

Overview of general tasks of the Frontex

Senior Liaison Officer to the Western Balkan region

1. BACKGROUND

Article 55 of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation¹ provides the legal ground for deployments of Frontex Liaison Officers (FLO) to third countries. The FLOs may only be deployed to third countries in which border management practices comply with minimum human rights standards. Within the framework of the external relations policy of the Union, priority for the deployment of liaison officers is given to those third countries which, on the basis of a risk analysis, constitute a country of origin or transit regarding illegal immigration.

Before the Management Board of Frontex may take a decision to deploy an FLO to a third country, it is subject to receiving a prior opinion on the deployment from the Commission. The European Parliament must be informed about any new deployments.

The deployment of the FLO to the Western Balkan region (comprising of Albania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo²) was approved by the Management Board decision 36/2016 of 23 November 2016. The FLO was effectively deployed to the region on 1 September 2017, with her main office in the premises of the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia.

Other FLOs to third countries are deployed to Turkey (Ankara) and Niger (Niamey). In 2019, Frontex plans further deployments to North and West Africa. One more FLO to Western Balkans is envisaged as well, splitting the responsibility for cooperation with the region between two FLOs, yet the Management Board decision approving this step is pending.

2. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As described by the Regulation, the tasks of the Agency's liaison officers include, in compliance with Union law and respecting fundamental rights, establishing and maintaining contacts with the competent authorities of the third countries to which they are assigned with a view to contributing to the prevention of and fight against illegal immigration and the return of returnees. FLOs coordinate their activities with Union delegations and are a part of the local and regional cooperation networks of immigration liaison officers and security experts of the Union and of the Member States.

Reporting to the Head of the International and European Cooperation Division of Frontex (and in specific areas under the supervision of the Head of EU Delegation to Serbia), the main duties of the Frontex Liaison Officer to the Western Balkan region are:

Operational role

- Facilitate and support the implementation of the working arrangements in place with the competent authorities of Serbia and the other non-EU countries in the Western Balkan region.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 of 14 September 2016 on the European Border and Coast Guard (OJ L 251, 16.09.2016, p. 1).

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

- Facilitate and encourage the operational cooperation and coordination between Frontex and the Western Balkan region countries in line with the Agency's mandate and Annual Programme of Work.
- Establish and maintain contacts with the relevant authorities/institutions in the Western Balkan region involved in border management, migration or cross-border crime with the aim to foster operational cooperation, facilitate information/intelligence sharing and support joint analytical work (e.g. under the umbrella of the Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network).
- Monitor the border management situation including cross-border crime and migration flows that transit through or towards the region and ultimately towards the EU, contributing to maintaining an updated situational picture.
- Produce field assessments, reports, letters, briefing notes as well as ad hoc responses to enquiries or requests for information from Frontex Headquarters.
- Monitor and, where necessary, report on key developments that could impact on the EU's external borders and internal security.
- Using their expertise, contribute to and participate in events, projects or activities which Frontex is managing, supporting or invited to.
- Facilitate and support the implementation of possible bilateral cooperation between the EU and Western Balkan region countries.
- Support the implementation of Frontex actions carried out in the territory of the Western Balkan region countries where and when appropriate.

Liaison role

- Liaise with the designated Frontex Points of Contact in the Western Balkan region.
- Liaise and exchange information with immigration liaison officers, airport liaison officers, police liaison officers, JHA/immigration attachés, diplomatic and consular staff (including Schengen local cooperation) of the respective EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries' diplomatic missions accredited to the Western Balkan region countries.
- Liaise with international organisations and EU bodies in the region.
- Establish and maintain contacts with ministries, civil society, regional organisations and other local stakeholders in the field of border management, migration and cross-border crime, including prevention of terrorism. Cooperate with the European External Action Service/EU Delegations in the region.

Supporting role

- Coordinate and assist in the organisation of meetings, trainings, workshops, seminars and other activities held by Frontex in the Western Balkan region.
- Contribute to the implementation of the Council Regulation (EC) No 377/2004 of 19 February 2004 on the creation of an immigration liaison officer's network and participate as appropriate in the immigration liaison officers network meetings held in the Western Balkan region.
- Support the implementation of technical assistance projects led by Frontex in the Western Balkan region, as might be required.