

Brussels, 28 November 2025  
(OR. en)

14622/25

**LIMITE**

**JAI 1554**  
**MIGR 396**  
**RELEX 1363**  
**FRONT 296**  
**CIVCOM 311**  
**ASILE 116**  
**EUAA**  
**EUROPOL**  
**FRONTEX**

**NOTE**

---

From: Presidency

To: Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration (EMWP)

---

Subject: EU agencies' mandate on the external dimension of asylum and migration

---

**Introduction**

The EU agencies play a key role in the implementation of the EU's asylum and migration policy, mostly as part of their mandates to support the Member States. However, in recent years there has been an increased focus on how the agencies can better support and strengthen the EU's efforts in achieving the policy objectives on the external dimension of migration and asylum.

As part of the EMWP's role in ensuring coherence across the external dimension of the EU's migration and asylum policy, the Danish Presidency believes it would be useful to provide an overview of the agencies' mandates on the external dimension, with a view to identifying potential gaps and avenues for improvement or strengthening of their mandates. This Presidency Paper outlines the agencies' current mandates on the external dimension, highlights examples of relevant measures, and discusses how the mandates could potentially be strengthened, in order to better support the achievement of the EU's policy objectives on the external dimension of migration.

### **The European Border and Coast Guard (Frontex)**

The current Frontex mandate is based on Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and the Council<sup>1</sup> (hereafter the 'EBCG Regulation'). The Commission's work program for 2026 includes a legislative proposal to strengthen Frontex in third quarter 2026. This revision may also include a reinforced mandate allowing Frontex to operate returns from third countries to third countries. A separate legislative proposal on the digitalisation of case management in the area of return, readmission and reintegration, to be presented in third quarter 2026, may also touch upon Frontex' mandate. As part of the new visa strategy, the Commission also intends to propose to establish an EU Visa Support Office within Frontex to provide support to Member States on Schengen visas processing through training, risk analysis, support on fighting documentary fraud.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1896>

Frontex currently has a mandate to cooperate, to the extent required for the fulfilment of its tasks, with third countries. The EBCG Regulation provides for two tools for such cooperation: working arrangements for non-executive cooperation and status agreements for the deployment of border management teams with executive powers.

Working arrangements provide a non-binding framework for non-executive operational cooperation on e.g. information-exchange, capacity-building and advising. Working arrangements are Frontex' commitment to non-EU countries for long-term technical and operational cooperation within the Agency's remit. Such arrangements specify the scope, nature and purpose of the cooperation, provisions on respect for fundamental rights and the protection of data as set forth by Union and international law as well as cooperation in the framework of EUROSUR. Working arrangements do not have the status of international agreements and are concluded by the Agency to define technical and operational cooperation.

Status Agreements are initiated and negotiated by the European Commission, with authorisation of the Council of the EU and consent of the European Parliament. Status agreements provide the legal framework allowing Frontex, upon request of the third country, to deploy border management teams from the standing corps with executive powers as well as technical assets in third countries. These teams can be empowered to perform border checks and border surveillance, as agreed in an annual operational plan between Frontex and its counterpart in the third country. Status agreements as currently negotiated provide a legal framework reflective of the legal limitations placed on Frontex operations in third countries without going into operational detail, thus affording the Agency maximum flexibility in its engagement in the third country. More targeted agreements, which limit flexibility by providing operational clarity to the third country are currently being considered by the Commission as a way to garner interest from countries further afield (this would not require any changes to Frontex' mandate). Status agreements have proved effective, particularly in the Western Balkans and Moldova, but have so far not been concluded with third countries outside the EU's immediate neighbourhood.

The agency also reaches out to third countries via Frontex Liaison Officers (FLOs) as well as through the deployment of EU Return Liaison Officers (EURLO). Seven FLOs will be deployed as of December 2025. Frontex is mandated to engage with CSDP missions in accordance with their mandates on the basis of working arrangements. Frontex cooperates with EU CSDP missions mostly through the exchange of situational awareness and risk analysis products, as mandated in the EBCG Regulation. The Agency has been cooperating over the years and at different degrees with CSDP missions and has concluded three working arrangements with CSDP missions: Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI (military not under CPCC), EUCAP Sahel Niger (ended since the Coup d'État in Niger in 2023) and EUAM Ukraine. Acknowledging the importance of this cooperation in the external dimension, negotiations with EUBAM Libya were initiated but have been stagnating. Moreover, the Agency has also received the Management Board authorization to start negotiations with EUPM Moldova.

The Agency can also implement Commission actions in third countries, as is currently the case in the MENA region (EU4BorderSecurity) and in the Western Balkans (EU regional support to protection-sensitive migration management systems in the Western Balkans).

An overview of Frontex cooperation with third countries can be found in Annex I.

Cooperation with third countries is key to addressing the migratory challenges facing the EU, and it is relevant to consider how cooperation between Frontex and third countries could play a strengthened role in achieving the EU's objectives on the external dimension of migration. The Danish Presidency has conducted thematic discussions on the future of Frontex, including at the JHA Council on 14 October 2025, in light of the Commission's commitment to present a legislative proposal on the strengthening of Frontex. The Working Party on Frontiers discussed on 5 November 2025 the future of Frontex's cooperation with third countries. On 13 November 2025, the Working Party on External Migration discussed EU Union Support to Ukraine's Border Management Authorities.

Many Member States have argued that more targeted agreements with third countries could make Frontex a more attractive partner along the key migratory routes. In this context, it could be examined how e.g. compliance with fundamental rights, personal data rules and privileges and immunities of staff can be effectively ensured. Furthermore, the discussions have also shown broad support for giving Frontex a role in returns from third countries to other third countries, which is not possible under the current EBCG Regulation. Finally, some Member States have also suggested that Frontex could play, in full compliance with fundamental rights, a supporting role in the so-called return hubs in third countries following the Commission's March 2025 proposal for a new return regulation.

The EMWP exchange of views on the agencies' cooperation with third countries will, with regard to the discussions on Frontex, feed into a Presidency paper summarising the Council's discussions on the future of Frontex to provide political guidance for the Commission's upcoming legislative proposal.

### **The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)**

The current mandate of the EUAA is based on Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council<sup>2</sup> (hereafter the 'EUAA Regulation'). On cooperation with third countries, the Regulation includes a mandate to both support Member States in their cooperation with third countries, as well as to engage in cooperation directly with authorities of third countries competent in matters covered by the EUAA Regulation. According to Article 35(2) of the EUAA Regulation, the cooperation with third countries should in particular be in view to "promoting Union standards on asylum, assisting third countries as regards expertise and capacity building for their own asylum and reception systems, and implementing regional development and protection programmes and other actions."

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R2303>

In 2023, the EUAA Management Board adopted a new EUAA External Cooperation Strategy based on two pillars: asylum capacity development and support for resettlement and humanitarian admission. The asylum capacity development pillar builds upon the following elements:

- 1) **Differentiation of EU support:** Clear prioritisation and differentiation in line with the relation-centred approach, including 1) widest support to candidate and potential candidate countries, followed by 2) countries in the EU neighbourhood and 3) in exceptional cases, other countries important for the whole of route approach.
- 2) **Catalogue of services:** Listing all capacity building activities that can be offered to partner third countries to facilitate joint needs assessments, including services linked to the facilitation of operational cooperation between EU+ countries and candidate and potential candidate countries.
- 3) **Pursuit of external funding:** From EU instruments (such as IPA and NDICI-Global Europe) and EU+ countries' voluntary contributions, to hire the necessary project staff.
- 4) **Possibility of deploying liaison officers in third countries:** Aiming to facilitate communication with competent authorities and build/maintain effective cooperation mechanisms. In line with the criteria of the EUAA Regulation and in close coordination with the EU Delegation and relevant stakeholders.

Under the current mandate, the EUAA is carrying out capacity development activities in four geographical areas: the Western Balkans, Türkiye, North Africa, and the Eastern Partnership. All except the support for Türkiye are (co-)funded by EU or Member State funding, which enables the Agency to recruit the project staff required to deliver such support. Such capacity building work includes training, workshops, peer to peer activities, study visits for practical perspectives, support with developing processes and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and so forth. In the Western Balkans, for example, over the last two years the Agency delivered over 80 capacity development actions, involving 10 Member States in peer-to-peer exchanges.

This work produced concrete improvements across the region, such as new SOPs for asylum processes in Montenegro and North Macedonia, strengthened Country of Origin Information (COI) functions in Serbia, updated legal frameworks more closely aligned with the Common European Asylum System in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a revised contingency plan for high influx scenarios in Kosovo\*.

---

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

With regard to the Eastern partnership, the Agency has provided access to automated training modules through cooperation with the Prague Process and is now working on projects for bilateral support to Ukraine and Moldova. The EUAA does not have a mandate to carry out operational support to third countries in the same way it does to Member States. It has a limited mandate to support operational cooperation between Member States and third countries, which was used once when the Agency was requested to support the transfer of Ukrainians from Moldova to volunteering Member States, when Russia began its war of aggression against Ukraine.

An overview of EUAA cooperation with third countries can be found in Annex II.

In its external cooperation work, the EUAA fosters strong cooperation with the European Commission, EU Delegations, and international organisations (UNHCR, IOM, ICMPD) to ensure coordination and avoid duplication. At the same time, EU Member States are continuously involved by providing both financial support and technical expertise through peer-to-peer exchanges, an approach highly valued by partner countries. Particularly considering the EUAA's cooperation with countries in the EU neighbourhood in relation to the EU's focus on capacity building in third countries, it could be considered how cooperation between the EUAA and third countries under the existing mandate could be better embedded in the comprehensive partnership approach as well as the work towards operationalising new and innovative solutions in parallel with the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum.

### **European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)**

Europol's current mandate is based on regulation (EU) 2016/794 of the European Parliament and of the Council<sup>3</sup>. As part of its mandate, Europol shall 'support and strengthen action by the competent authorities of the Member States and their mutual cooperation in preventing and combating serious crime affecting two or more Member States, including in the areas of migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. Europol's cooperation with third countries and international organisations is based on operational and strategic agreements, and working arrangements, as well as on EU adequacy decisions and EU agreements on Europol cooperation.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/794/oj/eng>

Europol's cooperation with third countries differs in line with the provisions of the legal basis enabling such cooperation. For instance, with the countries in the Western Balkans (except for Kosovo\*), Europol concluded operational cooperation agreements which enable a fully-fledged information exchange including on operational personal data. This facilitates Europol's support for investigations into serious and organized crime, including on criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling. Similarly, cooperation on countering criminal networks facilitating migrant smuggling across the English Channel, is enabled by the Working and Administrative Arrangement establishing cooperative relations with the competent authorities of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The cooperation with selected countries in the Eastern Partnership is also possible with notable differences; while with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, Europol concluded Operational Cooperation Agreements enabling fully such cooperation including on countering migrant smuggling and human trafficking, while with Armenia, Europol concluded a Working Arrangement which is limited to the exchange of information of a strategic nature with notable restrictions on investigation related operational personal data.

Cooperation with Türkiye is governed by a Strategic Cooperation Agreement which limits law enforcement cooperation on serious and organised criminality, including on combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking to the exchange of strategic information.

Europol also engages with CSDP missions. Notably Europol's Working Arrangement with EUNAVFORMED Operation Irini enables operational cooperation between the two EU bodies in line with the operation's mandate with a focus on the disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks.<sup>4</sup>

An overview and more details on Europol's cooperation with third countries can be found in Annex III.

---

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

<sup>4</sup> Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/472 of 31 March 2020 on a European Union military operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI) – See doc 6414/20.

## Way forward

The JHA agencies could play a further strengthened role in implementing the EU objectives in the external dimension. The JHA agencies are a special category of stakeholders, given their unique ability to engage on operational matters and exchange of information with the corresponding authorities in third countries, that no-one else has. Given that unique ability and its particular relevance in the area of migration and security, supporting them with priority in setting a footprint in third countries is particularly relevant and should be an EU objective on its own.

The agencies' mandates on cooperation with third countries should always be taken into account when developing and implementing the EU's policy on the external dimension of migration and asylum, in particular bearing in mind an increased focus on capacity building of authorities in third countries in relation to international protection, integrated border and migration management, including return and readmission, as well as combatting criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. To this end, the MOCADDEM actions files provides a useful overview of the operational cooperation with relevant third countries, including the EU agencies' roles in specific actions.

Looking forward, delegations are invited to reflect on how the agencies' role on the external dimension can potentially be strengthened, both in terms of their practical and operational cooperation with third countries (including by considering EU agencies' role in developing IT tools to facilitate the cooperation between Member States and third countries e.g. on readmission). Also, it could be relevant to reflect upon the agencies' linkages to and practical cooperation with other actors, like the CSDP missions with migration related mandates (EUNAVFORMED Operation Irini, EUBAM Libya, EUCAP Sahel Mali and EUAM Ukraine). Furthermore, since cooperation with third countries also often relies on implementing partners such as UNHCR, IOM and ICMPD, it could also be considered how the agencies could work together with such stakeholders, with the view to achieving the overall EU objectives. In this context, it is also relevant to consider how the agencies can complement other stakeholders when it comes to the potential operationalisation of new and innovative solutions to prevent and counter irregular migration as discussed at the EMWP meeting on 13 November.

Against this background, delegations are invited to an exchange of views in the presence of the three agencies, based on but not limited to the following questions:

- 1) How can the agencies' role in achieving the EU's policy objectives on the external dimension be further strengthened? In this context, what is particularly important considering the ongoing discussions on the future of Frontex and Europol?
  - 2) How could the agencies be supported to deliver better on the international dimension and how could the relation with other stakeholders on the external dimension such as CSDP missions, IOM and UNHCR, be developed for that purpose?
  - 3) Do Member States see any specific gaps in the agencies' current mandates, which need to be considered to achieve the objectives on the external dimension?
-

**Overview of Frontex cooperation with third countries**

**Frontex Working Arrangements (19) in force on the basis of previous legal regulations:**

- Albania
- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- *Belarus (cooperation suspended)*
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Canada
- Cape Verde
- North Macedonia
- Georgia
- Kosovo\*
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- Nigeria
- *Russian Federation (cooperation suspended)*
- Serbia
- Türkiye
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom
- United States

**New negotiations launched under the Model Working Arrangement** developed by COM as set out in art.76(2) of 2019/1896 Regulation.

Negotiations concluded, consultation with European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) launched

- Cape Verde
- Moldova

Negotiations launched:

- Western Balkans
- Ukraine
- Lebanon
- Mauritania
- Senegal
- Armenia
- Jordan
- the US
- Canada
- Nigeria

Working Arrangements authorised by the Management Board (MB) to negotiate:

- Morocco
- The Gambia
- Ghana
- Togo
- Ivory Coast
- Pakistan
- Türkiye

Next mandates:

- Mexico
- Bangladesh
- Egypt

Concluded Working Arrangements:

- The UK (in 2023)

---

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

## Frontex Status Agreements:

Country	Status Agreement	Implementation
Albania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1.0 entered into force in May 2019</li> <li>- 2.0 entered into force in June 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint Operation (JO) Flexible Operational Activities Western Balkans in Albania launched in May 2019; since January 2021 the operation continues as JO Albania Land</li> <li>- JO Albania Sea launched in March 2021</li> </ul>
Montenegro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1.0 entered into force in July 2020</li> <li>- 2.0 signed in May 2023, entered into force in July 2023</li> <li>- The operations in line with the 2.0 Status Agreement started on 1 November 2023.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- JO Montenegro launched in July 2020</li> <li>- Since 2021, these JOs continue as JO Montenegro Land and JO Montenegro Sea</li> </ul>
Serbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1.0 entered into force in May 2021</li> <li>- 2.0 entered into force in April 2025</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- JO Serbia launched in June 2021 at SRB-BGR border.</li> <li>- Extended to SRB-HUN border in December 2022</li> <li>- Status Agreement (SA) 2.0 enabled deployment at all borders</li> </ul>
Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2.0 entered into force in March 2022 with provisional application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- JO Moldova launched in March 2022 (Extended to air BCP in July 2023)</li> </ul>
North Macedonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2.0 entered into force in April 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- JO North Macedonia launched in April 2023</li> </ul>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2.0 entered into force in June 2025</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- JO Bosnia and Herzegovina includes executive powers since November 2025</li> </ul>

1.0 – first-generation SA, based on EBCG Regulation 2016

2.0 - second-generation SA, based on EBCG Regulation 2019

**Overview of EUAA cooperation with third countries**

In line with its External Cooperation Strategy, the EUAA provides capacity-development assistance to third countries in the field of asylum and reception. This cooperation is implemented through regional programmes and bilateral Roadmaps, as detailed below.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Cooperation Framework / Project Name</b>	<b>Participating Countries</b>	<b>Timeline / Status</b>	<b>Funding Source / Financials</b>
<b>Western Balkans</b>	Regional Protection-Sensitive Migration Management Systems Project	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia	Current phase: 2022-2026  Next phase: 2027-2030	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) and EUAA budget.
	2nd Roadmap for Cooperation	Albania	2024–2027	IPA III
	2nd Roadmap for Cooperation	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2025-2027	IPA III
	Roadmap for Cooperation	Kosovo*		IPA III
	2nd Roadmap for Cooperation	Montenegro	2025-2027	IPA III
	3rd Roadmap for Cooperation	North Macedonia	2025-2027	IPA III
	3rd Roadmap for Cooperation	Serbia	2025-2027 Ongoing (pending RS approval)	IPA III
<b>Türkiye</b>	5th Roadmap for Cooperation	Türkiye	2025–2028	EUAA budget
<b>Eastern Neighbourhood</b>	New cooperation projects	Ukraine, Moldova	In preparation	Ukraine Facility (for Ukraine), NDICI (for Moldova)

---

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

<b>North Africa</b>	Regional Protection Project for the Southern Neighbourhood	Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco (Note: Tunisia declined to participate)	2024–2029	Co-funded by Denmark and EUAA budget
	2nd Roadmap for Cooperation	Egypt	2024–2026	NDICI

## **Overview and more details on Europol's cooperation with third countries**

Cooperation with non-EU countries in the area of countering migrant smuggling and human trafficking is operationalised through information exchange, strategic and operational support, and institutional liaison:

- Information exchange with non-EU countries associated with Europol is facilitated by SIENA, ensuring the secure transmission of both strategic and operational data.
- Liaison Bureaux embedded in Europol's headquarters allow for direct representation of third countries, promoting cooperation with the Agency, as well as between third countries and EU Member States' law enforcement authorities. In October 2025, Europol welcomed the new Qatari liaison officers as the most recent addition.
- Operational cooperation involving Europol's non-EU partner countries may take place through information exchange and joint operations, including Operational Task Forces and EMPACT actions (e.g., common actions days coordinated by Europol).
- Europol also supports third countries' competent authorities through inter-agency cooperation efforts. Europol's participates in international investigations led by other JHA agencies (i.e., Eurojust's Joint Investigations Teams) by providing operational and analytical support to national authorities of both EU Member States and third countries.
- Other activities include Europol's central role in policy and governance frameworks involving close cooperation with non-EU countries and international bodies, such as the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling. Europol also contributes to capacity building initiatives provided by its partners to LEAs of non-EU countries.

The European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) at Europol has been especially involved in efforts addressing both migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

Europol currently has:

- Working arrangements with 15 third countries (Andorra, Chile, India, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Armenia, Ecuador, Israel, Kosovo\*, Qatar, San Marino, Egypt)
- Operational agreements with 18 (Denmark, Australia, Canada, Georgia, Moldova, Norway, Serbia, Liechtenstein, Ukraine, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Switzerland, Monaco, United States)
- Strategic agreements with 5 (Türkiye, China, United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Russian Federation<sup>5</sup>)
- International Agreements on Europol cooperation/adequacy decisions (New Zealand, United Kingdom)

---

---

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

<sup>5</sup> Suspended since 29 March 2022