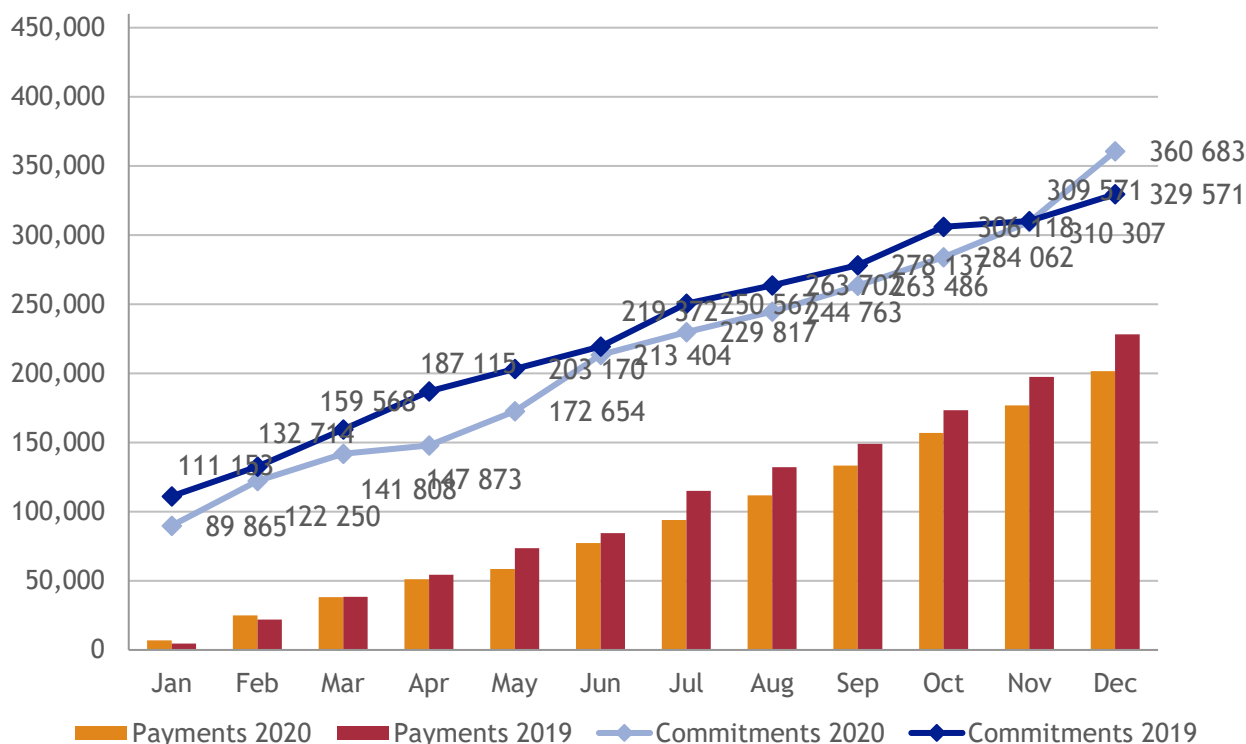
Table 8 - Performance comparison of the budgetary year 2020 versus 2019

Performance comparison	2020	2019
Commitments C1	99%	100%
Payments C1	55%	69%
Funds carried forward to the following year	44%	31%
Funds cancelled	3.60%	0.20%



The budget implementation was heavily impacted by COVID-19 spread related crisis in 2020. The overall percentage level of commitments, however, reached 99 % which is only at a slightly lower level than in 2019 and for the payments, it decreased by 14 % per cent to 55 % in comparison to 2019. The percentage of funds carried forward from 2020 to 2021 is 44 %, and 1 % of the budget appropriations had to be cancelled.

Graph 1 - Comparison of C1 funds (commitments and payments) in 2020 and 2019.



### 2.3.2. Information on transfers and budget amendments

The initial budget of the Agency for 2020 was EUR 459,955,041 after the budget amendments performed in 2020 the final budget of the Agency for the year was EUR 364,432,654 as detailed hereunder:

- 1) On 6 October 2020, the Management Board decided to adopt amendment N2 to the Single Programming Document 2020-2022 (in particular the annual budget 2020 and the annual work programme 2020). This has been the first budget amendment of 2020 budget. The rationale and objectives for this amendment were:
  - i. Receiving and returning an EU subsidy of EUR 10m to Frontex budget 2020 to enable the introduction of the Action Programme for measures to support Greece on returns to countries of origin.
  - ii. Returning EUR 29.6m from Frontex 2020 budget to the EU budget to enable continuity of the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN Programme) until 1 July 2022.
  - iii. Release of part of the Agency's budget to the EU general budget (i.e. EUR 30,275,816) as part of a global transfer.

Frontex 2020 budget was amended and an overall amount of EUR 59,875,816 was returned to the EU budget (EUR 29,600,000 + EUR 30,275,816). The decrease of the budget also included the proportionate reduction of the financial contribution of the Schengen Associated Countries (SAC) to the Agency's budget 2020 by the amount of EUR 4,447,000.

- 2) On 3 December 2020, the Management Board decided to adopt amendment N4 to the Single Programming Document 2020-2022 (in particular the annual budget 2020 and the annual work programme 2020). This was the second amendment of the 2020 budget. The rationale and objectives for this amendment were to release a part of the Agency's budget to the EU general budget. Frontex released a total of EUR 29,043,571 from its budget to the EU general budget. The transfer consisted of appropriations of all titles: title 1 staff, title 2 administrative and title 3 operational. The return of EUR 29,043,571 to the EU budget required again a proportionate decrease in the financial contribution from the Schengen Associated Countries (SAC) to the Agency' budget 2020 by EUR 2,156,000.

Further to these two amendments and for the sake of completeness, in 2019, one amending budget, adopted by Management Board Decision 20/2019 on 20 August 2019, reduced the budget of the Agency by EUR 3.2m. The Agency returned EUR 3m from its EU subsidy to the general EU budget, following the agreement with the European Commission, to ensure the continuity of the ERRIN programme ahead of its transfer to the Agency in the coming years (including 2020). As a result, EUR 0.2m was returned to the SAC, as their contribution is linked to the EU contribution, therefore,



by reducing one, the other should also be reduced. Appropriations were reduced in title 1 (staff expenditure) following a higher share than anticipated of internal turnover, i.e. the fact that individuals already employed in the Agency were successful in job competitions and were offered new contracts, thus reducing the initially foreseen new-staff costs.

Nine budget transfers were adopted by the Executive Director in 2020:

- 1) On 3 March 2020 a transfer decision was made to release the mandatory operational reserve (EUR 5.2m) to cover the needs of the rapid border intervention taking place in Greece. Two operations were covered: operation EVROS and AEGEAN.
- 2) On 24 April 2020 a decision was made to contract interpretation services in operational areas to cover the needs until the end of May 2020, following the withdrawal of interpreters from the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service from the operational areas following the COVID-19 crisis.
- 3) On 17 June 2020 the outcome of the first comprehensive budget review was implemented. The following activities received additional funding from the savings identified:
  - a. in research and innovation area (EUR 2.6m): the pilot project of Aerostat II, the second phase of the EES land border pilot project which is foreseen for implementation in Q2 2021 and implementation of the contract for technology foresight services;
  - b. in pooled resources area (EUR 11.7m): acquisition of vehicles for migration management support, (MSS vehicles), warehousing, interpretation services, chartered flights;
  - c. in property development: design and construction works with regard to relocating the municipal district heating pipeline transiting through Ractawicka 132B allotment, in order to free the plot from any underground constructions disturbing the construction of the future Frontex Headquarters (permanent premises).
- 4) On 30 August 2020 the outcome of the second comprehensive budget review was implemented. The following activities received additional funding from savings identified:
  - a. In research and innovation area (EUR 1.47m): aerostat pilot project deploying two platforms for six months. The decision is motivated by the extended quantity of platforms (two instead of one) needed for the aerostat II pilot project.
  - b. Expenditure related to transport equipment (EUR 80.8k): As a result of long delivery time for cars under the framework contract (up to 9 months) additional orders needed to be placed in 2020 to ensure timely provision of vehicles to Frontex liaison officers.
- 5) On 29 October 2020 the outcome of the third comprehensive budget review was implemented. The following activities received additional funding from savings identified:
  - a. Legal expenditure and damages (EUR 120k): an additional need for legal expenditure and expenditure related to the procurement of local law firm for standing corps legal protection in Greece, Italy and Spain.
  - b. Frontex Situation Centre (EUR 50k): additional budget required for ongoing missions, specific needs to travel for crisis management purposes (COVID related) and additional STMs expenditure.
  - c. ETIAS (EUR 103.7k): additional budget required for external support for Interoperability/Multiple Identity Detector transition period.
  - d. ICT operational (EUR 280k): additional budget required for development of shift management module.
- 6) On 24 November 2020 to finance Project Management capabilities for Multiple Identity Detection project, EUR 20k were transferred to ETIAS.
- 7) On 24 November 2020 to finance amendments to Grant Agreement covering deployment of Frontex Situation Centre Team Members, car rental and COVID-19 test costs as well as to finance specific contract under crisis management Framework Contract, Frontex Situation Centre received additional EUR 100k.
- 8) On 18 December 2020 to finance publications: In-Brief 2020, Frontex International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2023, ECRet Service Catalogue and Weekly Update Briefing Note and Infographics, EUR 5.5k were transferred to Media and Public Relations.
- 9) On 18 December 2020 to finance preparatory measures for the deployment of the standing corps as well as ongoing pre-return and return operations EUR 16m were transferred to Operational Response Division.

Table 9 - Budget transfers in 2019

#	Description	Transaction number	Date	Title 1 - staff expenditure (EUR)	Title 2 - other administrative expenditure (EUR)	Title 3 - operational expenditure (EUR)
1	Budget transfer no. 1	FRO.25438	03.03.2020	-	-	5,220,175.00
2	Budget transfer no. 2	FRO.25483	24.04.2020	-	-	300,000.00
3	Budget transfer no. 3	FRO.25547	17.06.2020	700,000.00	2,129,500.00	15,039,569.00
4	Budget transfer no. 4	FRO.25673	31.08.2020	525,443.00	80,800.00	1,470,002.00
5	Budget transfer no. 5	FRO.25738	19.10.2020	1,675,400.00	120,000.00	433,665.00
6	Budget transfer no. 6	FRO.25775	24.11.2020	-	-	100,000.00
7	Budget transfer no. 7	FRO.25783	24.11.2020	-	-	20,000.00
8	Budget transfer no. 8	FRO.25900	18.12.2020	-	5,500.00	-
9	Budget transfer no. 9	FRO.25925	18.12.2020	-	-	16,069,580.00

### 2.3.3. Implementation of appropriations from 2019 carried forward to 2020

The amount carried forward from 2019 to 2020 (C8 funds) amounted to EUR 102 million out of which 91 % was paid. The remaining 9 % (EUR 9.4 million) had to be cancelled.

Table 10 - Implementation of appropriations carried from 2019 to 2020

Title		Budget	Commitments		Payments		Cancelled
		A	B	D = B/A	C	E = C/A	
A – 1	Staff	973 717	587 143	60%	587 143	60%	386 574
A – 2	Other admin expenditure	10 893 079	10 145 428	93%	10 145 428	93%	747 651
A – 3	Operational activities	90 208 232	81 969 166	91%	81 969 166	91%	8 239 066
		102 075 029	92 701 737	91%	92 701 737	91%	9 373 292

### 2.3.5. Late payments – interest paid to suppliers

The overall interest charged by suppliers through late payments (>30 days) amounted to EUR 4,032. The amount included just the late payment charged by suppliers as according to the financial rules, an interest for late payment is not due to the Member States.

Table 11 - Late payments

Year	Number of transactions	Late payments	Percentage of late payments (in % of the amount paid late)
2015	11313	1768	16%
2016	13011	1804	14%
2017	15905	2949	19%
2018	17078	2846	17%
2019	16966	2258	13%
2020	8563	1971	12%

The social distancing measures posed an obstacle in the smooth running of the payments until the transition from a paper-based financial workflow to a digital workflow. The focus on reducing the extent of late payments was maintained throughout the year via monitoring, and the regular targeted reporting to the organisational entities.

### 2.3.4. Procurement procedures

#### Milestones achieved in 2020

- Launch and/or signature of several contracts related to the EBCG Regulation using procurement instruments of the Agency or via participation in inter-institutional tenders (e.g. indicatively: uniforms, handheld equipment, patrol vehicles, physical aptitude testing, languages skills testing, medical checks, media campaign);
- Signature of Framework Contracts covering the needs of the Agency in terms of ICT services for software development, as well as development, consultancy and support of information systems in the 4-year perspective (of the total value of EUR 50,000,000.00 euro);
- In view of the implementation of the EBCG Regulation, a concept of joint procurement with the Member States has been initiated. The content of the future joint procurement agreement has been defined and the Procurement Sector stands ready to enter into negotiations with any interested purchasing unit of Member States' border or coast guard authorities to explore synergies in acquisition;
- In 2020, Frontex led the inter-institutional tender for purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) with about 50 EU Institutions, Agencies and Bodies participating (of the total value of EUR 60,580,000.00);
- Frontex' COVID-19 response: No serious disruptions have been experienced in the procurement sector's function affecting the purchasing capacity of the Agency. Critical services have been ensured. COVID-19-related procurement procedures were concluded timely (PPE, testing, etc.) and contract management issues were handled professionally supporting the Business Units, securing the financial interests of the Agency and ensuring duty of care, as well as business continuity;
- Launch of a new paperless workflow for implementing framework contracts in order to facilitate business continuity in the remote working environment;
- Resilience to the new situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic with amendments of scope or new implementing tools (e.g.: online interpretation);
- Specific Executive Director's Decision establishing a Central Contract Management Team (CCMT) in order to support business units in their contract implementation duties, as recommended by the auditors;
- Successful development of the new procurement log in Frontex intranet (MyFX) – in use since January 2020;
- Further data population of contract management module in Frontex intranet (MyFX);
- Strengthening of planning and monitoring of the annual procurement plan in the Agency via formal exercise;

- Increasing number of inter-institutional and inter-agency procurement procedures in which Frontex participates (highest consumption usually linked to ICT software equipment, management consultancy, HR-related services);
- Development of a standard operating procedure for the participation of Frontex in inter-institutional tenders;
- Development of a standard operating procedure for complaints during procurement procedures;
- First Agreement with the European Defence Agency (EDA) in the field of procurement (JPA);
- No findings related to procurement by the European Court of Auditors (ECA audit), despite the numerous and very complicated tender procedures many of them in a niche market.

Despite the difficulties and limitations caused by the pandemic, necessary advice and support were provided timely by the procurement sector to business units throughout the procurement process, in a client-oriented approach, identifying potential non-compliance with the applicable regulatory framework related to procurement rules and assessing, as well as mitigating relevant risks.

### Most important tenders conducted in 2020

In 2020, a number of complex and significant tenders in terms of budget, technical specifications or market niche was processed including but not limited to the following ones:

- Inter-institutional Framework Contract on Frontex Surveillance Aircraft Support for Border & Coast Guard Function Services (FSA I) (estimated budget EUR 101,500,000.00; currently in the opening of offers phase);
- Purchase of service uniforms for standing corps cat-1 officers (EUR 20,000,000.00; evaluation of offers ongoing);
- Supply of four-wheel drive off-road vehicles for the operational activities of European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EUR 5,000,000.00; awarded)
- Provision of services for Maritime Surveillance Aerostat 2 technology pilot (EUR 3,009,000.00; signed in 2020);
- Provision of Entry-Exit System Land Border Pilot in Bulgaria and Spain (EUR 1,450,000; awarded);
- Framework contract for the purchase of drones and payloads (estimated budget EUR 2,000,000.00; currently in evaluation phase);
- Single framework contract for satellite imagery provisioning (EUR 4,000,000.00; awarded);
- Multiple framework contract in cascade for delivery of map production services (estimated budget EUR 4,000,000.00; currently in evaluation phase).

### Other relevant, in terms of complexity, tenders processed have been:

- Inter-institutional Framework contract for the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitary supplies (EUR 60,580,000.00; awarded);
- Multiple Framework Contract in cascade for the provision of Research and Innovation Assistance and Advisory Services (EUR 4,500,000.00; signed in 2020);
- Provision of mobile telephony services for Frontex (estimated budget EUR 3,500,000.00; published);
- Multiple framework contract for provision of services for GIS, GEOINT and IMINT consultancy (estimated budget EUR 3,000,000.00; currently under preparation);
- Framework contract for SAS Software services for business content development (estimated budget EUR 4,000,000.00; currently under preparation).

### Knowledge-sharing activities

- Specific procurement training sessions for newcomers delivered additionally on regular basis;
- A two-days internal training on Defence and Security Procurements (tailor-made for Frontex) was organised jointly with the Pooled Resourced Unit including presentations by an External Expert;
- Different new tutorials were published on Frontex intranet (MyFX).

### Procedural statistics

- The total value of procurement procedures processed by the Procurement Sector in 2020 amounted to EUR 263,358,322.13;
- Open tenders launched in 2020 amounted to over EUR 162 million;
- Out of the 23 open tenders launched in 2020, 5 resulted in signed contracts (of total value of EUR 9,309,000.00), while 18 of them (of the total value of EUR 153,294,000.00) are still ongoing and shall be finalised in 2021;
- 30 low and medium value procedures (negotiated with 3 and 5 candidates) of total value of EUR 2,764,706.46 have been handled in 2020 - out of the 30 procedures, 21 resulted in signed contracts in 2020 (of the total value of EUR 1,992,904.00), while 9 of them (of the total value of EUR 771,802.46) are still ongoing and shall be finalised in 2021;
- 213 very low-value procedures (negotiated with 1 candidate) of total value of EUR 1,347,649.76 were handled by the procurement sector in 2020;
- 776 procedures under existing framework contracts of total value of EUR 91,451,075.83 have been handled in 2020 - out of the 776 procedures, 696 resulted in signed specific contracts or order forms in 2020 (of the total value of EUR 80,895,932.89), while 80 of them (of the total value of EUR 10,555,142.94) are still ongoing and shall be finalised in 2021.

Table 12 - Overview of procurement processes in 2020 in comparison to 2019.

Procurement procedures 2019-2020 overview	2019		2020		
Procedure type	Number (excluding amendments)	Value in EUR*	Number (excluding amendments)	Value in EUR*	Change in % vs 2019
Open tenders	28	197,340,000	23	162,603,000	-18%
Orders and contracts issued under existing framework contracts	884	95,500,000	776	91,451,076	-4%
Negotiated procedures with min 3 and 5 candidates	45	3,382,000	30	2,764,706	-18%
Restricted tenders	1	2,600,000	1	4,999,950	92%
Exceptional negotiated procedure	6	1,700,000	3	191,940	-89%
Negotiated procedures with min 1 candidate (below 15 000)	276	1,500,000	213	1,347,650	-10%

\*estimated value of procedures as registered in the procurement logs.

### 2.3.6. Negotiated procedures - point 11 - Annex I to Financial Regulation

Table 13 - Overview of procurement processes in 2020 in comparison to 2019.

Contracts awarded in 2020 on the basis of point 11 of Annex I to the Financial Regulation - exceptional negotiated procedures					
Contract number	Subject	Supplies /services	Contractor	Signature date	Value in Euro
1270/2019	Satellite Radio Frequency Emitter Detection Maritime Situational Awareness	services	Hawkeye 360, Inc. 196 Van Buren Street, Suite 450 Herndon, VA, USA 20170	27/01/2020	1,507,00
1376/2019	Additional storage in Warsaw Spire building	services	2040 WS Tower Sp.z o.o Pl. Europejski 1, 00-844 Warszawa, Poland	20/02/2020	85,069.38
0027/2020	Legal assistance in case T-849/19R	services	Liedekerke Wolters Waelbroeck Kirkpatrick SCRL Boulevard de l'Empereur 3, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium	15/01/2020	43,500.00
0187/2020	Pre-litigation advice from the law firm "Ashurst" on potential staff case	services	Ashurst LLP Appold Street 5 Broadwalk House EC2A 2HA London, United Kingdom	04/03/2020	5,300.00
0192/2020	Purchase of protective equipment - Helmets	supplies	SCHUBERTH GMBH Stegelitzer strasse 12, 39126 Magdeburg, Germany	10/03/2020	127,030.00
0231/2020	Supply and provision of protective facemasks for Frontex staff	supplies	MANUTAN POLSKA SP. Z O.O. Ul. Postepu 18, 02-676 Warszawa, Poland	25/03/2020	19,015.00
0316/2020	COVID-19 related medical services	services	CENTRUM MEDYCZNE ENEL-MED SA Słomskiego 19/524, 00-195 Warszawa, Poland	04/05/2020	13,900.00
0321/2020	Purchase of protective equipment - Facial Masks	supplies	MB Taktines Medicinos Centras Krakiskiu Sodiu 21 OJI G 13 LT14289 Vilnius, Lithuania	30/04/2020	122,850.00
0443/2020	Direct subscription to Lloyd's List Intelligence database	services	Lloyd's List Intelligence 5 Howick Place, London, SW1P 1WG, United Kingdom	26/06/2020	43,600.00
0455/2020	Security services in EURTF Catania	services	Sicurtransport Via Papa Sergio I N 148, 90142 Palermo, Italy	28/08/2020	672,067.20
0508/2020	Legal assistance of the law firm "Ashurst" concerning Art. 90 (2) complaint	services	Ashurst LLP Appold Street 5 Broadwalk House EC2A 2HA London, United Kingdom	17/07/2020	3,180.00
0524/2020	Provision of litigation services by law firm "Daldewolf" in relation with the case T-409/20	services	Daldewolf Avenue Louise 81, 1050 Brussels, Belgium	03/08/2020	15,740.00
0562/2020	Third-country intelligence services: access to Janes products - Janes Military and Security Assessments, Janes Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, and Data analytics (Country Risk)	services	Janes Group UK Limited Sentinel House, 163 Brighton Road, Coulson, Surrey, CR5 2YH, United Kingdom	27/08/2020	127,346.27
0747/2020	Provision of psychological support and consultation for FSC staff	services	Andrea Milic N.Udine Algarottia 9, 51500 Zagreb, Croatia	07/10/2020	6,750.00

0770/2020	Purchase of training and environmental data update for SARMAP software	services	Bechtle Brussels NV Peerderbaan 207, 3910 Pelt, Belgium	15/10/2020	69,564.00
0797/2020	Provision of emergency response services for staff in training centres of Frontex in Poland	services	International SOS (Belgium) SPRL Heyzel Esplanade 1, b007, 1020 Brussels, Belgium	20/10/2020	189,600.00
0822/2020	Amendment no 1 to Contract no 2020-0797 Provision of emergency response services for staff in training centres of Frontex in Poland	services	International SOS (Belgium) SPRL Heyzel Esplanade 1, b007, 1020 Brussels, Belgium	02/11/2020	1,009,400.00
0965/2020	Ground handling services and related costs provided by Handling Company outside of the operational hours of Lampedusa Airport, Italy	services	AST Aeroservizi S.p.A. C/da Cala Francese Aeroporto Lampedusa 92031 Lampedusa (AG), Italy	30/11/2020	47,500.00
932/2018/ Lot 6	Amendment to Framework Contract - Aerial Surveillance Services for Border & Coast Guard Functions (FASS 2)	services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAE Aviation Sarl Luxembourg International Airport L-1110 Luxembourg, Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg</li> <li>• DEA Aviation Ltd Retford Gamston Airport Retford, Nottinghamshire DN22 0QL, United Kingdom</li> <li>• EASP Air BV GA Terminal Thermiekstraat 52, NL-1117 BD Schiphol, Netherlands</li> </ul>	22/01/2020	2,250,000.00
932/2018/ Lot 2	Amendment to Framework Contract - Aerial Surveillance Services for Border & Coast Guard Functions (FASS 2)	services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAE Aviation S.a.r.l. Luxembourg International Airport L-1110 Luxembourg, Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg</li> <li>• DEA Aviation Ltd Retford Gamston Airport Retford, Nottinghamshire DN22 0QL, United Kingdom</li> </ul>	01/06/2020	1,250,000.00

## 2.4. Delegations and sub/delegations

All expenditure is implemented in the form of centralised management. As a general rule, the Agency uses the financial circuit model 3 'decentralised circuit with central counterweight', where the operational initiation and verification functions, as well as the financial initiation function, are executed within each division. The ex-ante financial verification is centrally performed by the financial services within the Budget, Financial and Corporate Services Unit under Corporate Governance.

Two different financial circuits are in place at Frontex: (a) standard circuit, (b) simplified circuit for payments up to an amount of EUR 5.000 (as of 16 December 2020 up to EUR 15.000).

- a) The standard circuit is followed for all transactions, except where the simplified circuit is allowed and consists of the following steps:
  1. The operational actor(s) ensure the correctness of the operational aspects of a transaction.
  2. The financial initiation function is to be performed by a staff member of the respective entity initiating the transaction or by a staff member in the Budget, Financial and Corporate Services Unit.
  3. Financial verification function to be performed by a staff member in the Budget, Financial and Corporate Services Unit nominated as a financial verifier.
  4. Performing at the same time the role of an operational verifier, the authorising officer by delegation and authorising officer by sub-delegation performs his/her duties for the respective budget line in accordance with the respective Executive Director Decision on delegation of authority or act of sub-delegation of powers.
- b) The simplified circuit for payments is followed for payment transactions up to an amount of EUR 5.000, excluding mass payments (as of 16 December 2020 up to EUR 15.000):
  1. The operational actor(s) ensure the correctness of the operational aspects of a transaction. In the case of low-risk transactions, the role can be combined with the financial initiation function.
  2. Financial initiation function to be performed by a staff member of the respective entity initiating the transaction or by a staff member in the Budget, Financial and Corporate Services Unit.
  3. Financial and operational verification functions to be performed by the authorising officer by delegation and authorising officer by sub-delegation.



4. The authorising officer by delegation and authorising officer by sub-delegation performs his/her duties for the respective budget line in accordance with the respective Executive Director Decision on delegation of authority or act of sub-delegation of powers.

The system of delegations and deputising in Frontex respects the following principles:

1. Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director are entitled to sign all transactions for all amounts and all budget lines.
2. Delegations are granted by the Executive Director to the division directors and heads of entities outside divisions. The delegated authorising officers may propose to further sub-delegate to the heads of units, heads of sectors and other selected staff. The sub-delegation is in force when countersigned by the Executive Director. For commitment and payment transactions different financial thresholds apply to these delegations and sub-delegations depending on the level of responsibility of the delegated or sub-delegated authorising officer (as a general rule: Director - EUR 5m, for the heads of units – EUR 500k, for heads of sector – EUR 200k, for team leaders EUR 50k). At the end of 2020, there were 72 authorising officers.
3. Deputising: as a general rule, deputising is performed downwards; which means that the heads of units replace directors and that heads of sectors replace heads of units; when heads of sectors are absent, they are replaced by team leaders. In all cases when deputising for an AO by delegation or sub-delegated, the rights of the absent actor are given to the 'acting' AO by delegation or sub-delegation with no change to the threshold.

## 2.5. Human resources (HR) management

### 2.5.1. Human resources developments

2020 was a year of substantial growth, following the adoption of the EBCG Regulation that significantly increased resources in the area of budget and staff. The total number of recruits reached an unprecedented number of 577.

Due to internal turnover (47 staff members were appointed to a new position after having successfully participated in an external recruitment process), and external turnover (45 staff left the agency) the net increase in staff was 485, which is anyway a very high achievement considering that the agency staff was 749 at the beginning of the year and reached the overall number of 1,234 posts filled (temporary agents, contract agents and seconded national experts) by the end of the year.

This growth led to an additional workload for all services provided by HR. In order to handle this change and growth HR statutory staff have been supported by interim staff.

HR also managed the traineeship programme, which allowed 48 new trainees to get their first professional experience in the Agency, as well as an interim workforce programme supporting the entities with 74 additional new employment agency workers.

With a view to addressing the objectives set in the EBCG Regulation to recruit several additional thousands of staff until 2026, HR services continued their efforts to further increase the efficiency of staff selection and recruitment processes. Therefore, in collaboration with several other agencies Frontex planned to shift to an advanced fully paperless cloud-based e-recruitment system which was to become operational in summer 2020 (postponed to 2021 due to data protection concerns). The Agency continued to extensively use new diversified communication channels, such as LinkedIn and Twitter and restarted its cooperation with the European Personnel Selection Office.

In December 2019, Frontex senior management set the goal to implement SYSPER 2 essential modules for HR professionals until 1 May 2020. Despite resource limitations and other competing daily-task priorities, the HR team succeeded in rolling-out SYSPER on 1 May for HR professionals. This allowed to facilitate the standing corps on-boarding process more efficiently. Also, on 1 Oct 2020 SYSPER was rolled out to all Frontex staff members.

In the course of 2020, new implementing rules to the Staff Regulations have been adopted on the basis of the European Commission model:

- On middle management staff;
- On annual appraisal of middle management (amending the implementing rules on annual appraisal);
- On the temporary occupation of management posts.

### 2.5.2. Recruitment

Table 14 -Overview of recruitment processes in 2020 vs.2019.

Process	Quantity 2019	Quantity 2020	2020 vs. 2019	Additional comments
New external procedures concluded in 2020	65	49	-25%	Several procedures covered more than one post to be filled.



Recruitments completed – newcomers joined Frontex in 2020 (A)	136	100	-26%	The figure refers to new non-standing corps staff members without a former employment contract with Frontex.
Recruitment completed – change of contract and/or status in 2020 (B)	82	47	-43%	The figure refers to Frontex non-standing corps staff members appointed to a new position after having successfully participated in a completed external recruitment process.
Recruitment completed - standing corps category 1 (C)		430		The figure refers to the first batch of 265 standing corps staff that joined in June, plus the second batch of additional 165 standing corps in October.
TOTAL Recruitment completed (A + B + C)	218	577	165%	
Departures	30	34	13%	The figure refers to non-standing corps staff members that left the Agency.
Departure in standing corps category 1	-	11	-	The figure refers to standing corps staff members that left the Agency.
Internal reassignments and internal mobility	91	23	-75%	The majority of non-standing corps staff were re-assigned in the interest of the service or due to restructuring of entities (in particular 10 re-assignments to the Task Force DEPLOY entity). 5 staff were transferred as the result of individual requests for internal mobility.
Traineeship programme	60	48	-20%	Position filled during spring and autumn intake.
Interims programme	40	74	85%	Position filled during the year (on a rotation basis).

Graph 2 - Recruitment 2020



### 2.5.3. Staff development and training

In the area of staff career management a new version of probation report adjusted to the specificity of standing corps category 1 was developed and implemented (430 probation procedures started in a new version for standing corps staff joining the Agency in 2020). In addition, there was a change introduced as to the approach regarding the appraisal of staff who began employment during the reporting period. To avoid double reporting over the same period, only staff who finished probation before the end of a reporting period have their performance assessed in the annual appraisal exercise. As a result, a lower number of appraisal reports was required.

To organise proper induction for standing corps staff, a new full on-boarding programme was designed, prepared and delivered in addition to the standard on-boarding programme delivered regularly for the non-standing corps staff (in total three editions of the special standing corps version delivered for batches 1, 2.1 and 2.2, for 430 participants).

In order to continue the delivery of training courses in the COVID-19 circumstances, the in-class training activities were transferred into an on-line mode of delivery (language courses, induction training for the headquarters newcomers and other courses both internal and external). In addition to the change of the mode of training delivery, the training portfolio was rebuilt and amended with new offers to respond immediately to the needs related to COVID-19, teleworking and crisis management.

Frontex continued to implement other new or revised HR policies and proceeded to sign new service contracts with external providers, namely on pre-employment medical services, in-house language courses, new social measures, specific arrangements on talent selection in view of COVID-19 pandemics.

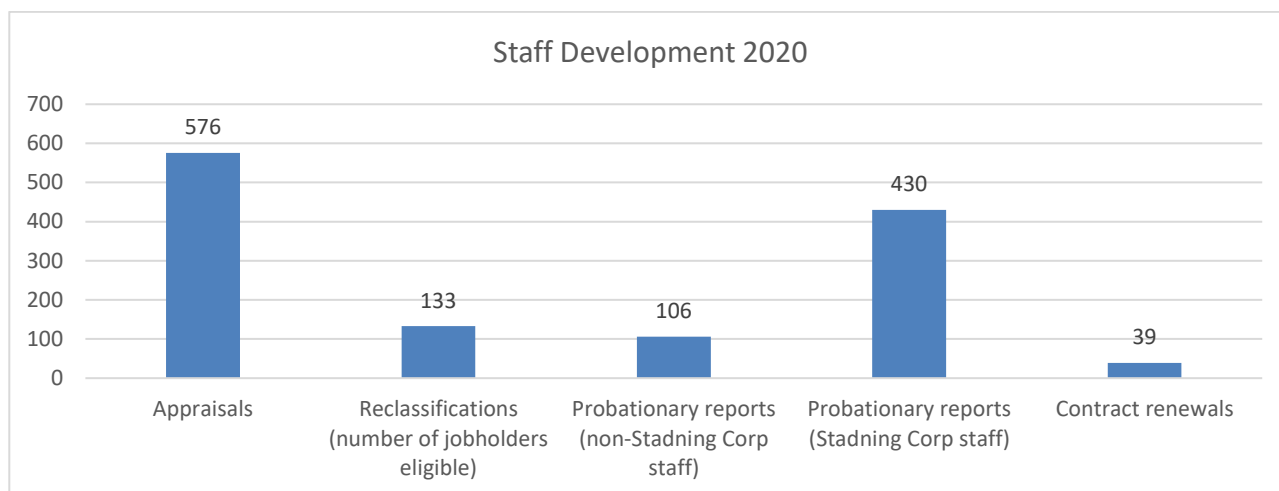
Next to swiftly setting-up a crisis management structure (COVID-19 crisis cell, strategic crisis cell, project manager exit strategy) and establishing communication lines in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, a lot of investment went into drafting different versions of guidelines, protocols and vademecum to adapt to the evolving situation ('Frontex vademecum for managers', 'Vademecum for managers' highlights and main differences with the Commission approach', 'Guidelines on teleworking in Frontex during COVID-19 pandemics', 'Guidelines on leave management', 'Guidelines on meetings and missions', 'Guidelines on quarantine and self-isolation', 'Frontex guidelines on temporary arrangements for/with contractors', 'Frontex protocols for the headquarters and the Brussels Office etc.'). Moreover, an exit strategy – Frontex Action Plan for a phased return to the office was designed for the Agency and a related project manager assigned.

Table 15 -Overview of main activities performed related to staff development in 2020.

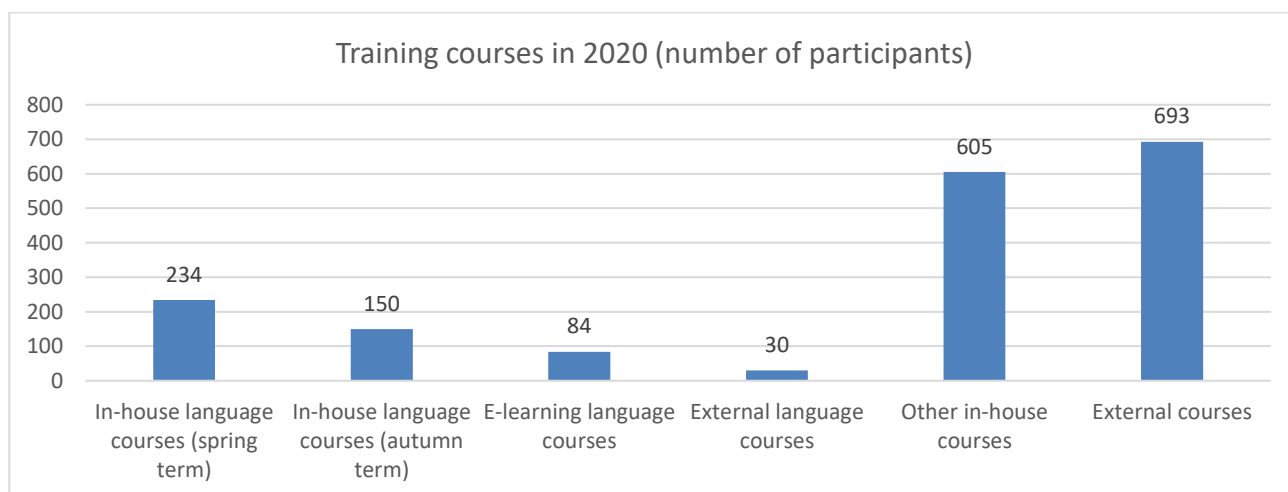
Process	Quantity	Additional comments
Appraisal	576 appraisals processed.	92 % of appraisals were finalised by 25/01/2021 (formal closure of the 2020 Appraisal exercise).
	Despite the growing overall number of staff, the number of reports decreased in comparison to the previous year. This is the result of the change of approach regarding the appraisal of staff who began employment during the reporting period. In view of avoiding double reporting over the same period, only staff who finished probation before the end of a reporting period have their performance assessed in the annual appraisal exercise.	No complaints under Article 90 (2).
		There were 7 appeals filed by the closing date to the appeal assessor within the appraisal procedure as per Article 7 of the appraisal rules.
Reclassification	133 jobholders (58 TAs and 75 CAs) eligible for the 2019 reclassification exercise	The 2019 reclassification exercise was launched in 2020 and is on-going.
Probation	109 probationary periods of non-standing corps staff started in 2020. 430 probation periods started in 2020 for standing corps category 1 (batch 1 and 2).  The number of probation reports more than doubled in comparison to the previous year.	So far two contracts that were concluded in 2020 were not confirmed at the end of the probationary period (some probationary periods that started in 2020 are to be finalised in 2021). One unsuccessful probation concerned staff in HQs and one concerned a member of standing corps category 1.
Contract renewal	61 contract renewal procedures started in 2020 (for contracts ending in 2021, 9 of which leading to indefinite contract). This corresponds to the increase in the number of processes equal to 37% (39 processes in 2019).	A contract renewal process is launched several months prior to the end of a given contract of employment. Out of 61 processes, 50 contracts were renewed in 2020. The remaining processes were launched according to schedule at the end of 2020. They are pending the Appointing Authority's decision. In 2020, some decisions were taken later than within the 9-month deadline set up in the relevant Policy on contracts. Those decisions depended on external factors, such as a jobholder's application for the personal security clearance or the extension of a project, to which a given contract is related.
		No complaints under Article 90 (2).
Training	In-house language courses: 30 groups in the spring semester (6 languages – DE, EN, ES, FR, PL and IT) – 211 participants.	Apart from language courses, other in-house courses as well as external courses, newcomers' induction programme were delivered in 2020 in two versions: for Frontex Headquarters newcomers (269 participants) and for standing corps members (as a new programme designed, prepared and delivered for 430 participants). All courses as from March 2020 has been delivered in remote mode.  As a result of the lockdown and suspension of in-house in-class training activities in 2020, the number of training courses has significantly dropped down in comparison to 2019. However, as most of the training courses has been gradually transformed into online mode and resumed in the second half of the year, the number of participants of external courses (run remotely) has been almost the same as in 2019. Additionally, the training portfolio has been rebuilt to respond immediately to the needs related to the COVID-19 and lockdown situation, to replace suspended in-house courses, as well as to serve as a support for the crisis management during the basic training phase of batch 1 of standing corps. The staff has been
	30 groups in the autumn semester (6 languages – DE, EN, ES, FR, IT and PL) – 245 participants	
	E-learning language courses: 81 participants	
	External language courses: 54 requests	
	Other in-house courses – 578 participants	

	External courses – 713 participants	provided with easily accessible educational resources in online mode. Part of them (due to its characteristics of freely accessible materials from a variety of sources, intended for self-guided usage) has not been included in training statistics.
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Graph 3 - Staff development 2020.



Graph 4 - Number of participants in training courses in 2020.



#### 2.5.4. Job screening

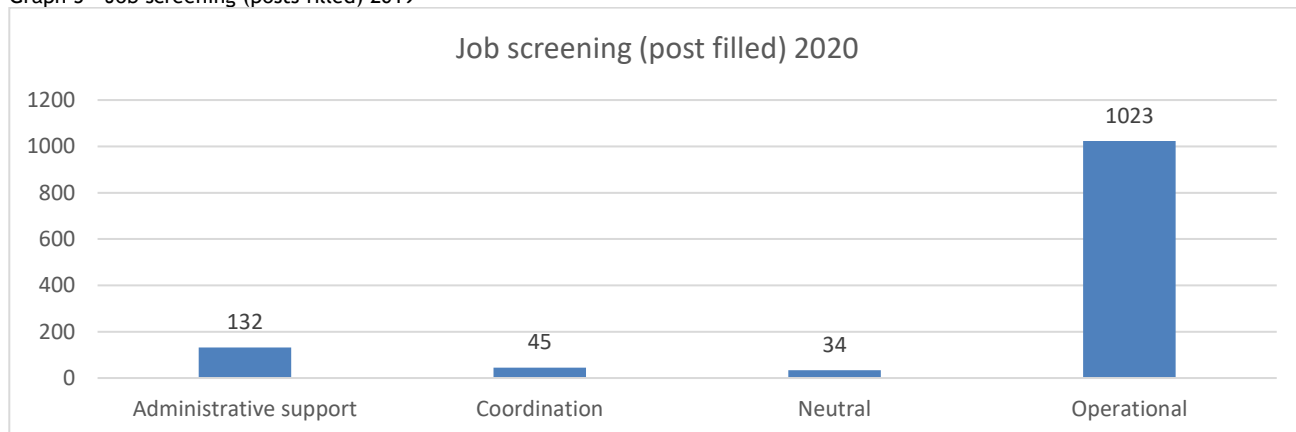
The standardised job screening exercise (classifications of posts into the roles of Administrative support, Coordination, Neutral and Operational) was done according to the guidelines defined by the EU Agencies Network and based on staff figures including temporary and contract staff as well as seconded national experts and existing posts with an open replacement on 31 December 2020.

Table 16 -Job screening 2020.

TYPE/ROLE AND CATEGORY		Filled posts		Vacant posts		Total posts	
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT</b>		<b>132</b>	<b>9.50%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1.20%</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>10.70%</b>
	DOC	4	0.30%	1	0.10%	5	0.40%
	HR	6	0.40%	2	0.10%	8	0.60%
	IA	35	2.50%	5	0.40%	40	2.90%
	ICT	8	0.60%	2	0.10%	10	0.70%
	LOG	26	1.90%	1	0.10%	27	1.90%
	RES DIR/HOA	53	3.80%	6	0.40%	59	4.20%
<b>COORDINATION</b>		<b>46</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>3.20%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1.20%</b>	<b>62</b>
	COMM	4	0.30%		0.00%	4	0.30%

	GEN COORD	11	0.80%	5	0.40%	16	1.10%
	LEGAL	30	2.20%	12	0.90%	42	3.00%
<b>NEUTRAL</b>		<b>37</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2.40%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.20%</b>	<b>37</b>
	FIN/CONT	34	2.40%	3	0.20%	37	2.70%
	LING	0					
<b>OPERATIONAL</b>		<b>541</b>	<b>1023</b>	<b>73.30%</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>8.90%</b>	<b>1147</b>
	EVAL	28	2.00%	8	0.60%	36	2.60%
	GEN OPER	98	7.00%	7	0.50%	105	7.50%
	PGM M/IMPL	771	55.30%	89	6.40%	860	61.60%
	TOP COORD	126	9.00%	20	1.40%	146	10.50%
		<b>1234</b>	<b>88.50%</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>11.50%</b>	<b>1395</b>	<b>100%</b>

Graph 5 - Job screening (posts filled) 2019



### 2.5.5. Developments in the area of security

The EBCG Regulation required the establishment of Frontex security rules. In 2020, these draft security rules were fine-tuned with internal and external stakeholders and prepared for approval by the European Commission and Frontex Management Board.

2020 was also the year of the arrival of newly recruited standing corps officers, impacting SEC as per required personnel security clearances for these newcomers. Those requests, together with a personnel security management programme for all Frontex staff was established, handled and requiring intensified contacts with national security authorities and European Commission Security Directorate-personnel security clearances.

Preparations regarding the realisation of ETIAS premises, new headquarters and Brussels liaison office intensified during 2020, requiring detailed physical security assessments for related premises provided by SEC.

2020 also required SEC to review and assess the existing classified Communication and Information Systems as the scope of some of them significantly changed during the year. Accordingly, files assessing the new scope from a security accreditation perspective were provided for decisions to the Executive Director as Frontex Security Authority.

## 2.6. Strategy for efficiency gains

The 2020 efficiency gains strategy implementation has been driven by the environment in which the Agency had to develop its activities and in particular by the pandemic. These circumstances have played a twofold role: as an accelerator of some initiatives and as an impediment to others, which resulted in the reprioritisation of resources to focus on critical functions and objectives. On the other hand, the difficulties faced by the market operators due to the pandemic led to the change of activity pattern (e.g. a drastic drop in staff missions).

To sum up, the main action lines of the agency were the following:

- Initial design of processes to handle different categories of standing corps (category 1 and category 2) by broadening every time the scope of existing tools (e.g. SYSPER 2) and redesign of existing processes to remove deadlocks resulting from the pandemic, while improving efficiency/proportionality to changed risks universe (e.g. making

employment contracts validity subject to subsequent fitness medical checks during the probation period and not as an ex-ante condition).

- Accelerated digitalisation of key processes to enable them to run without a physical presence of staff e.g. establishing the acceptability of validation through e-mail as an alternative to a physical signature, introduction of SYSPER as a reference HR database and HR service modules, use of ABAC modules previously not introduced, in particular, to allow mass payments processing with adapted control and validation circuits.
- Creating the basis for phasing-out the legacy of self-developed IT tools with the purpose to benefit from the EU public administration IT standards (including SYSPER mission management in support of the standing corps deployment).
- Absorbing the surge of EU and MS agents integrated in the newly created standing corps, in dialogue and under the on-going scrutiny of the EDPS, as 'IT cloud native' thus optimising on-boarding and improving business continuity likelihood.
- Review of the introduced efficient system of delegations in terms of financial and budget management as well as powers of the appointing authority;

Two analytical actions were carried out to establish the directions of steps of an overhaul in two dimensions:

- The overall set of corporate governance services and their contribution to the assurance of legality, regularity and service level were analysed and a proposal was made for a line of actions to adapt these to the EBCG 2.0 identified (ASSURANCE 2.0).
- The overall shortfall and needs for the human resources function were adapted to the revised mandate (HR 2.0).

## 2.7. Assessment of audit results during the reporting year

The assessment is based on the results of controls or control procedures performed by staff of the Agency, ex- post, ex- ante evaluations in order to contribute to provide reasonable assurance on the legality and regularity of underlying transactions as well as on the other four Internal control objectives set out in article 30.2 of the Frontex Financial Regulation namely, the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations, the reliability of reporting, the safeguarding of assets and information, the prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities.

Further to this the status of other valuable sources of information contributing to assess Agency's performance in terms of internal control objectives is presented below including on audits conducted by the Internal Audit Service, the European Court of Auditors as well as follow-up on recommendations and action plans for audits and evaluation and from the discharge authority.

### Ex-ante controls

All actors involved in the financial workflow are subjected to the ED Decisions on financial management of the agency namely:

1. ED Decision 2020-192 on delegating and sub-delegating the powers of budget implementation to the staff of the Agency
2. ED Decision 2020-188 on the on the financial circuit in Frontex 2021

Following the introduction of the paperless workflow for financial transaction in 2020, BFCS implemented a paperless Financial Initiator checklist, an operational actor's Certified Correct, and a written guidance for financial verification of payments and commitments for the Financial Verifiers. The checklists for all three actors provide additional assurance to the control mechanism in terms of an increased assurance to the Authorizing Officer in the financial workflow. All paperless checklists related for all the financial actors of the agency are published on the portal of Financial Services.

A complimentary platform was created through the ex-ante policy adopted in 2020. ED Decision R-ED-2020-56 Art. 106(4)-(4) provides that ex-ante and ex-post controls should be regarded as complimentary in the process of mitigating risks related to the various categories of expenditure and revenue. In practical terms, a coordinated and consistent method for their management shall contribute towards compliance.

BFCS elaborated on a new grant template dedicated to financing not linked to cost adheres to the written guidance for ex-ante financial verification.

## Ex-post controls

By mid-2020 Inspection and Control Office completed controls of eight Member States: Romania, Belgium, Poland, Croatia, Latvia, Malta, Austria, Sweden. These controls have been implemented following the ex-post controls plan 2019/2020.

Out of the total payments done in 2019 of EUR 176,607,328.28, the amount of that was checked ex-post was EUR 13,823,212.96. This amount constitutes 7.8% of all payments done in 2019. The ineligible amount amounted to EUR 34,767.04 and it constitutes 0.25% of the total amount checked i.e. EUR 13,823,212.96.

From the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2020 until the moment of reporting to CAAR 2020 (February 2021), following the ex-post controls plan 2020/2021, controls of four Member States have been ongoing: France, Portugal, Italy and Norway.

Out of the total payments done in 2020 amounting to EUR 127,207.986.00, the amount of EUR 6,198,505.58 was checked ex-post (4.87%). For 2020, there isn't a final ineligible amount available yet since one control of Portugal has been closed and the others are still on-going.

### 2.7.1. Internal Audit Service (IAS)

In 2020, the Internal Audit Service (IAS) performed and/or completed following audits, follow-ups and exercises:

#### Human resources planning, allocation and recruitment audit

- Objective: to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal control system supporting staff planning and allocation and the management of selection and recruitment processes.
- Outcome: 5 recommendations were issued, 3 of them with the priority status 'very important' and 2 with the status 'important'.

The audit was launched in 2019 and completed in 2020 with the final report issued in Q2 2020. The IAS concluded the updated action plan as adequate to mitigate the risks identified in the final audit report in November 2020.

Generally all recommendations from the IAS final audit report on human resources planning, allocation and recruitment were accepted, however for the Recommendation No 5 point 7 - Frontex Executive Director maintains his position and accepts the related risk.

The Audit Finding No 5, part b) Effectiveness issues, point 7. Status of the Executive Director in selection committees - entails the following risks:

*"The participation of the ED in a recruitment SC may affect the other SC members in expressing freely their opinion, and may therefore hamper the SC's role as an independent source of advice for the appointing authority or by analogy, as the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment (AACC), and a fully transparent selection procedure."*

#### Audit Recommendation no 5 (point 7)

*"Frontex should seek full compliance with the Staff Regulations and its own rules when conducting selection and recruitment procedures. Furthermore, the Agency should pay appropriate attention to: 7. respecting the segregation between the roles of appointing authority (or authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment) and selection committee and avoid hierarchical subordination among members of a selection committee (in particular, the Executive Director should neither chair, nor be a member of a selection committee in Frontex)"*

Frontex Executive Director confirmed to the IAS to maintain consistently his approach of taking up the roles as Appointing Authority and Chair of the Selection Committee for the recruitment procedures of managerial posts of Heads of Units and above, as he considers it is critical to the strategic steer of the agency in this growth phase.

The Executive Director's position is defined by the exceptionality of such cases, the business needs a fast-paced Agency has (recruiting very atypical for the EU public administration profiles of managers 'law-enforcement') at a time of building-up a revised organizational structure.

Moreover effective and transparent mitigating measures are used with external/independent high-level participation in the selection committee ensuring transparency and objectivity, as well as use of effective/documented inputs from an assessment centre for the final call.

The IAS has issued two follow up notes in 2020. The first note, issued in January 2020, was already included in the CAAR 2019 as the work relates to the year 2019.

The second note is from the follow-up of outstanding recommendations from the audits on 'procurement and asset management' and 'contract management', having an objective to assess the state of implementation of specific



recommendations in the original audits (audit work did not focus on re-assessment of the adequacy of controls as a whole).

Outcome:

- 4 recommendations closed (3 from the audit on 'procurement and asset management' and 1 from the audit on 'contract management').
- 2 recommendations relating to the audit on 'contract management', have been re-opened because the IAS considered them as not fully implemented.

#### **IAS risk assessment of the Agency**

- Objective: a full risk assessment, covering all process (administrative, financial, operational and information technology). The exercise constitutes the basis for preparing the IAS Strategic Internal Audit Plan (SIAP) 2021-2023 for Frontex, whereby the key risks identified will be presented together with topics for future IAS audits.

### **2.7.2. European Court of Auditors (ECA)**

#### **Opinion on the reliability of the accounts**

In the Court's opinion, the accounts of the Agency for the year ended 31 December 2019 present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Agency at 31 December 2019, the results of its operations, its cash flows, and the changes in net assets for the year then ended, in accordance with its Financial Regulation and with accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer. These are based on internationally accepted accounting standards for the public sector.

#### **Opinion on the legality and regularity of the transactions (revenue and payments) underlying the accounts**

In the Court's opinion, the transactions underlying the annual accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019 are legal and regular in all material respects.

#### **Emphasis of matter regarding the legality and regularity of payments underlying the accounts**

The Court has previously reported that the proof of actual costs claimed by cooperating countries was often not sufficiently reliable or complete, making such reimbursements prone to errors. In this context, the simplified financing scheme, in place since early 2018, covering the deployment of human resources, seems to be contributing to a reduced administrative workload, increased simplification and better monitoring of grants, thereby also reducing the risk of errors. However, the Court draws the attention to the fact that reimbursements of equipment-related expenditure are still based on actual cost and as such, more prone to errors. Against this background, the Court acknowledges that the Agency has taken steps to improve the ex-ante verifications and notes that the Agency re-introduced ex post verifications on reimbursements in 2019, in line with recommendations made in previous years.

#### **Observations on the legality and regularity of transactions**

As in previous years, the Court found that cooperating countries had not always presented cost claims supported by invoices, or by other evidence, duly substantiating the actual costs incurred in operations. As an example, the Agency reimbursed 115,000 euros to the Latvian Border agency to cover expenses for fuel and lubricants used in a joint operation. The Agency accepted pro-forma invoices as evidence for the costs claimed. However, these are preliminary bills of sale, not evidence of the actual costs incurred. In this case, we concluded that the Agency's ex-ante verifications were ineffective and that this reimbursement was non-compliant with the provisions of the grant agreement.

In another case, the Polish border Agency failed to submit its request for the reimbursement of 413,000 euros for the deployment of human resources in joint operations within the 75 days period stipulated in the grant agreement. The fact that the claim for reimbursement also contained errors, further delayed the processing of the payment.

At the same time, the Court stresses that the duty to submit accurate and timely supporting evidence together with the cost claims lies with the cooperating countries.

#### **Observations on internal controls**

In 2019, the Agency continued to recruit new staff in line with its enlarged mandate. The intake for the year was 218 newcomers. The Agency reached an occupancy rate of 82 % of the staff establishment plan at year-end (without counting the posts reserved for the standing corps). The Court's audit of recruitments over the year showed that the procedures had largely worked as intended, but that the Agency should improve the guidance given to selection committee members and verify more closely the candidates' financial entitlements for the salary payments.

## Observations on sound financial management

The Court audited a payment of two million euros issued to cover reconstruction works carried out on the Agency's premises. The Court found that the Agency had modified the contractual arrangements at a very late stage of the project. It had introduced the possibility of making a pre-financing (a float) for works still to be completed. Under the initial contractual arrangements, payments were to be made only when works were accepted. This decision was made to avoid otherwise having to de-commit and cancel the related appropriations. But by making this change, the Agency forfeited a key element of control. Also, the consumption of funds does not reflect the economic reality of the operation. Nor does it reflect the real progress of the works. It also affects the budget authorities' ability to properly monitor the implementation of the Agency's budget and activities.

## ECA performance audits

In 2020, several performance audits were ongoing and/or completed:

### Audit on the European Border and Coast Guard Agency

- Objective: to assess if Frontex effectively supported the Member States in implementation of European integrated border management
- Outcome: expected date of publication of the report Q2 2021

### Performance audit on EU readmission arrangements with priority third countries - Frontex included in the scope

- Objective: to assess the EU progress since 2015 in concluding relevant readmission agreements or similar arrangements with priority third countries, and the EU action to facilitate effective implementation of third countries readmission obligations
- Outcome: expected date of publication of the report Q3 2021

### Audit on migrant smuggling - Frontex included in the scope

- Objective: to assess the effectiveness of Europol support to Member States in combatting migrant smuggling since 2016
- Outcome: expected date of publication of the report Q3 2021

### Audit on Future of EU agencies - Potential for more flexibility

- Objective: to assess whether the Commission and the agencies have put in place adequate conditions to ensure the performance of EU agencies
- Outcome: Special Report 22/2020 published in Q3 2020 (3 recommendations for Frontex)

## Follow-up on relevant aspects from the ECA's opinion from the last years

For the financial year 2019 the ECA made emphasis of matter regarding the legality and regularity of payments underlying the accounts. The Court drew the attention to the fact that reimbursements of equipment-related expenditure are still based on actual cost and as such more prone to errors.

At the same time the ECA recognised that simplified financing scheme (covering the deployment of human resources) seems to be contributing to a reduced administrative workload, increased simplification and better monitoring of grants, thereby also reducing the risk of errors.

The Agency believes that the establishment of unit costs for the deployment of heavy technical equipment is a complex issue. Member States/Schengen Associated Countries (MS/SAC) expressed on several occasions their scepticism about the extension of the use of unit costs to cover the running expenses of means (REM).

The use of unit costs in case of heavy technical equipment would increase the total costs of its deployment compared to the current practice in place based on real costs borne or calculation of hourly rates, thus is considered not cost effective. However, due to the fact that in the past the ECA questioned the reimbursement method of some REM categories for aerial means, in particular of the category related to all inspections and maintenance, in 2021 Frontex is planning to thoroughly verify the hourly rate used in this category of costs for grants 2021. In addition, the Agency is planning to open the discussion on the unit cost both internally and with the MS/SAC to see if any changes in this regard are feasible and if there is willingness to establish formally unit costs for some selected REM categories.

## 2.8. a. Follow up of recommendations and action plans for audits and evaluation

At the beginning of the 2020 Frontex had in total 16 recommendations from previous audits in the implementation phase. Additionally, 5 new recommendations were issued as a result of the Audit on 'Human resources planning, allocation and recruitment' that was launched in 2019 (3 very important and 2 important), making total number of IAS recommendations in the implementation phase to 21.

As a result of the IAS follow up audit performed in 2020, 4 recommendations were closed namely:

### **Audit on Procurement & Inventory Management (2015):**

1. Improvements to Planning Processes
2. Review and Monitoring of Procurements
3. Introduction of a dedicated IT Tool for Procurement

### **Audit on Contract Management (2019):**

1. Use of Amendments to contracts

Hence at the end of 2020 in total 17 actions were in the implementation phase. There are no critical recommendations, and 9 very important recommendations that have the status 'pending' (i.e. excluding 2 recommendations assessed as implemented by FRONTEX which are under IAS review):

### **Audit on Contract Management (2019):**

1. Recognition of contract management function.
2. Contracts are managed by several business units.
3. Monitoring and reporting on contract management, all 3 recommendations having initial deadline 30.09.2019, revised - 30.06.2021.
4. Feedback mechanism between contract management and procurement strategy, the recommendation having initial deadline 31.03.2020, revised - 30.06.2021

### **Audit on IT governance and project management (2019):**

1. IT governance framework, initial deadline 30.06.2021
2. IT Security governance, initial deadline 31.12.2020, revised - 30.09.2021

### **Audit on HR Planning, Allocation & Recruitment (2020):**

1. HR Strategy and monitoring, initial deadline 30.06.2021
2. Staff allocation process, initial deadline 31.12.2021
3. Attractiveness as an employer and grading, initial deadline 30.03.2021

## **Significant delays in the implementation of action plans**

At the end of 2020 the status of very important overdue recommendations is as follows:

### **Overdue for over one year:**

#### **Audit on Human Resources management (2015) - Rec.: Reshape the training policy**

The first review of the implementation date was caused by the need to include the new learning and development business needs of the EBCG 2.0 regulation. Moreover, the process of moving forward with the adoption of the implementing Rules on Learning and Development took longer than expected and Frontex has revised the implementation date once again postponing the implementation by the end of 2020.

At this stage, the draft Management Board decision on the Framework for Learning & Development, the prerequisite for the establishment of a Frontex Learning & Development Policy, is being finalised with the aim to be submitted for adoption by the Management Board in written procedure in Q2 2021.

Informal consultations at working level with DG HOME and DG HR confirmed that the mandatory training for staff of the standing corps as described in the EBCG Regulation Article 55(3) can be excluded from the scope of this decision of the Management Board. Following adoption by the Management Board of the Framework for Learning & Development, the Executive Director will adopt the Frontex Learning & Development Policy. An analysis exercise on the organisational learning needs in the Agency is also being considered.

#### **Audit on contract management (2019)**

1. Recognition of contract management function.
2. Contracts are managed by several business units.
3. Monitoring and reporting on contract management

**Overdue for more than 6 months:**

**Audit on contract management (2019)**

**4. Feedback mechanism between contract management and procurement strategy**

The recommendations from the Audit on contract management are related to the establishment of the Central Contract Management Team - CCMT - (Audit on **contract management**) an ED decision was adopted, but not yet implemented. The establishing of the CCMT team requires additional human resources however, the required recruitments have not yet been activated.

It is relevant to note that the procurement team in anticipation of the CCMT activation and with no additional staff dedicated to the CCMT, managed to deliver the following outputs:

- Created a consolidated list of contract managers in the Agency;
- Developed the tasks of contract managers and added the tasks to the job descriptions of the relevant staff;
- Provided training on contract management issues trying to raise awareness;
- Supported the contract management function providing guidance on contract management and administration;
- Performed a benchmark at NAPO-network level with certain EU Agencies exchanging feedback and good practices on contract management;
- Introduced the contract management SharePoint tool designed to track FWCs' consumption. The tool shows the total amount of all specific contracts/order forms, as well as commitments' and payments' values, it enables verification of specific contracts/order forms issued under a given FWC, and provides information on the contract administration data (e.g. contractor, contract manager, duration, expiry dates etc.). Each specific contract/order form has direct link to ABAC.

## **2.8. b. Follow up of recommendations issued following investigations by OLAF**

No recommendations received in 2020.

## **2.8. c. Follow up of observations from the discharge authority**

**The discharge authority's (European Parliament) observations and measures taken by Frontex**

**Significant delays in the implementation of action plans** are reported above

Regarding the observations, in the Report to the Discharge Authority on measures taken in the light of the Discharge Authority's recommendations issued in respect of the implementation of the budget 2018, in 2020 Frontex has reported

**the observations as implemented:**

1. Regarding the Budget monitoring
2. Regarding the Agency's ex-ante verifications
3. Regarding the costs estimates and budget forecasts
4. Regarding more realistic estimates of service needs in tender documents and to apply rigorous financial management to contracts.
5. Regarding the information on Frontex operational activities
6. Regarding the Agency's participation in inter-institutional procurement tenders
7. Regarding dissemination of the results of Agency's research to the public, and to reach out to the public via the social media and other media outlets

**the observations reported as ongoing:**

1. Regarding the setting of proper quantitative objectives and specific target values for the joint operations
2. Regarding the outstanding recommendation regarding e procurement (implemented at the time of this report)
3. In regards of the importance of gender balance
4. Regarding the creation of a register of documents, which is a legally obligation under Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.
5. Regarding the resource in the area of fundamental rights

6. Regarding the identified horizontal trend across agencies in the use of external staff hired in IT consultancy roles
7. Regarding publishing of the CVs and declarations of interest for all members of its management board
8. Regarding a “sensitive post” policy

## 2.9. Register of exceptions and non-compliance events 2020

The exceptions and non-compliance are recorded following the Procedure for the Management of Exceptions and Non-compliance Events adopted by the ED decision No R-ED-2020-115.

As set out in the procedure, quarterly reports are prepared, focusing on the following aspects:

- statistics on the numbers registered, amounts and categories;
- conclusions on established control indicators and evolution of trends;
- recommendations for improvement actions.

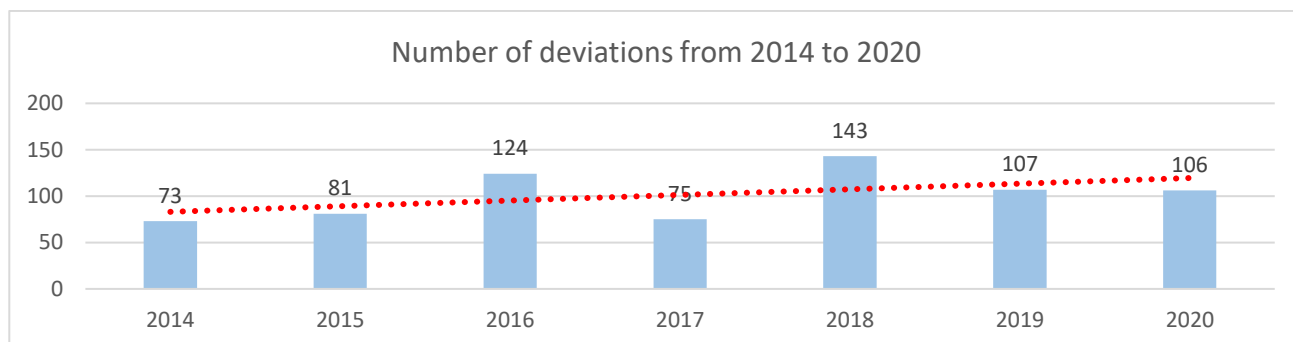
Exceptions and non-compliance events are deviations which are not initially foreseen by the processes and procedures and therefore they require an individual follow-up. They are categorised as follows:

- exceptions: control-overrides or deviations that are approved before the action is taken (ex-ante);
- non-compliance events: control-overrides or deviations detected after they occurred (ex-post).

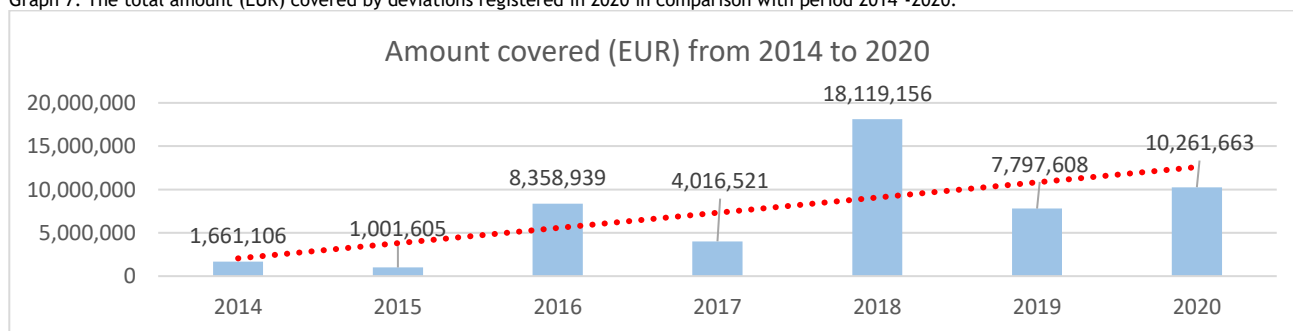
### Overview of the year 2020 and trend

The total number of deviations registered in 2020 equals to 106, covering an amount of 10,261,662.66 EUR, which is 30 % more than in 2019. However, the increase of the budget implemented for the year (+ EUR 31 million) must be noted as well as the environmental difficulties related to the pandemic during which a sudden shift to teleworking and the swift introduction of a paperless financial workflow affected, up to a certain extent, compliance.

Graph 6. The number of deviations registered in 2020 in comparison with period 2014 -2020.

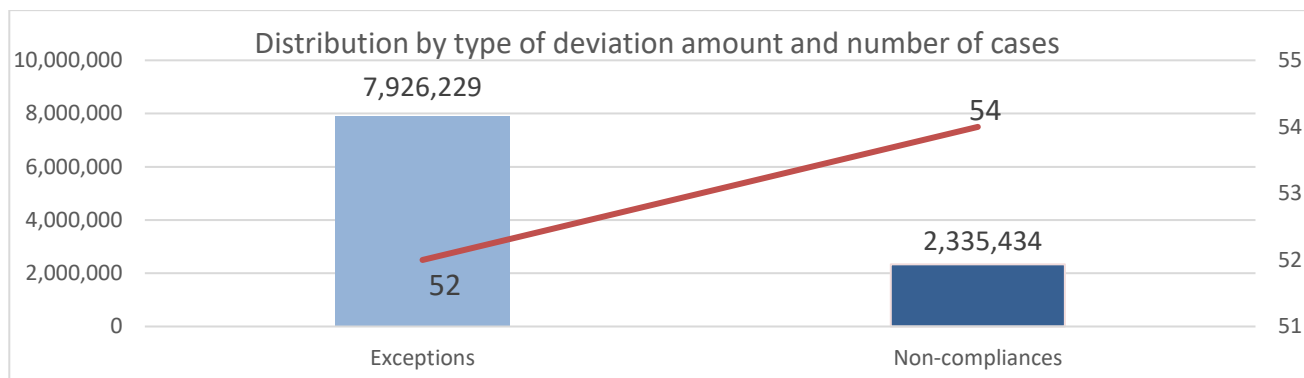


Graph 7. The total amount (EUR) covered by deviations registered in 2020 in comparison with period 2014 -2020.



51% (a total number of 54 registrations) of deviations in 2020 are registered as non-compliance and 49% (a total number of 52 registrations) as exceptions. However, the amount of deviations registered as exceptions constitutes 77% of total amount of deviations registered in 2020, making an average amount for an exception 3.5 times higher than for a non-compliance event.

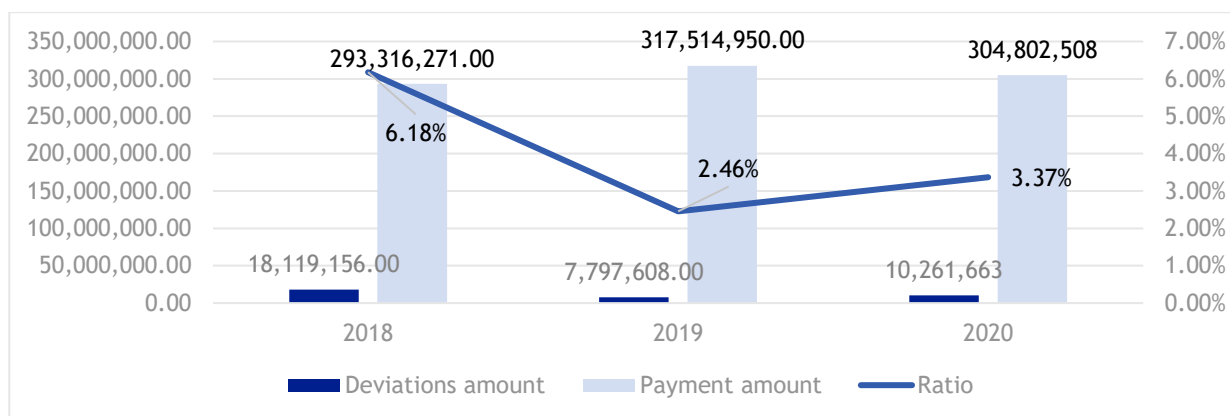
Graph 8. The total amount and number of cases per type of deviation.



#### Performance indicator

The exceptional payments made during 2020, covering the total amount of EUR 10,261,662.66 and the amount of total payments in 2020 equal to EUR 304,802,508. Hence, the ratio (performance indicator) is calculated at 3.37 %. However, as the objective for this indicator is to keep the ratio less than 2%, we should conclude that for the 2020 the objective was not achieved.

Graph 9: Exceptions performance indicators – an evolution in 2018-2020



Generally, the procedure to register exceptions and non-compliance is designed as an element of internal control functions to provide reasonable assurance of the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

Id	Subject	Area	Amount EUR
2020-EXE-010	The exceptional decision for a deviation from the established procurement procedure, by exceptionally prolonging duration of the specific contracts for more than 6 months after the FWC is expired and increasing the amount for more than 10%.	Contract management	1,096,758
R-NC-2020-16	The breach of the principle of sub-delegation of powers of Authorising Officer pursuant to ED Decision No.2019/99. The payment with the value of EUR 835,386.80 was sent for financial approval to the Authorising Officer (HoICT) with threshold rights to approve such payment only in the case in absence of DCGO.	Financial rules	835,386
R-EXC-2020-52	Procurement request for covering travel services under FWC Frontex/OP/258/2019/CNT-2019-00004 was signed without having created a budgetary commitment.	Procurement procedure	5,000,000

Table 17: Deviations of high financial materiality registered in 2020

Despite acknowledging that some improvements in the area of contract management were achieved in the course of 2020, it is still relevant to note that the key recommendation – related to establishing of the Central Contract Management Team which was endorsed by the ED decision – is not yet implemented and therefore is to be included in the improvement plan for 2021.

These are the corrective measures, proposed by initiators, to strengthening controls in the area of contract and grants management:

- To introduce automatic reminders on a specific contract's expiration dates in the contracts module on MyFX. Currently, reminders are sent for framework contracts only (action 14 in the action plan below).



- To assess the needs for an advanced training module on grants which would help Frontex staff to improve performance in this area, taking necessary actions promptly and with confidence (action 15 in the action plan below).
- Establishing a compendium of FAQ related to grants management to be validated by FIN, in order to align potential contradicting interpretations and avoid them (action 16 in the action plan below).

With regard to the type of deviations, the fact that 49% of deviations in 2020 were registered as exceptions demonstrates an improvement, meaning that deviations were noticed ex-ante, hence the controls are working with the gradual enhancement of the understanding of the differences between exceptions and non-compliances by the staff engaged in financial and procurement activities. However, a still-high number of exceptions is triggered by a previous non-compliance event. Consequently, to achieve improvement more attention must be given to ex-ante control.

In relation to the implementation of the improvement actions identified in the report 2019 for the 2020, hereunder listed the initiatives completed in the procedure of register of exception and non-compliance events:

- A new simplified procedure for the management of exceptions and non-compliance events was adopted by the ED decision No R-ED-2020-115.
- From April 2020 an automated workflow for registration of exceptions and non-compliance was introduced.
- Special guidelines on HowTo have been published.
- Eight awareness sessions (58 participants) were organised.

In 2020 a total of **seven** improvement actions were **implemented**. Further to this, **two** improvement actions related to the implementation of the IAS recommendations were **delayed** (contract management and IT project management), and these will remain in the action plan for 2021, additionally **six new** actions were **proposed** for the implementation in 2021.

No	Actions proposed	Deadline	Status
1	The contract management function to be strengthened at the centralized level. This action is related to the implementation of the IAS recommendation and will be considered as implemented when the recommendation will be closed by the IAS	Q2 2021	Ongoing
2	To enhance control activities: ex-ante check-in procurement, finance, human resource and contract management. Clear procedures establishing controls with clear roles and responsibilities for the control activities	Q4 2021	Ongoing
3	To enhance project management, especially the IT-related projects. This is in line with IAS recommendation and related to establishing the PMO and PM2 as the methodology to be used to manage projects	Q2 2021	Ongoing
4	To update the procedure for the register of exceptions and non-compliance simplifying the registration process, clarifying the steps and information sessions are provided clearly identifying the cases to be registered as either exceptions or as non-compliance events. A proposal for the adoption of an ED decision is to be prepared.	Q3 2020	Implemented
5	To introduce an automated workflow for the registration of deviations, taking into account the simplifications proposed.	Q2 2020	Implemented
6	To create and keep updated the list of initiators for further communication, training, evaluation and improvement activities.	Q2 2020	Implemented
7	To organise a training session with initiators, on the updated procedure and automated workflow. E-learning tool on HowTo.	Q2 2020	Implemented
8	To review the reporting of the deviations identified as 'grants'.	Q3 2020	Implemented
9	To introduce guidelines for the reporting of grant-related deviations.	Q2 2020	Implemented
10	To organise an awareness session for the new procedure for the management of exceptions and non-compliance events	Q4 2020	Implemented
11	To maintain the awareness of financial actors (not only the initiators, but authorising officers as well) and promote the understanding of the system, including clearly explaining the current shortages of the IT system itself. For financial initiators it should be strongly recommended to consult the list of authorising officers and all other financial actors accessible on in the financial services portal as well as the deputising calendar, for the actual, up-to-date information of the AOs availability.	At least 2 awareness sessions in 2021	New
12	To conduct a survey with initiators to assess the level of satisfaction with an automated procedure for registration of exceptions and non-compliance events.	Q2 2021	New
13	To disclose the case NC-23 as having a high materiality level in the CAAR for the year 2020.	Q1 2021	New

14	To introduce automatic reminders on specific contract's expiration dates in the contracts module on MyFX.	Q2 2021	New
15	To assess the need for an advanced training on grants which would help Frontex staff to reply to inquiries correctly, promptly and with confidence.	Q1 2021	New
16	Establishing a compendium of FAQ related to grants management to be confirmed by FIN, so that contradicting interpretations are possibly avoided.	Q2 2021	New

Table 18: Improvement action plan 2021

## 2.10. Environment management

At Frontex, environmental management in recent years has been expressed in solutions targeting three types of activity:

- Stability or low and sustainable increase in consumption despite growth of staff and external personnel: utility consumption, use of paper, stationery and office supplies, travels etc.
- Introduction of new tools and solutions: mainly paperless document circulation and digitalisation advances;
- Promotion of green attitude: waste segregation, use of biodegradable packaging, encouraging greener modes of transport.

These solutions result from the practical feasibilities related to the buildings occupied by Frontex on the one hand, and from the procedures introduced by the Agency on the other. The above solutions were implemented at two main layers encompassing the premises and the behaviour of the Agency staff and external personnel.

### 1. Environmental performance of the premises:

- Environmental performance of the buildings occupied by Frontex: it is assessed as being already high due to its modern and environmentally friendly construction.
- Consumption of utilities: in 2020 a considerably lower consumption of water should be noted, admittedly due to much lower occupancy, with teleworking and shift work (presence in the premises every other week) becoming the default work arrangement for many staff members.
- Waste management: there was a reduction in waste generated in the main premises building, with the same reason as above.

### 2. Promoting ecological behaviour at work:

- Promotion of sustainable and responsible use of paper, stationery and office supplies. In 2020 there was a noticeable reduction in consumption of paper and stationery despite growth in staff.
- Promoting of videoconferencing and reduction of travel needs. In 2020, an increased use of videoconferencing and consequent reduction in travel cost was triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, nevertheless lowering cost of travel and increased videoconferences is planned further to become part of environmental programme of the Agency.
- Encouraging greener modes of transport, for example by encouraging to use public transport (reimbursement of costs).
- Gradual adoption of green public procurement by increasing the use of e-workflows.

A more detailed overview is presented in Annex 9.

## 2.11. Assessment by management

The year 2020 was decisive for the preparations required for the effective set-up of the standing corps and crucial for the full implementation of other elements of the new Regulation. The year proved to be even more difficult due to the pandemic, but ultimately many necessary instruments and activities were developed despite the unforeseen challenges.

The strategic steering and oversight by the Management Board was strengthened by the establishment of the Executive Board and the Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations. The organisational structure of the Agency was amended, adjusting it to the new, wider mandate.

Important groundwork was done for the development of the fundamental rights framework of the Agency, laying the basis for the recruitment of a new Fundamental Rights Officer with wider prerogatives and independence, the recruitment of 40 fundamental rights monitors as well as the new fundamental rights strategy. Some of these activities were delayed by a few months compared to the timeline laid down in the Regulation and as initially planned by Frontex. The delays were mainly caused by the pandemic which had a severe impact on all activities, but also by the need to appoint a Fundamental Rights Officer *ad interim* who took the post in September and only then could initiate some of the necessary actions.

Faced with the need to immediately and without warning switch to fully remote working arrangements due to the COVID-19 outbreak, Frontex succeeded in maintaining the critical processes, swiftly set up a crisis management structure and established communication lines in the new environment. Support to staff in the headquarters and deployed in the field, affected by quarantine and travel restrictions, was the priority for the management, and it was well organised and delivered thanks to the dedication of staff members engaged in the pandemic response.

Due to COVID-19 and restrictions enforced by the EU Member States, Frontex amended its budget twice in 2020, decreasing the initially planned budget from EUR 460 million to EUR 364.4 million. This decrease by EUR 95.5 million shows the profound impact of the pandemic on the operational activities of the European Border and Coast Guard.

The year was also very demanding for the human resources service. Frontex staff grew from 749 at the beginning of the year to reach the overall number of 1,234 posts filled (temporary agents, contract agents and seconded national experts) by the end of the year. This growth led to enormous additional workload for all services provided by HR, which continued their efforts to further increase the efficiency of staff selection and recruitment processes, staff development and training, and personnel administration.

The effects of the public health crisis created by the pandemic are apparent across the board and are showcased well in the procurement highlights from 2020. Frontex led an inter-institutional tender for purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) with ca. 50 EU institutions, agencies, and bodies of the total value of EUR 60.5 million. To facilitate business continuity in the remote working environment, a new paperless workflow was launched for financial and procurement processes. An entire scope of new implementing tools (e.g. online interpretation) were developed, showing resilience in the new situation. These developments prove that the impact of the pandemic in some cases can be described as positive, as it accelerated much-needed innovations and it simplified some procedures.

The total value of procurement procedures processed by Frontex in 2020 amounted to a remarkable figure i.e. EUR 263 million. In this context, it should be emphasised that despite the numerous and very complex tender procedures, many of them in a niche market, the European Court of Auditors audit of Frontex did not find any irregularities related to procurement.

Cooperation with the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors continued, and their valuable observations and recommendations were considered and implemented, albeit with considerable delays in some areas. These areas will be treated with priority in 2021 to ensure the Agency's compliance with the recommendations received. At the end of 2020, in total 17 actions were in the implementation phase, with no critical recommendations, and there were 9 very important recommendations that have the status 'pending' under audits on contract management (2019), IT governance and project management (2019), HR planning, allocation and recruitment (2020), HR management (2015). Implementation of these recommendations is a crucial step towards the improvement of the efficiency of key processes within the Agency, and as such must be prioritised.

To ensure sound financial management and rigorous control over the Agency's budget, the Executive Director adopted a new decision on exceptions and non-compliance events. The recorded data results in a performance indicator on the exceptions rate (the total payments to deviations amount ratio) was in 2020 at 3.37%, which was above the 2% target set. This can be partly explained by the rapid introduction of a new, paperless financial workflow without the necessary time to train financial actors properly and where the Agency will closely monitor this aspect during 2021 to redress the situation.

In my capacity as Executive Director of the Agency and responsible for the attainment of the objectives set in the annual work programme 2020, I deem relevant to point out several factors where the management of the Agency has limited influence while at the same time they have a profound impact on the Frontex's ability to implement its mandate. These are:

- The existing gaps in the legal and regulatory framework in which the Agency operates;
- Lack of procedural clarity;
- Lack of clarity on the financial and human resources entrusted to the Agency at this point in time; and
- Interinstitutional relations and closer support on the part of the European Commission to develop regulatory tools necessary for Frontex to implement its mandate.

It has to be explicitly stated that these factors negatively impacted the activities of the Agency in 2020, by causing delays and hampering our ability to timely accomplish certain deliverables envisioned in the roadmap for the implementation of the EBCG Regulation.

## Part III - Assessment of effectiveness of internal control systems

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

Following the expanded mandate and responsibilities of Frontex under the Regulation as well as the introduction of changes to the European Commission's internal control framework on April 2017, Frontex internal control framework (ICF) was updated accordingly<sup>18</sup> in order to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of the five objectives:

1. effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations;
2. reliability of reporting;
3. safeguarding of assets and information;
4. prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities, and
5. adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments concerned.

To appropriately and effectively address its objectives, Frontex follows a **risk-based approach**. This approach enables the Agency to act according to its strategic directions ensured by internal control processes and mechanisms that provide the Executive Director with reasonable assurance that Frontex delivers effectively even in cases where business continuity measures are activated.

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

Each of the five components consists of several principles (17 in total). This structure facilitated the implementation of the ICF during 2020 and served as a guidance for the management when assessing whether each above-mentioned component is present and functioning effectively and in harmony. A holistic approach of assessing the framework from 17 perspectives contributes to providing a reasonable assurance that the Agency's objectives are met, as they specify the actions required for effective internal control.

The Executive Director was mandated to implement the framework, and to conduct an overall assessment of the presence and functioning of all internal control components at least annually (in the context of the preparation of consolidated annual activity report), in order to:

- establish and/or streamline the processes, structures and functions to accommodate changes resulting from the revision of the Frontex internal control framework, and in particular the processes of risk management, control, planning and evaluating, reporting, and communicating.
- ensure the adequate resources for an efficient and consistent implementation, and effective assessment of the internal control system;
- with the support of the Inspection and Control Office to take appropriate actions to establish and manage the revised internal control framework; by performing the internal control coordinator function the Office shall facilitate the process and support the managers in defining the baselines and targets as regards internal control, taking into account their specificities and risks, and to improve awareness and understanding of the internal control framework by all staff, in particular through training, information and support activities.

### 3.1. Effectiveness of the internal control system

Frontex annual assessment of the internal control system is based on the 'Internal Control Framework in the Commission Implementation Guidelines'<sup>19</sup>.

The sources of information analysed to draw the conclusions:

- Internal control indicators
- Self-assessment survey

<sup>18</sup> Frontex internal control framework was adopted by the Management Board on 22 November 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Ref. Ares (2017)3293999 - 30/06/2017.

- Risk assessment results
- Recording of exceptions/non-compliance reports
- Weaknesses reported by staff
- Audit findings and recommendations
- Non-implemented improvement actions

### Self -Assessment survey

Managers assess the effectiveness of Frontex internal control system at least once per year. This process is supported by an input from managerial-level staff by means of self-assessment survey on internal control. The self-assessment of internal controls for 2020 was organised via e-survey that was conducted on 12- 23 February 2021.

The invitation to participate in the survey was sent to 65 managers (Directors, Heads of offices, Heads of units, and Heads of sectors). The survey questions were created in the form of statements, replicating the internal control principles and characteristics, including performance indicators. The participants showed the agreement with the statements, by choosing from 5 - fully agree, 4- agree, 3 - neutral, 2-disagree, 1- fully disagree.

### Measurement of control indicators

The control indicators are established in relation to all 17 internal control principles, taking into account the characteristics of those principles as is set out in the Internal Control Framework.

### Conclusions on the assessment results

The term 'internal control deficiency' means a shortcoming in a component or components and relevant principle(s) that reduces the likelihood of the Agency achieving its objectives. There is a critical deficiency in the internal control system if management determines that a component and one or more relevant principles are not present or functioning or that components are not working together. When a critical deficiency exists, the Executive Director cannot conclude that it has met the requirements of an effective system of internal control.

The internal control system assessment was done following these steps, leading to the identification of internal control strengths and deficiencies:

- assessment of presents and functioning of characteristics for each principle;
- assessment at principle and at component level - each principle separately and then each component separately;
- overall assessment- final conclusion on assessment.

According to the IAS' Audit methodology audit recommendations are classified in four categories namely, Critical, Very important, Important and Desirable. Therefore, those four categories of IAS recommendations address respectively critical, major, moderate and minor deficiencies.

On the basis of the above set of information, Frontex identified both the internal control strengths and deficiencies and assessed the severity of the identified deficiencies as follows:

- Minor deficiency - it has a minor impact on the presence and/or functioning of the principle. The principle is in place and functions well, only minor improvements are needed.
- Moderate deficiency - it has a moderate impact on the presence and/or functioning of the principle. With such a deficiency, the principle is in place and functions but some improvements are needed.
- Major deficiency - it has a significant impact on the presence and/or functioning of the principle, but the principle is partially effective. With such a deficiency, the principle is partially in place and/or is partially functioning; substantial improvements are needed.
- Critical deficiency - it has a fundamental impact on the presence and/or functioning of the principle and the principle is not effective. With such a deficiency, the principle is not in place and/or essentially does not function as intended.

At principle level, the existence of a critical internal control deficiency or combination of several major deficiencies determines that the principle in general is not effective. Whereas when a major deficiency or combination of moderate deficiencies exists - the principle is partially effective. However, a critical/major deficiency in one principle cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level by the effectiveness of other principles.

Following this assessment the principles were classified in four categories as follows:

- Category 1. The principle is present and functioning well, only minor improvements needed.
- Category 2. The principle is present and functioning but some improvements are needed.
- Category 3. The principle is partially present and functioning, major improvements are needed.
- Category 4. The principle is not present and functioning.

At component level, if one principle is not present and functioning (category 4) or if several principles need major improvements (category 3), management should conclude that the component is not present and functioning and that



the system of internal control is not effective; if one principle needs major improvements (category 3) or if several principles require some improvements (category 2), management should conclude that the component is partially present and functioning and that the system of internal control is partially effective.

#### Summary of results and recommendations of the annual risk assessment exercise

Principles	Category	Recommendations
<b>I. Control Environment- is partially present and functioning</b>		
1. Demonstrates a commitment to integrity and ethical values.	No deficiencies identified	1.1.
2. Internal Control function demonstrates independence from management and exercises oversight of the development and performance of internal control	No deficiencies identified	1.2. 1.3.
3. Management establishes, with political oversight, structures, reporting lines, and appropriate authorities and responsibilities in the pursuit of objectives	Category 2	
4. Demonstrates a commitment to attract, develop, and retain competent individuals in alignment with objectives	Category 2	
5. Holds individuals accountable for their internal control responsibilities in the pursuit of objectives	Category 2	
<b>II. Risk Assessment- is present and functioning</b>		
6. Specifies objectives with sufficient clarity to enable the identification and assessment of risks relating to objectives	Category 1	2.1. 2.2. 2.3.
7. Identifies risks to the achievement of its objectives across the organisation and analyses risks as a basis for determining how the risks should be managed	Category 1	
8. The Agency considers the potential for fraud in assessing risks to the achievement of objectives.	Category 1	
9. The Agency identifies and assesses changes that could significantly impact the internal control system	No deficiencies identified	
<b>III. Control Activities - is partially present and functioning</b>		
10. The Agency selects and develops control activities that contribute to the mitigation of risks to the achievement of objectives to acceptable levels	Category 3	2.4. 2.5.
11. The Agency selects and develops general control activities over technology to support achievement of objectives	No deficiencies identified	2.6. 2.7.
12. The Agency deploys control activities through corporate policies that establish what is expected and in procedures that put policies into action	Category 2	2.8.
<b>IV. Information &amp; Communication -is partially present and functioning</b>		
13. Obtains and uses relevant quality information to support the functioning of internal control	Category 2	2.9. 2.10.
14. The Agency internally communicates information, including objectives and responsibilities for internal control, necessary to support the functioning of internal control	No deficiencies identified	2.11.
15. The Agency communicates with external parties about matters affecting the functioning of internal control	Category 3	
<b>V. Monitoring Activities- is partially present and functioning</b>		
16. Selects, develops, and performs ongoing and/or separate assessments to ascertain whether the components of internal control are present and functioning	Category 3	2.12.
17. The Agency assesses and communicates internal control deficiencies in a timely manner to those parties responsible for taking corrective action, including the Internal Control Management Function, as appropriate	Category 1	

## Action plan to improve internal controls

No	Improvement recommendations	Deadline	Status
1	1.1 Improvement in the controls in the domain of contract management activity, by implementation without further delay the IAS recommendations.	30.06.2021	Ongoing
2	1.2 To enforce accountability of individuals and entrusted entities for the performance of internal control responsibilities. To properly address cases of underperformance.	During 2021	New
3	1.3 To ensure the timely implementation of the IAS recommendations issued in regard to the strengthening of the internal control system supporting staff planning and allocation, and the management of selection and recruitment processes.	End of 2021	Ongoing
4	2.1 Improvement needed in alignment of the up-to-date mission statements across all hierarchical levels and clarity of objectives as well as in use of the objectives as a basis for allocating available resources as needed to achieve policy, operational and financial performance goals.	During 2021	New
5	2.2 Risk tolerance and materiality. When setting objectives, management defines the acceptable levels of variation relative to their achievement (tolerance for risk) as well as the appropriate level of materiality for reporting purposes, taking into account cost-effectiveness	During 2021	New
6	2.3 Risk identification and risk assessment to be integrated into the annual activity planning and regularly monitored.	During 2021	New
7	3.1 The review the existing control procedures and to consider introducing new controls in a form of a variety of checks, including supervision arrangements to mitigate risks.	During 2021	New
8	3.2 To review the responsibility on control measures, considering whether duties are correctly divided between staff members to reduce risks of error and inappropriate or fraudulent actions.	During 2021	New
9	3.3. The control procedures have to ensure, that the staff member(s) put in charge to perform the control activities in a timely manner and with due diligence, taking corrective action where needed	During 2021	New
10	3.4 To adopt and implement a business continuity plan.	During 2021	Ongoing
11	3.5 To adopt and implement a sensitive posts policy	30.06.2021	Ongoing
12	4.1 To adopt and implement a corporate information management strategy. (action 1.3. in the action plan for the implementation of IAS recommendation on IT governance)	During 2021	Ongoing
13	4.2. To adopt and implement an internal communication policy	During 2021	Ongoing
14	4.3 To adopt and implement an external communication policy, including stakeholders' management.	During 2021	New
15	5.1 To enhance awareness among managers on the internal control system in general, and in particular on importance of monitoring and assessment of functioning of the internal controls and timely implementation of corrective actions	During 2021	New

## 3.2. Conclusions of assessment of internal control systems

The following conclusions were elaborated based on the following dedicated reports:

- The regular internal control activities, including the monitoring and periodical update of Frontex corporate risk register, analysis of the register of exceptions and non-compliance events (quarterly reports), monitoring of implementation of improvement actions, the annual assessment of the internal control system.
- The opinion of the internal auditor (IAS) as expressed in the audit reports and in its assessment of the implementation of post audit recommendations.
- The opinion and observations of the external auditor of Frontex (European Court of Auditors) as well as based on Frontex actions proposed in response to the observations and recommendations received.
- Other issues identified ad-hoc during meetings at strategic and tactical levels as part of the ongoing assessment of the internal control system.

These reports result from a systematic analysis of the available evidence. This approach should allow to provide 'reasonable assurance' so as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported.

The control results and other elements that support management's assurance are detailed in the sections 2.7, 2.8, 2.9 and 3.1 of this document as follows: audit observations and recommendations, follow-up on recommendations from audits, investigations and observations from the discharge authority, the register of exceptions and the assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system.

All directors of divisions, and where appropriate, their subordinated staff were requested to issue individual declarations of assurance which were presented to the Executive Director as an input and supporting evidence for him to prepare his own declaration of assurance as the Agency's authorising officer.

The Authorising Officer performed the required assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal control system, based on FRONTEX's Internal Control Framework.

### Compliance and effectiveness of Internal Control Standards

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

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

In accordance with the outcome of the annual risk assessment exercise and in view of the existence of overdue audit recommendations, **the Agency can conclude that its internal control system, although deemed as overall effective, will benefit from some improvements.** In view of that, the Agency has initiated during 2021 resolute action to address this shortfall.

The management of the Agency acknowledges the importance of setting the tune at the top for this improvement and express its commitment to conclude a major review of the process for following-up the implementation of action plans to address audit recommendations received and envisions to gather objective evidence of a major improvement on this regard within the year 2021 whereby only on duly justified cases an audit recommendation could be overdue by less than six months.

### 3.3. Statement of the Head of Inspection and Control Office as manager in charge of risk management and internal control

I, the undersigned, manager in charge of risk management and internal control within Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, in my capacity as manager in charge of risk management and internal control, I declare that in accordance with Frontex's Internal Control Framework, I have reported my advice and recommendations on the overall state of internal control in the Agency to the Executive Director.

I hereby certify that the information provided in the present Consolidated Annual Activity Report and in its annexes is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate, reliable and complete.

Place, date: Warsaw, 16 June 2021

**Michael Juritsch**

## Part IV - Management assurance

### 4.1. Review of the elements supporting assurance

Frontex conducts its operations in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, striving to deliver in line with the expected high level of professional and ethical standards while upholding EU values and full respect to fundamental rights. The Agency's Internal Control Framework, based on the equivalent standards laid down by the European Commission and international best practice, aimed to ensure the achievement of policy and operational objectives. Further to this, Frontex Financial Regulation requires that the organisational structure and the internal control systems are set up in accordance with these principles.

In light of the measures in place to ensure legality and regularity, in particular: the risk self-assessment carried out; ex ante verification; the ex post evaluations, the systematic registration and follow-up of exceptions; the system for the delegation of the powers of the authorising officer embedded in the Office's financial management system and the opinions expressed in the final reports by internal and external auditors; the results of the self-assessment on the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal control system carried out at Divisional level, it can be concluded that the Agency's internal control system is appropriate and provide reasonable assurance on the implementation of the five components included in the Internal Control Framework as present and functioning although some improvement are still required for implementation during 2021.

This approach provides sufficient guarantees of the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in exhaustive coverage of the budget delegated to the Executive Director.

### 4.2. Reservations

Based on the internal control assessment process, the Directors of Divisions who were in charge of risk management and internal control of the activities performed by the Division under their managerial remit, confirmed that the state of internal control in their Division during 2020 was duly reported, and the information provided and represented in Part 3.1 of the Report is to the best of their knowledge, accurate and complete.

Following these statements, and the outcome of the overall internal control assessment process for year 2020, it can be concluded that the internal control standards are functioning effectively. However, as described above, there are areas where improvements are needed. This is especially important given that there will be a continued increase in both financial and human resources following the new multiannual financial framework 2021-2027. The significant changes in the mandate of the Agency will further impact on Frontex's activities, the internal organisation and the way it interacts with the Member States and other external stakeholders. It is anticipated that these changes will put a major strain on the internal control system, thus placing the revised Internal Control Framework in focus.

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

Reviewing the elements supporting the assurance as described and the evidence as presented in this Consolidated Annual Activity Report some areas for improvement were identified. However, they do not rise to the level of "reservations".

## Part V - Declaration of assurance

I, the undersigned, Executive Director of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, in my capacity as authorising officer, declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view.

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

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls, the work of the Internal Audit Service, and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the Agency.

Place, date: Warsaw, 16 June 2021

**Fabrice Leggeri**