EU/North Macedonia Agreement: operational activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in the Republic of North Macedonia

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PURPOSE: to conclude, on behalf of the Union, of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of North Macedonia on operational activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in the Republic of North Macedonia.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: one of the tasks of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency is to cooperate with third countries in relation to the areas covered by the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1896) including through the possible operational deployment of border management teams in third countries. Specifically, the Agency, as part of the European Border and Coast Guard, is to ensure European integrated border management, one component of which is cooperation with third countries in the areas covered by the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation focusing in particular on neighbouring third countries and countries of origin or transit for irregular migration. The Agency may cooperate with the authorities of third countries competent in matters covered by the Regulation to the extent required for the fulfilment of its tasks and may carry out actions related to European integrated border management on the territory of a third country subject to the agreement of that third country.

Pursuant to Article 73(3) of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 on the European Border and Coast Guard, in circumstances requiring the deployment of border management teams from the standing corps of the European Border and Coast Guard to a third country where the members of the teams will exercise executive powers, a **status agreement** is to be concluded by the Union with the third country.

On 29 July 2022, the Commission received the Council authorisation to open negotiations with North Macedonia for an agreement on operational activities to be carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in North Macedonia.

The European Commission, on behalf of the European Union, and North Macedonia held negotiations on the agreement on 25 August 2022. The Commission considers that the objectives set by the Council in its negotiating directives were attained and that the agreement is acceptable for the Union.

CONTENT: therefore, the Commission proposal seeks to conclude, on behalf of the EU, **the Agreement between the EU and North Macedonia on operational activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in North Macedonia**. Reinforcing controls along the borders of North Macedonia will positively impact the management of the Union’s external borders as well as the borders of North Macedonia itself.

The status agreement will allow for the deployment in North Macedonia of European Border and Coast Guard teams by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, using all the possibilities offered by Regulation (EU) 2019/1896. Without such a tool, only bilateral deployments by Member States can be used to develop and implement European integrated border management and support North Macedonia in managing a significant number of migrants seeking to transit its territory. A **common approach** is therefore needed to better manage the borders of North Macedonia.

The conclusion of a status agreement would tie into the wider objectives and priorities for cooperation as set out in the European Union's Stabilisation and Association Agreement with North Macedonia. It should also support the wider efforts and commitments of the European Union to further develop capabilities in order to contribute to crisis response management and promoting convergence on foreign and security matters between the Union and North Macedonia.