

European Border and Coast Guard

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The Commission has presented a communication regarding a European Border and Coast Guard and the effective management of Europe's external borders.

Firstly, it recalled that with the decision to share a common internal area of free movement comes a shared responsibility to provide high and consistent standards of border management and security at the external borders. Citizens' confidence in this collective ability to manage common external borders has been put to the test by the events of this year and in particular by the unprecedented rise in flows of migrants and refugees.

The crisis has exposed **weaknesses and gaps in existing border management mechanisms**, which have proved insufficient to guarantee effective and integrated border management. The report exposed the limitations of Frontex such as inadequate resources in terms of staff and equipment, an inability to initiate and carry out return or border management operations and the absence of an explicit role to conduct search and rescue operations.

This communication, and the measures which accompany it, provide for a **strong and unified policy on the management of the EU's external borders** based on the principle of shared responsibility.

The main areas concern:

- **A European Border and Coast Guard:** this will be set up to ensure the effective application of strong common border management standards and to provide for operational support and intervention where necessary to promptly respond to emerging crises at the external border. The European Border and Coast Guard will bring together a European Border and Coast Guard Agency built from Frontex and the Member States' authorities responsible for border management, who will continue to exercise the day-to-day management of the external border. National coastguard authorities are also part of the European Border and Coast Guard in so far as they perform maritime border surveillance. The role of the Agency to contribute to search and rescue operations will now be significantly strengthened.
- **Effective implementation of integrated border management:** this goes beyond border control performed solely at the external border. It includes measures in third countries, measures with neighbouring third countries, and measures within the area of free movement, including return of irregular migrants from the EU to their countries of origin. Proper border management is also supported by a number of elements such as strong and regular risk analysis, improved inter-agency cooperation and the use of state-of-the-art technology.
- **A reserve of European Border Guards:** the Agency needs to have at its immediate and direct disposal a sufficient number of well-trained experts with the appropriate profiles as well as the relevant technical equipment. Currently, contributions of assets and experts to Frontex are, in principle, provided on a voluntary basis. This method of working, in combination with the current migration crisis, has recently led to shortages which have prevented Frontex from performing its operational tasks at maximum capacity. Such deficiencies must be remedied. To secure the capacity of the Agency to perform its tasks in responding to emergency situations, a **rapid reserve pool** of experts will be created as a standing corps put at the disposal of the Agency.
- **Return Office:** improving the effectiveness of return procedures has been recognised as a key objective of migration management. An enhanced role for the European Border and Coast Guard

Agency in the field of return will improve the capacity of the EU to successfully return illegally staying third-country nationals. A dedicated Return Office will be created within the structure of the Agency to cooperate with the Member States in conducting identification and return procedures.

- **Complaint mechanism:** it is important to have an adequate complaint mechanism in case a person considers himself or herself to have been subject to a violation of fundamental rights in the course of operational engagement by the Agency.
- **Modification of the Schengen Borders Code:** controls at the external borders need to be reinforced in order to be able to identify such persons and minimise risks to the internal security of the Schengen area. The Commission is proposing a targeted modification to the Schengen Borders Code as regards checks of EU citizens against databases such as the Schengen Information System, the Stolen and Lost Travel Documents Database as well as relevant national systems. The proposed amendments will make systematic checks of EU citizens against databases at all external borders (air, sea and land) – which are today possible based on a risk assessment – compulsory.
- **A new European travel document for return:** the current EU system to return irregular migrants is not sufficiently effective. The Commission is proposing to establish a new European travel document for the return of third-country nationals, based on a uniform format and using enhanced technical and security features that can ensure a wider acceptance by third countries.

To conclude, the Commission calls on the European Parliament and the Council to give the highest priority to these proposals, and in particular to the proposed Regulation on the [European Border and Coast Guard](#), so that the confidence of citizens in Europe's external borders can be restored swiftly and the integrity of the Schengen area of free movement without internal borders can be guaranteed.