

## 1<sup>st</sup> JHA Agencies Network Meeting, 26 March 2021

VC organised by Frontex

### Tour the table on key developments

#### COVID-19 adjustments

Last year, Frontex had introduced sustainable crisis management and business continuity measures with the Crisis Cell and the high-level Strategic Crisis Response Team operating 24/7, including stand-by duty during the weekends. The Agency continued to support operations and activities in the field and ensure the safety of its staff. As of mid-March 2021, following the Polish government's decision to implement the so-called "amber phase", the Agency reduced staff presence to 15% and divided it into two shifts. Current governmental recommendations encourage teleworking to reduce contagion risks.

#### Standing Corps

As of February 2021, the Agency had 503 Standing Corps Category 1 officers, out of which 253 have already been trained, and the remaining 250 currently being trained. Out of the 253 trained officers, 109 were deployed from mid-January. As regards Category 2, 370 officers were selected and planned for deployments at the beginning of January. Due to the COVID 19 crisis, some postponements and resignations took place, which impacted on the recruitment and training of SC members, and affected the deployments in turn.

Now 1345 personnel in Fx operations.

The dedicated Task Force Deployment Management, established in order to support the building up of SC, is also to become the division responsible for the management of Standing Corps officers. By the end of 2021, the Agency will be organised into 7 divisions as follows:

- Situational Awareness and Monitoring Division
- International and European Cooperation Division
- Operational Response Division
- European Centre for Returns Division
- Capacity Building Division
- Deployment Management Division
- ETIAS Central Unit Division
- Financial, Digital and Security Division
- Governance Support Centre

In addition, 3 Deputy Executive Directors will be recruited this year - with a Deputy Executive Director for Returns, a Deputy Executive Director for Standing Corps Management and a Deputy Executive Director for EBCG Information Management and Processes. The vacancies were published on Wednesday 24 March in [the Official Journal](#). The closing date for application is 23 April 2021, 12.00 noon Brussels time.

#### The implementation of the International Cooperation Strategy

The ICS 2021-2023 was adopted by the Management Board in December 2020 and was implemented as of January 2021. It encompasses four strategic objectives, namely the reinforcement of dialogue and structure cooperation frameworks, increased technical and operational exchanges, the strengthening of TCs capacities for border management and returns and the contribution to EU external action policy and the promotion of European IBM standards. It also entails one overarching goal, which is the effective management of EU external borders and the enhancement of border security. However, the implementation of the ICS depends on the shared ownership of the

Agency's partners - Frontex is to continue its cooperation via dialogues, consultations, cooperation plans and roundtables with the interested stakeholders.

## **The state of play of the cooperation with TCs, EU and international organisations**

As regards cooperation with EU stakeholders, several Working Arrangements were signed as follows:

- in October, a Working Arrangement was signed between Frontex and CEPOL, to renew the Agencies' cooperation and harmonize law enforcement training and ensure a mutual understanding of the law enforcement culture.
- In November, Frontex and Europol signed an agreement to exchange Liaison Officers in order to increase the information exchange between the two Agencies.
- In January, a Working Arrangement was signed with Operation EUNAVFORMED IRINI to support the information gathering through Frontex risk analysis activities and to tackle the challenges in the Central Mediterranean and ensure security at EU borders.
- In March, a Tripartite Working Arrangement between Frontex, EFCA and EMSA was signed for a duration of four years. This Working Agreement is aimed at structuring the three Agencies' cooperation and supporting national authorities in carrying out coast guard functions and provides a solid ground for activities such as exchange of information, environmental protection, search and rescue, border control or fisheries control.

Frontex also signed Working Arrangements with Third Countries as follows:

- In October, the revised WA with the Republic of Albania and the revised WA with Georgia,
- In March, the WA with [REDACTED].

Europol, euLISA, FRA, Eurojust - among the ones to be developed this year

## **Frontex Liaison Officers**

As of March 2021, Frontex has a network of 17 FLOs. All FLOs to MSs have been deployed, with 11 FLOs covering 26 EU MS and 4 Schengen Associated Countries. In addition, Frontex continues to extend its network of FLOs in TCs with the recent deployment of a second FLO to the WB region based in Tirana, while the first FLO deployed to this region continues her duties from her seat in Belgrade. Frontex has 3 more FLO in Turkey, Niger and Senegal and is studying possibilities to extend the geographical mandate of some FLOs already present on the African continent. Furthermore, Frontex is about to deploy a FLO to the EaP region, with place of deployment in Kyiv. This latest member of the network took up her duties on 16 March and is currently undergoing her pre-deployment training. Aside from deploying FLO, the Regulation also foresees the capacity to receive Liaison Officers: currently, one LO from EASO is deployed at Frontex HQ, and the Agency has completed an agreement with Europol for an exchange of LOs. The 2019 Regulation also allows MS/SAC to deploy LOs to the Agency. It is expected that the first LOs from MS will be hosted at the Agency's HQ in 2021. MSs are allowed to deploy up to two LOs to the Agency but are under no obligation to do so.

## **The Management Board Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal Operational Aspects of Operations in the Aegean Sea presented its final report**

At the last Extraordinary Management Board meeting which was held upon COM request, the final report of the WG on Fundamental Rights and Legal Operational Aspects in the Aegean Sea found that there has been no violation of fundamental rights in the alleged pushbacks reported by the media. This final report issued several recommendations, amongst which is the inclusion of a transparent reporting mechanism in every Operational Plan, and the documentation of the detailed allocation of responsibilities within the Agency, in order to improve the Frontex reporting system. The Executive Director took on board these recommendations by providing a roadmap of the steps the Agency will take in order to make the reporting mechanism more efficient.

## **The Frontex Fundamental Rights Strategy**

The Fundamental Rights Strategy was adopted by the Management Board in February, repealing the 2011 strategy to better align with the provisions prescribed by the Regulation 2019/1896 as regards fundamental rights. An Action Plan has been envisaged and will be presented to external stakeholders in April, which adoption is foreseen to take place

in June, after the Fundamental Rights Officer has been formally appointed by the Executive Director. Frontex is now also reporting on third countries' participation in Frontex activities to the Consultative Forum.