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NOTE

From: Presidency

To: Working Party on Frontiers / Mixed Committee (EU-Iceland/Norway and Switzerland/Liechtenstein)

Subject: The future of Frontex: The standing corps – composition and tasks

The Commission's political guidelines for 2024-2029 include a commitment to strengthening Frontex by equipping it with state-of-the art technology for surveillance and situational awareness and to proposing to triple the standing corps to 30,000.

Member States' operational needs

The Presidency has taken note that Member States generally highlight the need, first and foremost, to discuss the future mandate and tasks of the agency before considering a possible proposal to increase the size of the standing corps.

Accordingly, the Presidency believes that it would be most useful at this point in time to focus on what types of support that Member States primarily require from the agency. In this context, the Presidency considers it important to discuss if Member States mainly see a need for human resources or technical equipment. In this regard, Member States could examine whether the current provisions on technical equipment, including article 64 as regards requirements for equipment purchased with EU support, are fit for purpose, or whether targeted adjustments could be envisaged. Member States could also indicate if they see a need for Frontex coordination of joint procurement.

At the same time, Member States could discuss if any possible amendments to the regulation should only focus on the quantity or also on the quality of the standing corps. For instance, Member States could discuss if the agency should provide more support when it comes, for example, to training in Member States or experts with specialised skills in e.g. document fraud, combatting organised crime, risk analysis, or possibly operating drones for border surveillance purposes. At the same time, given the increasing digitalisation of border management and new large-scale IT systems, Member States could discuss if there is a need to ensure more support from the agency in the area of e.g. digital solutions, state-of-the-art technology, cyber security measures, and artificial intelligence.

Composition of the standing corps

Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 on the European Border and Coast Guard currently provides for the following staff categories:

- Category 1: Border guards directly employed by Frontex
- Category 2: Long-term staff seconded from Member States (24 months)
- Category 3: Short-term staff deployed from Member States (up to four months)

Until 2024, the standing corps also included a category 4 consisting of a reserve of border guards from Member States. This category could have been activated for rapid border interventions, but was never used.

Without prejudice to discussions about the overall size of the standing corps, delegations could discuss if there is a need to amend the current staff categories. At the same time, delegations could consider whether there is scope for other categories. For instance, it has been suggested e.g. in the meeting of the Commission's EBCG expert group on 9 October 2025, that the existing categories could be complemented by a new category. This category would consist of staff from national authorities who would remain in the service of their national authorities, but would be trained by Frontex in all aspects of European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) and could be called upon in extraordinary situations. In this regard, it should be considered what added value this category could bring to Member States and how such a new category could be compatible with national administrations in Member States that do not have a separate border guard service and/or Member States with migration management services responsible for return.

Member States could also consider if there is a need to revise and simplify the mechanism for financial support for the development of the standing corps (article 61), in view of addressing the shortcomings identified in its implementation (e.g. administrative burden, lack of flexibility in cases of reorganisation of national authorities).

At the same time, the Presidency invites Member States to clearly indicate if they see a need for developing measures addressing the limitations of the current rules applicable to standing corps statutory staff, in order to cater for the specificities of operational deployments.

Tasks of the standing corps

Previous discussions in e.g. the Schengen Council in October 2025 show that Member States agree on the need to focus on the agency's core functions relating to external borders and return.

Nevertheless, given also the uncertain and constantly evolving nature of threats confronting Member States at the external borders, some Member States have in previous discussions expressed an interest in examining whether the standing corps could take on additional limited secondary support roles. Such secondary functions could relate to other elements of European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) and the four-tier access control model underpinning EIBM. This model comprises measures in third countries, such as under the common visa policy, measures with neighbouring third countries, border control measures at the external borders, risk analysis and measures within the Schengen area and return.

Hence, delegations might consider whether the current mandate is sufficiently flexible and would allow the agency to take on new supporting functions across EIBM without new legal amendments if new threats were to emerge in the future. For instance, some Member States have suggested e.g. at the Schengen Senior Officials Meeting in Copenhagen in September 2025 that Frontex could support Member States upon request in the area of visa policy. Such support could e.g. relate to training, deployments to Member State consulates, early warning indicators, and risk analysis. Moreover, considering that the EIBM component of border control already includes measures e.g. related to the prevention and detection of cross-border crime, delegations could consider whether there is a need to revisit provisions in the regulation in this area.

Finally, the Commission's legislative proposal on strengthening Frontex will likely coincide with the application of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. It is already foreseen that Frontex can assist Member States in the screening at external borders within the limits of the agency's mandate in accordance with the new screening regulation (Regulation (EU) 2024/1356). The Presidency considers it relevant to discuss if Frontex should also be given a clear mandate to assist Member States in screening within the territory (article 7). Moreover, the Presidency would like to discuss if the current mandate of Frontex and its possible modification could allow for a Frontex role in Dublin transfers after screening, given the close link between the Dublin *acquis* and the Schengen area and the obligation under the screening regulation to refer third country nationals to the appropriate procedures once screening has been completed.

Questions

Against this background, the Presidency would like to invite delegations to reflect on the following questions:

1. Do your operational needs mainly relate to human resources or technical equipment? Do you see value in a new category of staff which would remain in your service, but be trained by Frontex, and that could be called upon by Frontex in extraordinary situations?
2. Do you see a need to amend the regulation with regards to the standing corps? In view of evolving hybrid and technological threats, should the standing corps develop specific operational capabilities (e.g. cyber-monitoring or use of AI for border surveillance) within an expanded Frontex mandate?
3. Do you see a need for secondary support functions across EIBM, while maintaining the main focus on the core functions related to external borders and return? Is the current mandate sufficiently flexible to allow Frontex to respond to new threats across EIBM without the need for legislative amendments?