

FRONTEX EVALUATION REPORT

**JO Flexible Operational Activities - Western
Balkans 2019 in Albania**

Approved by
/ /2020

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Signature
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with Article 47 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896², the Agency shall adopt a Frontex Evaluation Report of the operational activities to be transmitted to the management board within 60 days following the end of those activities, together with the observations of the Fundamental Rights Officer.

Joint Operation Flexible Operational Activities Western Balkans 2019 in Albania (JO FOA WB 2019 in Albania), was the first operational activity with executive powers organised and coordinated by European Border and Coast Guard Agency (hereinafter the Agency) on the territory of a non-EU/SAC country. The operation was inaugurated on 21 May 2019, in Tirana, thus marking the start of the operationalisation of the Status Agreement between the EU and Albania which entered into force on 1 May 2019. This evaluation report covers the period of implementation of the operational activities between 22 May 2019 and 29 January 2020.

The data collected, scrutinized and presented in this report highlight the performance in order to achieve the objectives according to five indicators of relevance. All five general objectives were achieved (enhance border security, enhance operational cooperation, enhance exchange of information including personal data, identify possible risks and threats and establish and exchange best practices).

In 2019, 16 participating Member States contributed to JO FOA WB 2019 in Albania by [REDACTED]

Commented [MW1]: The non-disclosed parts contain information regarding the number and profiles of officers deployed in the operational area. Disclosing such information would be tantamount to disclosing the weaknesses and strengths of Frontex operations and pose a risk to their effectiveness. As a result, the course of ongoing and future similar operations would be hampered, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. Consequently, the disclosure of such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security as laid down Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) 1049/2001.

During the implementation of the JO, 7630 migrants and 21 people smugglers were apprehended, 11 cases of document fraud and 5 cases of smuggling of 37.5 kg of cannabis detected, all reported in 1521 incidents. Joint Debriefing Teams performed 187 interviews [REDACTED]

The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

The JO reached a good level of development in terms of operational cooperation based on the support and commitment received from Albanian authorities in setting up the coordination structure. Furthermore, the operational activity featured some other developments. In particular the JO succeeded in providing good working conditions and deployment of Frontex border surveillance equipment and vehicles in support to the team members and the local authorities as well as it enhanced the operational cooperation with UNHCR. The opening of the new Registration and Temporary Accommodation Centre for screening and debriefing tasks in the vicinity of the [REDACTED] provided good working conditions for the experts.

Commented [KB2]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information regarding the modus operandi of law enforcement officials performing border control and/or coast guard duties. Disclosing such information would expose the working methods applied in ongoing and future operations, thus obstructing their effectiveness in prevention of cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In consequence, it would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and thus, cannot be disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

The deployments in 2019 have followed Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2016 on the European Border and Coast Guard applicable until 4 December 2019 when the new European Border and Coast Guard Regulation³ entered into force. The results of this evaluation report shall form part of a comprehensive analysis with a view to enhancing the quality, coherence and effectiveness of future activities and shall be taken into account in the preparation of future operational activities.

Accompanying this report, the observations of Fundamental Rights Officer provide an assessment on the compliance of the JO FOA WB 2019 in Albania with its fundamental rights obligations.

^{2,3} Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast

1. Background information

Regulation (EU) 2016/1624⁴, establishing the European Border and Coast Guard (hereinafter “the EBCG Regulation”), provided for new opportunities for cooperation with third countries. One of these opportunities was the possibility to carry out operational activities with executive powers on the territory of third countries neighbouring European Union (EU) Member States (MS) with one of the preconditions being the conclusion of a Status Agreement (SA) between the EU and the respective third country (TC).

The status agreement negotiated between the EU and Albania was signed in October 2018 and entered into force on 1 May 2019. It was the first such agreement to become operational with a Western Balkan partner country. This gave Frontex the responsibility to launch its first fully fledged Joint Operation with executive powers in a third country. The operation was inaugurated on 21 May 2019 in Tirana after the conclusion and agreement on the Operational Plan. Consequently, on 22 May 2019, Joint Operation (JO) Flexible Operational Activities Western Balkans 2019 in Albania started covering the Albanian border with Greece as part of JO Flexible Operational Activities concept.

1.1. Brief assessment of the situation

Albanian - Greek land border

During the FOA 2019 WB in Albania, 7 630 irregular migrants were apprehended in 1 521 incidents. In addition, the national authorities arrested 21 people smugglers. The table below shows the reported numbers of migrant apprehensions, incidents and arrested people smugglers.

Number of migrant apprehensions	Number of incidents reported	People smugglers arrested	Land border section	Share of the total number of migrants apprehended
7 630	1 521	21	GRC - ALB	100%

The main nationalities apprehended for illegal border-crossing during the JO were Syrian (2 460), Iraqi (2 370), Moroccan (969), Algerian (437) and Palestinian (301). A comparison with data from the previous year was not possible as no JO took place in 2018.

However, data collected within the Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network (WB-RAN) were used to provide a rough comparison of illegal crossings on this border. According to WB-RAN data, from May to December 2018, 1 028 illegal border-crossings from Greece to Albania were reported by the Albanian authorities. This shows a more than six fold increase in migrant apprehensions in 2019 compared with the same period in 2018.

Albanian - Greek land border BCPs, border checks

During the JO, 11 cases of document fraud were reported. One case was reported from the [REDACTED] and 10 cases from the [REDACTED]. 11 Albanian citizens were detected with false entry or exit stamps. Other nationalities were not reported in possession of false or falsified documents.

Commented [KW3]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information regarding the modus operandi of law enforcement officials performing border control and/or coast guard duties. Disclosing such information would expose the working methods applied in ongoing and future operations, thus obstructing their effectiveness in prevention of cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In consequence, it would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and thus, cannot be disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

In addition 5 ALB nationals were reported from the [REDACTED] for smuggling of 37.5 kg of cannabis. However, the 5 ALB nationals were apprehended [REDACTED] in a distance of about 4 km from the BCP.

Number of persons reported	Number of incidents reported	Incident type	Border crossing point
10	10	Document fraud	[REDACTED]
1	1	Document fraud	[REDACTED]
5	1	Smuggling of goods	[REDACTED]

Only Albanian nationals were reported either being in possession of false entry or exit stamps or being involved in the detected case of drug smuggling.

1.2. Operational aim

The operational aim of the Joint Operation Flexible Operational Activities - Western Balkans 2019 in Albania (hereinafter "JO") was to implement coordinated operational activities at the land border with Greece in order to control illegal immigration flows, to tackle cross-border crime and to enhance European cooperation as well as to promote the European standards on border control.

The operational aim was implemented in full compliance with the relevant EU and international law, and national law of the Republic of Albania, guaranteeing the respect for fundamental rights and in particular the access to international protection, the compliance with the principle of non-refoulement and data protection rules, taking into account the recommendations of the Frontex Consultative Forum and the reports and observations of the Fundamental Rights Officer.

1.3. Period of implementation and operational areas

The joint operation was implemented from 22 May 2019, 12:00 hrs (local time) till 29 January 2020, 11:59 hrs (local time) [REDACTED]

Operational area

The operational activities were implemented at the border between Albania and Greece [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Commented [MW4]: The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001

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An International Coordination Centre (ICC) was established in the Frontex HQ premises in Warsaw, Poland.

The ICC coordinated all operational activities in the framework of Frontex joint operations at MS/TC land borders, [REDACTED]

Commented [MW6]: The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

1.4. Host and Participating Member States, third countries, other Union bodies, offices and agencies or international organisations

The JO was hosted by Albania with the participation of 16 Member States. In addition, 1 cooperating TC participated with the deployment of observers, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Each MS participated with one authority, with the exception of Romania, which participated with Romanian Border Police and the General Inspectorate for Immigration. The number of participating authorities reached 18, including Albanian Department for Border Migration and IND (Immigration and Naturalization Service) from the Netherlands, [REDACTED]

The implementation of the JO was supported [REDACTED]

Commented [KB7]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information regarding the modus operandi of law enforcement officials performing border control and/or coast guard duties. Disclosing such information would expose the working methods applied in ongoing and future operations, thus obstructing their effectiveness in prevention of cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In consequence, it would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and thus, cannot be disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

Host TC	Albania
Participating MSs	Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia
Other participating Third Countries	Bosnia & Herzegovina
Other Union bodies, offices and agencies	European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL), European Agency for the Operational Management of Large-scale IT Systems (eu-LISA), Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), European Union Judicial Cooperation Unit (EUROJUST)
International organizations	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

1.5. Financial information

The Operational Budget of JO Flexible Operational Activities - Western Balkans 2019 amounted to 3,412,689 EUR with 3,180,199 EUR spent on deployments of human resources and 232,490 EUR spent on deployments of light technical equipment.

2. Achievement of objectives

2.1 Enhance border security

This objective was achieved.

The number of migrant apprehensions was high during the JO. This result was due to enhanced border surveillance activities, the deployment of experienced EU officers and additional technical equipment [REDACTED] This information did not include

personal data but provided satisfactory information [REDACTED]

Information and intelligence [REDACTED]

As a result of increased border surveillance activities, the number of irregular migrants apprehended on the border between Albania and Greece increased while the number of irregular migrants detected inland decreased. Also the additional operational support implemented on the BCP level led to a considerable number of detections of document fraud cases, falsified entry/exit stamps, vehicles with manipulated VIN numbers and a seizure of 37.5 kg of smuggled cannabis.

2.2 Enhance operational cooperation

The objective was achieved.

The participation of 16 MS and 1 TC in the JO largely contributed to the achievement of the main operational aim of the JO and resulted in the enhancement of the cooperation between experts from different home MSs as well as the cooperation of Members of the Teams with the local officers of the hosting authority. Deployed human resources and technical equipment contributed to enhancing the border surveillance capacity in the operational area. The participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina showed their active involvement in Frontex joint operations and allowed for the establishment of communication channels not only with Frontex but with the hosting authorities as well.

The participation of Members of the Teams (TMs) originating from different MS enhanced the capacity of the hosting authorities in coordinating additional personnel and equipment within a joint activity. The teams composed by TMs and host country officers were integrated in the work of the national structure.

Established communication channels between the Albanian authorities and home MS on daily basis enhanced the exchange of information in a smooth manner. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] proved effective and useful for their active commitment regarding the coordination and implementation of the activities.

In relation to interagency cooperation on local level, the Albania State Police ensured the possibility to perform interviews at the New Registration and Temporary Accommodation Centre for irregular migrants [REDACTED]

Regular bilateral meetings of the Greek and Albanian contact points enhanced awareness and cooperation between those countries in the field of border surveillance as well as enhanced information flow on the operational level. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] during implementation of the JO had a major impact on the operational cooperation.

Regarding TC participation, deployment of TC observers had been organised and accomplished with the support of the local authorities.

2.3 Enhance the exchange of information excluding personal data

This objective was achieved.

The JORA [REDACTED] was used by the Joint Debriefing Teams (JDTs) without major difficulties. Some delays in the validation of interviews [REDACTED] were observed. However, the quality of the submitted information and data in the interview reports was at a satisfactory level.

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The non-disclosed parts cannot be released as it refers to details crucial for situational awareness at the external borders of the European Union which is used by Frontex to conduct its operational activities and to develop risk analyses. The disclosure of this information would hamper the effectiveness of Frontex operations and jeopardise the efforts carried out by the European Union and Member States to curtail criminal activities at the external borders. It would thus benefit criminal networks especially those involved in people smuggling and trafficking in human beings, which would put the life of migrants in danger. Hence, the disclosure of the information pertaining to this variable would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and has to be refused based on Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

The information related to this part is also used for the development of risk analyses, which constitute a specific form of internal decision-making processes based on the intelligence derived from previous and presently ongoing activities and have a bearing on the conduct of current and future operations. Being an important base for determining the strategic orientation of the Agency, the possibility to conduct such analyses without interference is crucial for Frontex to effectively exercise its mandate. Consequently, releasing this information would enable third parties to gain insights into this decision making process and, with ascertainable likelihood, result in depriving Frontex of the possibility to conduct such analyses wholly independently, free from any external pressure or third-party influence. In sum, releasing this information would seriously undermine Frontex internal decision making-processes. As no overriding public interest that is objective and general in nature and not indistinguishable from individual or private interests for the release of this information is ascertainable in the present case, information pertaining to this variable cannot be released based on Article 4(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

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Approximately 70% of the interviews conducted [REDACTED] met the basic requirements.

Other factors, [REDACTED], impacted on the quality of interviews but could not be influenced by the deployed staff.

2.4 Identify possible risks and threats

This objective was achieved.

2.5 Establish and exchange best practices

This objective was achieved.

The JO was used as a platform for the exchange of operational information, professional experiences as well as for best practices. Regular operational briefings and debriefings were delivered by operational team on the spot for all TMs deployed.

In cooperation with the operational analyst (OA), several briefing and short debriefing workshops were held in the operational area. Debriefing experts, screeners, interpreters and locals participated in these workshops. An additional briefing day was organised the day after the general briefing, specifically for debriefers, screeners and interpreters during each rotation of TMs and sTMs to provide them with updated information. It was a useful tool to increase the knowledge of the deployed staff, to network with the national authorities and better manage the teams.

Best practices were exchanged on a daily basis in the framework of the joint coordination structure featuring [REDACTED] and a high level of standardisation of procedures.

3. Link to other Frontex activities and best practices

3.1. JO Focal Points 2019 Land

Starting in May 2019, when Frontex launched the JO FOA WB 2019 in Albania, TMs with border check tasks were deployed in the operational area in Albania, on the border with Greece. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In order to comply with the requirements of the Status Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Albania [REDACTED]

Commented [MW10]: The non-disclosed parts cannot be released as it refers to details crucial for situational awareness at the external borders of the European Union which is used by Frontex to conduct its operational activities and to develop risk analyses. The disclosure of this information would hamper the effectiveness of Frontex operations and jeopardise the efforts carried out by the European Union and Member States to curtail criminal activities at the external borders. It would thus benefit criminal networks especially those involved in people smuggling and trafficking in human beings, which would put the life of migrants in danger. Hence, the disclosure of the information pertaining to this variable would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and has to be refused based on Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

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JO Focal Points 2019 Land at the Greek-Albanian border was implemented at the [REDACTED] on the opposite side of the border [REDACTED] as well as [REDACTED] on the opposite side of [REDACTED]. The TMs deployed in these FPs/BCPs on both sides of the border exchanged information during the JO.

Commented [MW12]: The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

3.2. JO FOA 2019 Land

Local Coordination Centre [REDACTED] of the JO was established and smoothly integrated in JO FOA 2019 Land [REDACTED].

The JO FOA 2019 Land supported the implementation of the JO in information gathering and reporting process as well as by providing any other necessary operational and logistical support.

Moreover, the FOSS content of [REDACTED] was available for all Members of the Teams / EU experts deployed in any of these operations. Feedback received from TMs clearly indicates that this kind of exchange is useful in their daily work and creates networks and cooperation among the deployed experts.

Full integration of the TMs in the established [REDACTED] of the JO FOA 2019 Land, was considered both by TMs as well as by the Albanian authorities, to be effective and beneficial having in mind its positive effects, especially on the information exchange.

Commented [KW13]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information regarding the modus operandi of law enforcement officials performing border control and/or coast guard duties. Disclosing such information would expose the working methods applied in ongoing and future operations, thus obstructing their effectiveness in prevention of cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In consequence, it would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and thus, cannot be disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

3.3. Contributing Frontex projects, products and services

3.3.1 Joint Action Days (JADs)

Joint Action Days were not organised within the JO.

4. Assessment of joint operational activities

4.1. Operational Response

4.1.1. Operational concept

In accordance with Article 54(3) and (4) of the Regulation and Article 4 of the SA, TMs deployed in the host TC within the context of JO FOA WB 2019 in Albania had the authority to perform the tasks and exercise the executive powers required for border control.

The general and specific objectives of the JO were achieved to a different extent by combining various operational activities.

In particular, the main activities of the JO were:

- Border surveillance
- Border checks
- Preventing and detecting cross-border crime
- Reporting relevant document and identity fraud cases (Frontex Document Alerts)

Supporting activities of the JO included:

- Supporting screening of migrants
- Training activities including "Roadshows"
- Deployment of observers from participating TCs
- Supporting the gathering of information without personal data through debriefing activities
- Reporting illegal border crossing incidents and all other relevant cases
- Exchanging best practices

The aforementioned activities were implemented by the deployed human resources (Members of the Teams and local officers) and technical equipment.

Members of the Teams carried out their tasks in full compliance with the national law of Albania and in line with the internal regulations of the competent Albanian authorities. Exercising executive powers was strictly limited to the territory of Albania and it was performed in the presence of the competent staff of the Albanian authorities and based on their instructions. The consent of the home Member State to use force in the host TC was given by the nomination of the Members of the Teams to participate in the activities.

4.1.2. Operational results

[REDACTED]

During the implementation of the JO, the following results were reported (according to JORA Data): 1521 incidents with 7630 migrants and 21 people smugglers apprehended and 11 cases of document fraud and 5 cases of smuggling of 37.5 kg of cannabis detected (more details in chapter 1.1).

As this JO was launched for the first time in 2019, no reference statistics are available. However, for the same border section on the Greek side, 575 migrants and 48 people smugglers were recorded as apprehended.

Top nationalities for migrants apprehended were SYR (2460), IRQ (2370) and MAR (969). As for people smugglers the main nationality was [REDACTED]

Commented [MW14]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information regarding the modus operandi of law enforcement officials performing border control and/or coast guard duties. Disclosing such information would expose the working methods applied in ongoing and future operations, thus obstructing their effectiveness in prevention of cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In consequence, it would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and thus, cannot be disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

4.1.3. Operational coordination structures

At the time the JO in Albania was launched, it was expected that more Western Balkan countries would sign and ratify Status Agreements with the EU, which would subsequently lead to further expansion of the operational areas. In order to ensure appropriate coordination of existing and new operational areas, the ICC was relocated to Frontex' Headquarters in Warsaw on 15th May 2019.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Commented [KW15]: The non-disclosed parts cannot be released as it refers to details crucial for situational awareness at the external borders of the European Union which is used by Frontex to conduct its operational activities and to develop risk analyses. The disclosure of this information would hamper the effectiveness of Frontex operations and jeopardise the efforts carried out by the European Union and Member States to curtail criminal activities at the external borders. It would thus benefit criminal networks especially those involved in people smuggling and trafficking in human beings, which would put the life of migrants in danger. Hence, the disclosure of the information pertaining to this variable would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and has to be refused based on Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Operational briefings were carried out at the beginning of the deployment rotations and debriefing at their end, according to the operational plan. [REDACTED]

The overall cooperation between stakeholders was evaluated as being on a good level.

4.1.4. Operational cooperation

Cooperation between the host TC and participating MS

At working level, communication between Albania and the home MS was well established in overall terms and information was exchanged, when required, in a smooth manner. Taking into consideration that this type of JO was not organised before, the level of communication was considered efficient and well implemented. The operational communication between Albania and home MS was actively supported by the operational team achieving satisfactory level outcome.

[REDACTED] On the other hand, [REDACTED] enhanced their active engagement and commitment regarding the implementation of activities within the JO.

Cooperation between national authorities in host TC

The Albanian State Police (Department for Border Migration) had the leading role in the implementation of the JO. There was no direct involvement of other local authorities.

Cooperation with other Third countries

JO FOA WB 2019 in Albania invited the WB Countries having concluded negotiations for Status Agreements to participate in the JO as observers. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Deployed Third Country observers highly appreciated the readiness of the Albanian authorities to share their experience/knowledge related to the functioning of the first fully-fledged operational activities hosted by a TC and especially the implementation of the IBM concept in practice.

Cooperation with other Union agencies and bodies or international organizations

The cooperation with UNHCR was developed and enhanced in the course of the implementation of JO FOA WB 2019 in Albania. UNHCR actively participated [REDACTED], in the operational briefings organised [REDACTED] Moreover, the cooperation was further enhanced after the opening of the New Registration and Temporary Accommodation Centre for irregular migrants on 29 October 2019, where JDT could perform their tasks.

Frontex coordination role

[REDACTED]

Commented [MW16]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information regarding the modus operandi of law enforcement officials performing border control and/or coast guard duties. Disclosing such information would expose the working methods applied in ongoing and future operations, thus obstructing their effectiveness in prevention of cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In consequence, it would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and thus, cannot be disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

[Redacted]

Commented [KB17]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information regarding the modus operandi of law enforcement officials performing border control and/or coast guard duties. Disclosing such information would expose the working methods applied in ongoing and future operations, thus obstructing their effectiveness in prevention of cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In consequence, it would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and thus, cannot be disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

4.1.5. Resources deployed

Resources deployed by the Participating Member States

JO FOA WB 2019 in Albania received a consistent support from MS [Redacted]

Commented [MW18]: The non-disclosed parts contain information regarding the number and profiles of officers and technical equipment deployed in the operational area. Disclosing such information would be tantamount to disclosing the weaknesses and strengths of Frontex operations and pose a risk to their effectiveness. As a result, the course of ongoing and future similar operations would be hampered, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. Consequently, the disclosure of such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security as laid down Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) 1049/2001.

Resources deployed by the Participating Third Countries

During the implementation phase, the JO received and deployed [Redacted]

Frontex owned, leased and co-owned equipment

Frontex equipment deployed within the JO were used [Redacted]

Host Member States / Third Countries resources co-financed by Frontex

[Redacted]

Major developments and challenges identified in regard respective resources

The main development in terms of Frontex coordinated activities was the launch of a fully-fledged joint operation with executive powers on the territory of a third country, in this case Albania. The Agency together with the strong support of the local authorities developed the coordinating structure of the joint operation and provided good working conditions for JO implementation.

[Redacted]

Commented [KW19]: The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

[REDACTED]

4.2. Situational Awareness

4.2.1. General assessment of the situation

Threats and risks, modi operandi and trends identified at the Greek - Albanian land border

In the FOA WB 2019 in Albania, 7630 migrant apprehensions were reported in 1 521 incidents. In addition, the Albanian authorities reported the apprehension of 21 people smugglers. The nationalities of the people smugglers arrested [REDACTED]. The top nationalities of irregular migrants apprehended were Syrian (2 460), Iraqi (2 370), Moroccan (969), Algerian (437) and Palestinian (301).

In Albania, the three BCUs with the most irregular migrant apprehensions were [REDACTED]

Operational area	Incidents	Irregular migrants	People smugglers
[REDACTED]	1 277	6 330	18
[REDACTED]	238	1 278	3
[REDACTED]	4	17	-
[REDACTED]	1	4	-

Modi operandi and people smuggling

[REDACTED]

Commented [MW20]: The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

The non-disclosed part contains detailed information regarding the modus operandi of criminal networks involved in the smuggling and migrants and trafficking in human beings. Its disclosure would jeopardize the work of law enforcement officials and pose a hazard to the course of ongoing and future operations aimed at curtailing the activities of such networks, ultimately obstructing their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime as well as to prevent unauthorized border crossings. The disclosure would thus undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security as laid down in Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) 1049/2001.

4.2.2. Information gathering and exchange

Assessment of the quality of information gathered

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Information flow and reporting

In total, 187 [REDACTED] reports were received during the FOA 2019 WB in Albania, submitted/uploaded to JORA [REDACTED] (99 conducted in the operational area of [REDACTED] and 88 in [REDACTED]).

Nationality	Count
Iraqi	47
Syrian	42
Blank (no nationality reported)	33
Moroccan	22
Algerian	10
Afghan	6
Iranian	5
Turkish	33

The level of cooperation with the Albanian authorities, the appointed TLs and IOs can be assessed as good.

[REDACTED]

During the JO, several short debriefing workshops and training sessions were provided by the operational analyst to the JDTs deployed in the operational area. These meetings concerned cooperation and information exchange between the JDTs and the OA.

Reporting and information exchange

The exchange of the information was carried out in accordance with the Operational Plan.

The Frontex Situation Centre (FSC) had the responsibility to manage close to real time data processing by collecting information, validating incident reports in JORA and providing the situational picture by producing and disseminating [REDACTED].

During the implementation phase, FSC was available 24/7 and was reinforced with support officers deployed by participating MS to Frontex HQ. In addition, [REDACTED] were deployed to the [REDACTED] to support reporting within the JO.

Commented [MW21]: The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

The non-disclosed part contains detailed information regarding the modus operandi of law enforcement officials performing border control and/or coast guard duties. Disclosing such information would expose the working methods applied in ongoing and future operations, thus obstructing their effectiveness in prevention of cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In consequence, it would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and thus, cannot be disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

Commented [KW22]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information related to reporting tools and methods used by law enforcement officials to conduct border control tasks and counter criminal activities. Its disclosure would jeopardize the implementation of ongoing and future operations, and thus facilitate irregular migration and trafficking in human beings as the effectiveness of law enforcement measures would be significantly reduced. As disclosing this information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security, this part is not disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

JORA was used to exchange operational information with all relevant Joint Operation participants, making use of a [REDACTED]. A constantly updated situational picture was provided through [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]

In accordance with the Operational Plan, the JO was created in JORA properly and within the deadline. The reporting structure was largely respondent to the operational needs, and the incident template for the data collection was created on time. During the operational phase altogether 1521 incidents were reported to FSC within the JO [REDACTED]. More detailed reporting performance results are shown in pie charts which can be found under Fact Sheets.

During the operation [REDACTED] Serious Incidents were reported to FSC. Serious Incidents were reported in proper time and according to the established SIR procedure. No major issues were identified on the implementation of SIR templates and reporting procedures.

During the operation, remote support in regard to the JORA application was provided by [REDACTED].

Commented [KW23]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information related to reporting tools and methods used by law enforcement officials to conduct border control tasks and counter criminal activities. Its disclosure would jeopardize the implementation of ongoing and future operations, and thus facilitate irregular migration and trafficking in human beings as the effectiveness of law enforcement measures would be significantly reduced. As disclosing this information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security, this part is not disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

Commented [KB24]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information regarding the modus operandi of law enforcement officials performing border control and/or coast guard duties. Disclosing such information would expose the working methods applied in ongoing and future operations, thus obstructing their effectiveness in prevention of cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In consequence, it would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and thus, cannot be disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

5. Main conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions	Recommendations
Supporting Response	
The border surveillance measures implemented within the FOA 2019 WB in Albania increased the capacity of the Albanian authorities to detect and prevent illegal migration and cross-border crime	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Commented [MW25]: The information related to this part is also used for the development of risk analyses, which constitute a specific form of internal decision-making processes based on the intelligence derived from previous and presently ongoing activities and have a bearing on the conduct of current and future operations. Being an important base for determining the strategic orientation of the Agency, the possibility to conduct such analyses without interference is crucial for Frontex to effectively exercise its mandate. Consequently, releasing this information would enable third parties to gain insights into this decision making process and, with ascertainable likelihood, result in depriving Frontex of the possibility to conduct such analyses wholly independently, free from any external pressure or third-party influence. In sum, releasing this information would seriously undermine Frontex internal decision making-processes. As no overriding public interest that is objective and general in nature and not indistinguishable from individual or private interests for the release of this information is ascertainable in the present case, information pertaining to this variable cannot be released based on Article 4(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
In order to efficiently support the implementation of the JO [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
During the implementation of the JO, [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Commented [MW26]: The non-disclosed parts cannot be released as it refers to details crucial for situational awareness at the external borders of the European Union which is used by Frontex to conduct its operational activities and to develop risk analyses. The disclosure of this information would hamper the effectiveness of Frontex operations and jeopardise the efforts carried out by the European Union and Member States to curtail criminal activities at the external borders. It would thus benefit criminal networks especially those involved in people smuggling and trafficking in human beings, which would put the life of migrants in danger. Hence, the disclosure of the information pertaining to this variable would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security and has to be refused based on Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

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Situational Awareness	
The quality of reporting and validation of incidents in JORA was satisfactory. [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Commented [KW27]: The non-disclosed part contains detailed information related to reporting tools and methods used by law enforcement officials to conduct border control tasks and counter criminal activities. Its disclosure would jeopardize the implementation of ongoing and future operations, and thus facilitate irregular migration and trafficking in human beings as the effectiveness of law enforcement measures would be significantly reduced. As disclosing this information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security, this part is not disclosed pursuant to Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

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[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Development	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Commented [KW28]: The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

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[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Commented [MW31]: The non-disclosed parts contain information regarding the number and profiles of officers and technical equipment deployed in the operational area. Disclosing such information would be tantamount to disclosing the weaknesses and strengths of Frontex operations and pose a risk to their effectiveness. As a result, the course of ongoing and future similar operations would be hampered, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. Consequently, the disclosure of such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security as laid down Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) 1049/2001.

2.1.3. Frontex owned / leased / co-owned technical equipment

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

2.2. Host Third Country Resources

Human resources

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

2.3. Third Country deployments

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

3. Financial information

Table 1: JO Flexible Operational Activities - Western Balkans 2019 Operational Budget distribution (EUR)

Resources type	Amount (EUR)*
Human resources deployed	3,180,199
Light technical equipment deployed	232,490
Total Operational Budget	3,412,689

* The amounts are reflecting the state of financial settlements with MS/SAC and Third Countries on 20 February 2020

4. Figures and maps

The reporting performance shown below measures the timely transmission of operational data to Frontex: the time from the occurrence of an incident until insertion into JORA, validation on national level and acceptance by FSC. The timeframe given is 24 hours (1 day). During the operational phase 1521 incidents were reported in JORA.

Figure 1: Initial insertion of incidents into JORA

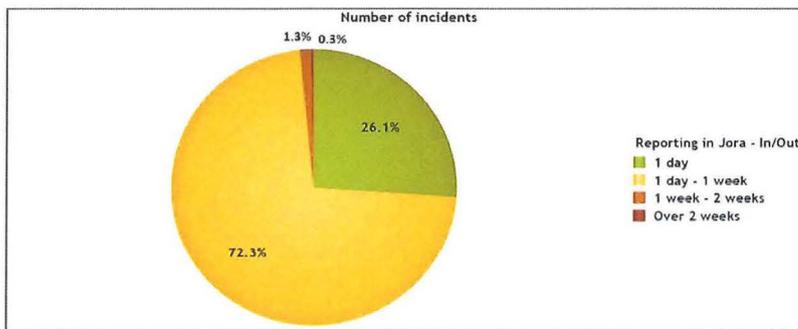


Figure 2: Intermediate validation on national level (LCC/ICC)

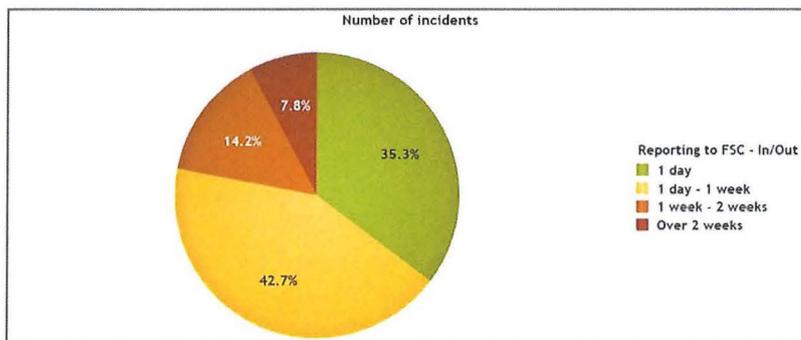


Figure 3: Summary of the entire reporting sequence, from insertion until FSC validation

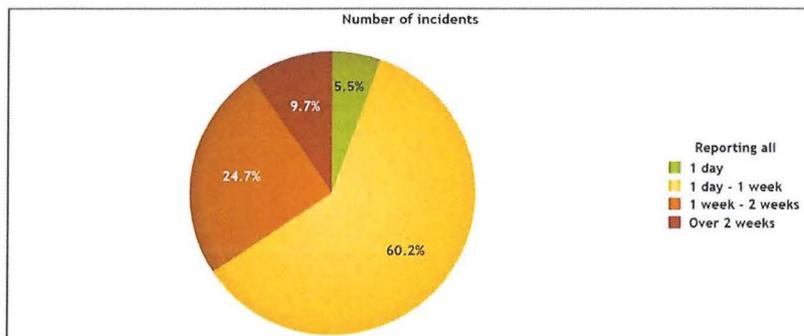


Figure 4: Migrant apprehensions at the GRC-ALB border from 22 May 2019 to 29 January 2020 by month

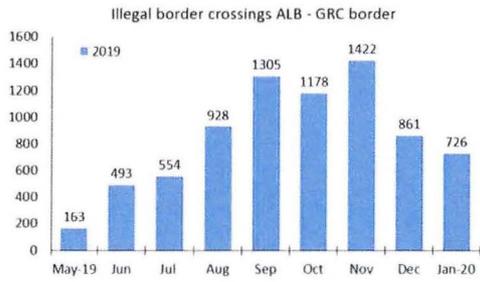
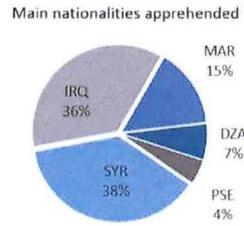
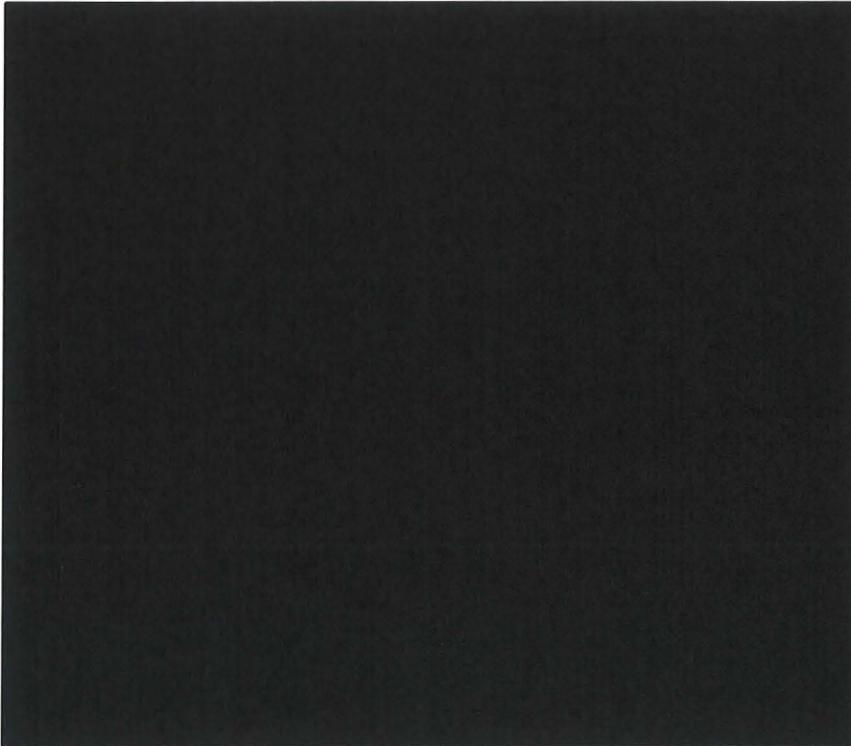


Figure 5: Main nationalities apprehended during the JO



Operational map:



Commented [MW32]: The non-disclosed parts refer to details of the operational area and cannot be released. As ongoing operations tend to cover similar operational areas as the operations conducted in preceding years, disclosing details of previous operational areas would be tantamount to disclosing the current state of play. This would provide smuggling and other criminal networks with intelligence, enabling them to change their modus operandi, which would ultimately put the life of migrants in danger. Consequently, the course of ongoing and future operations of similar nature would be hampered by depriving the operations of any strategy and element of surprise, ultimately defeating their purpose to counter and prevent cross-border crime and unauthorized border crossings. In this light, the disclosure of documents containing such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security in the sense of Article 4(1)(a) first indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

5. Other supporting activities

No other activities.

ANNEX - Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Spelling
AFIS	Automated Fingerprint Identification System
ALDO	Advanced-Level Document Officer
BCP	Border Crossing Point
BIWAR	Biweekly Analytical Reports
BSO	Border Surveillance Officer
CM	Cultural Mediator (Interpreter)
CO	Commanding Officer
COM	European Commission
CPB	Coastal Patrol Boat
CPC	Central Police Coordinator
CPV	Coastal Patrol Vessel
DSR	Daily Situation Report
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
ECGFO	European Coast Guard Function Officer
EFCA	European Fishery Control Agency
EFS	Eurosur Fusion Service
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
EU	European Union
EURODAC	European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database
EUROPOL	European Union Law and Enforcement Agency
EUROSUR	European External Border Surveillance System
EURTF	European Union Regional Task Force
FASS	Frontex Aerial Surveillance Services
FCO	Frontex Coordinating Officer
FER	Frontex Evaluation Report
FLO	Frontex Liaison Officer
FOC	Frontex Operational Coordinator
FOSS	Frontex-One-Stop-Shop
FPS	Frontex Positioning System
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
FSC	Frontex Situation Centre
FSO	Frontex Support Officer
FRO	Fundamental Rights Officer
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency

FWA	Fixed Wing Airplane
HCG	Hellenic Coast Guard
HELO	Helicopter
HP	Hellenic Police
HR	Human resources
ICC	International Coordination Centre
IFC	Information Fusion Centre
Interpol	International Criminal Police Organization
IO	Intelligence Officer
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JCB	Joint Coordinating Board
JDT	Joint Debriefing Team
JO	Joint Operation
JORA	Joint Operations Reporting Application
JRCC	Joint Rescue Coordination Centre
JST	Joint Screening Team
LCC	Local Coordination Centre
LPC	Local Police Coordinator
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MAS	Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance
MRCC	Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre
MS	Member State
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCC	National Coordination Centre
NFPOC	National Frontex Point of Contact
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NO	National Official
OA	Operational Analyst
OLO-TE	Operational Liaison Officer- Technical Equipment
OM	Operational Manager
Opera	Operational Resources Management System
OPLAN	Operational Plan
OPV	Offshore Patrol Vessel
OT	Operational Team
PC	Patrol Car
PeDRA	Personal Data for Risk Analysis
R	

RAU	Risk Analysis Unit
RCC	Regional Coordination Centre
RFO	Registration and Fingerprinting Officer
REX	Frontex Rapid-intervention Exercise
RPAS	Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems Services
SAC	Schengen Associated Countries
SAR	Search and Rescue
SI	Serious Incident
SIR	Serious Incident Reporting
SIS	Schengen Information System
SLTD	Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TE	Technical Equipment
TL	Team Leader
TM	Members of the Teams
sTM	Team Members seconded to the Agency
TVV	Thermo Vision Vehicle
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WAO	Weekly Analytical Overview
WAR	Weekly Analytical Report
WAU	Weekly Analytical Update