

ALDE background notes:



FRONTEX [\[FR\]](#)

Border security has taken on a Community dimension. In human terms the stakes are high, involving some 900 million people entering at 1 636 known crossing points. As for the number of illegal immigrants in Europe, it is estimated that there are 8 million. In the light of these figures, the European Union has created a European agency responsible for external borders, known as Frontex.

I. How the agency works

Frontex forms a key element in the strategy for securing the external borders of the Union. As a Community agency, Frontex has operational and budgetary autonomy. Its role is to promote a model of integrated border security. This model comprises both information exchange and cooperation between Member States, border and customs controls, and cooperation with border guards, customs and police authorities of neighbouring countries.

The background to its creation

Article 62 of the EC Treaty allows the adoption of measures which establish standards and procedures to be followed by Member States in carrying out checks at external borders. In addition, Article 66 provides that the Council must take measures to ensure cooperation between the relevant departments of the administrations of the Member States as well as between those departments and the Commission.

The Commission, in its communication entitled 'Towards integrated management of the external borders of the Member States of the European Union' of 7 May 2002, recommended the setting up of an 'External borders practitioners common unit' which would be responsible for managing operational cooperation at the external borders of Member States. The plan for the management of the external borders of the Member States of the European Union, which was approved by the Council on 13 June 2002, confirmed the creation of a common unit. At the request of the European Council, meeting in Thessaloniki, a regulation proposed the creation of the agency known as Frontex.

Legal basis

The 'European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union', or Frontex, was created by the regulation of 26 October 2004. That regulation was amended in 2007 to allow the creation of Rapid Border Intervention Teams, or RABITs. Warsaw was



designated as the agency's headquarters by a Council decision in 2005.

Tasks

Frontex is active in six principal areas:

- Risk analysis. Frontex has the task of assessing threats and vulnerabilities and anticipating the consequences. On the basis of that analysis it has to establish the priorities to which it will allocate its resources;
- Coordination of operational cooperation between Member States in the management of external borders. To fulfil this task Frontex is seeking solutions which will enable Member States to ensure the best possible allocation of their resources;
- Assistance to Member States in the training of national border guards, in particular the establishment of common training standards;
- Monitoring scientific research on the control and surveillance of external borders. This enables the agency to provide information on new technologies and subjects of specific interest to border guards;
- Assistance to Member States in circumstances requiring increased operational and technical assistance at external borders. To this end, Frontex prepares 'pre-positioned and pre-structured rapid intervention packages' which enable it to deploy rapidly and provide immediate assistance to Member States;
- Providing support for Member States in organising joint return operations. In liaison with experts from the Member States, Frontex is identifying best practices in returning illegal immigrants to their country of origin.

Budget

In order to guarantee its independence, Frontex has an autonomous budget which essentially consists of contributions from the Community. The Community budget procedure is applicable to all funds which come from the Union's budget. Audits are carried out by the Court of Auditors.

Frontex's budget has been increasing constantly ever since its creation: from EUR 6.2 million in 2005, it had risen to EUR 83.25 million by 2009

Frontex's cooperation with other bodies

Frontex liaises closely with other partners of the Community and the EU who are responsible for security at external borders, such as EUROPOL, CEPOL and OLAF, for customs cooperation and for cooperation on plant-health and veterinary controls, in order to promote overall coherency.

Frontex also cooperates with Member States and takes care to ensure cooperation between the Member States' border-control authorities, in line with the Community's external relations policy.



Achievements to date

In 2006 and 2007 respectively, the agency carried out the following joint operations at external borders: 5 and 4 operations at sea borders, 2 and 10 operations at land borders and 2 and 5 operations at air borders, in addition to 3 and 2 additional operations covering more than one type of border.

During the same period, more than 53 000 people were stopped or prevented from entering at borders. More than 2 900 fake or falsified travel documents were discovered and 58 smugglers of illegal immigrants were arrested.

2009 work programme

In its work programme for 2009, Frontex set itself four long-term objectives:

- Knowledge – analytical capacity
- Response – operational capacity and reaction capacity
- Interoperability
- Performance – managerial capacity

These objectives form Frontex's working basis for its first multi-annual plan for the period 2010-2013.

Frontex in the Stockholm Programme

The Stockholm Programme makes provision for giving a central role to Frontex in the border surveillance mechanism. In order for this to happen, it recommends a certain number of improvements in the way the agency operates:

- strengthening Frontex's operational capacity, in particular by creating regional and/or specialised offices
- rationalising the various types of border controls
- increasing the attention paid to vulnerable persons and groups
- developing the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) with the aim of establishing cooperation in the sharing of surveillance data between Member States and Frontex.

II. ALDE and Frontex

In the opinion of Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (VVD, Netherlands), ALDE spokesperson on immigration policy, it is essential for Member States to commit to the principle of '*compulsory solidarity*' if they really want to address the issues of migration and border control.

'EU border security is the responsibility of all Member States and border controls must be operated in a spirit of sharing responsibilities and solidarity', she said in 2008, 'but is the Council prepared to make this principle mandatory?'

'In today's world though, marked by increasing regional conflicts, food shortages and a growing gap between rich and poor, mobility of people is likely to increase rather than diminish. Instead of putting all our efforts into keeping people out, we need a



radical and responsible migration policy for Europe.'

For more information:

[ALDE press releases on Frontex](#)

[Frontex: Website](#)

