

FRONT**X**



Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2021

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Glossary

ABAC	Accrual Based Accounting
ABC	Automated Border Control
ABN	Annual Bilateral Negotiations
ABNet	Electronic resource management tool supporting Frontex – coordinated operational activities
AC	Air conditioner
AD	Administrative Grades
AFIC	Africa–Frontex Intelligence Community
AFIS	Automated Fingerprint Identification System
AIMC	Arab Interior Ministers' Council
AIPN	Staff Regulations on the appointing authority
ALDO	Advanced Level Document Officer
AO	Authorising Officer
AOF	Alternate Office Facility
API	Advance Passenger Information
APP	Annual Procurement Plan
AST	Assistant (staff grade)
ATO	Authorisation to Operate
AWP	Annual Work Programme
BA	Baseline Assessment
BoMIC	Border Management Innovation Centre
BMVI	Border Management and Visa Instrument
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
BSRBCC	Baltic Sea region Border control Cooperation
CA	Contract Agent
CAP	Capability Programming Office

CAT	Category
CBC	Cross-Border Crime
CBCDO	Cross-Border Crime Detection Officer
CBD	Capacity Building Division
CCC	Common Core Curriculum
CCMT	Central Contract Management Team
CCWP	Customs Cooperation Working Party
CDP	Capability Development Planning
CED	Centre of Excellence for Combating Document Fraud
CELBET	Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border Expert Team
CEPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
CF	Consultative Forum
CGF	Coast Guard Functions
CGFO	Coast Guard Functions Officer
CGGS	Coast Guard Global Summit
CIRAM	Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model
CISE	Common Information Sharing Environment
CM	Complaints Mechanism
COMM	External communication & information
COSI	Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security
COVID-19	SARS-Cov-2 Coronavirus
CRO	Collecting Return Operation
CS	Corporate Services
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy

CU	Central Unit
CVAM	Common Vulnerability Assessment Methodology
DA	Discharge Authority
DCP	Direct Contact Points (in return matters)
DED	Deputy Executive Director
DIG	Digital Services Unit
DG	Directorate-General
DG BUDG	Directorate-General for Budget
DG CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
DG DEFIS	Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space
DG GROW	Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
DG JRC	Directorate-General Joint Research Centre
DG JUST	Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
DG TAXUD	Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union
DG MARE	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DG HR	Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security
DG DIGIT	Directorate-General for Informatics
DIS	Document Inspection Systems
DMD	Deployment Management Division
DOC	SYSPEP Document management module
DP	Data Protection
DPO	Data Protection Officer
DPR	Data Protection Regulation
EAP	Eastern Partnership
EASA	European Aviation Safety Agency

EAU	Executive Affairs Unit
EBCG	European Border and Coast Guard
EBTP	Extended Basic Training Programme
EC	European Commission
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ECHA	European Chemicals Agency
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
ECGFF	European Coast Guard Functions Forum
ECN	EUROSUR Communication Network
ECRET	European Centre for Return
ED	Executive Director
EDA	European Defence Agency
EDPS	European Data Protection Supervisor
EEAS	European External Action Service
EES	Entry Exit System
EFCA	European Fisheries Control Agency
EFS	EUROSUR Fusion Services
EG	Expert Groups
EIBM	European Integrated Border Management
EMD	European Maritime Day
EMPACT	European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
EO	European Ombudsman
EP	European Parliament
e-RCT	e-recruitment
ERRIN	European Return and Reintegration Network
ETIAS	European Travel Information and Authorisation System
ETIAS CU	ETIAS Central Unit

ETIAS TF	ETIAS Task Force
EU	European Union
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EUI	European Union Institution
EU OSHA	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
EUAM	European Union Advisory Mission
EUAN	EU Agencies Network
EUBAM	European Union Border Assistance Mission
EUCI	European Union Classified Information training
EUCAP	European Union Capacity-Building – Civilian Mission
eu-LISA	European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice
EUNAVFOR	European Union Naval Force
EURLO	European Return Liaison Officers
EURODAC	European Dactyloscopy
EUROFRONT European Frontiers	
Europol	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
EUROSUR	European Surveillance System
EURTF	EU Regional Task Force
EUSA	European University Sports Association
EUSR	Staff Regulations of Officials of European Union
EVAL	Evaluation and impact assessment
EXP-DOC	Expert Group on Document Control (EXP-DOC Group)
FADO	False and Authentic Documents Online
FAR	Frontex Application for Return
FDA	Frontex Document Alert

FDD	Field Deployment Unit
FDS	Financial, Digital and Security Division
FFR	Frontex Financial Regulation
FIELDS	Frontex INTERPOL Electronic Document System
FIN	Financial Services Unit
FIN/CONT	Accounting, finance, non-operational procurement, contract management and quality management, internal audit and control
FISROP	Frontex Internal Structure and Rules of Procedure
FLO	Frontex Liaison Officer
FOA	Flexible Operational Activities
FOCC	Frontex Operational Coordination Centre
FP	Focal Point
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
FR	Fundamental Rights
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
FRESO	Forced Return Escort and Support Officers
FRO	Fundamental Rights Officer
FROM	Fundamental Rights Monitor
FSA	Frontex Surveillance Aircraft
FSC	Frontex Situation Centre
FSWG	Frontex Scrutiny Working Group
FTSO	Frontex Tactical Support Officer
FWC	Framework contracts
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GEN COORD	General coordination
GEN OPER	General operational activities
GNI	Gross National Income
GSC	Governance Support Centre
HLRT	High-Level Round Table

HOA	Head of Administration
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resource
IA	Internal auditing and control
IAP	interoperability assessment programme
IAS	Internal Audit Service
IATO	Interim Authorisation to Operate
IBC	Illegal border crossing
IBM	Integrated Border Management
IBMTF	Integrated Border Management Task Force
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICF	Internal Control Framework
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICO	Inspection and Control Office
ICS	Internal Control System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEC	International and European Cooperation Division
IFC	Information Fusion Centre
ILO	Immigration Liaison Officer
IM	Identification missions
IMEX	Working Party on Integration, Migration and Expulsion
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPR	Intellectual Property Right
IRMA	Integrated Return Management Application
IR	Implementing Rules
IXIM	Working Party on JHA Information Exchange
ISA	Investigation Support Activities

IT	Information technologies
ITIL	Information Technology Infrastructure Library
JAD	Joint-Action Day
JAI	Justice and Home Affairs
JCP	Joint Coordination Platform
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
JHAAN	Justice and Home Affairs Agencies Network
JO	Joint Operation
JORA	Joint Operation Reporting Application
JRC	Joint Research Centre
KA	Key Activity
KPI	Key Performance indicators
LCCA	Life Cycle Cost Analyses
LEG	legal services sector
LES	Law Enforcement Sector
LEWP	Leaders to Working Party
LIBE	Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
LING	Linguistic activities
LOG	Logistics, including Facilities management and Security
LPU	Legal and Procurement Unit
MALE RPAS	Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System
MAOC-N	Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics
MAS	Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance
MB	Management Board
MED	Mediterranean
MIC-RAN	Maritime Intelligence Community Risk Analysis Network
MID	Multiple Identity Detection
MMO	Multipurpose Maritime Operations
MNITE	Minimum Number of Items of Technical Equipment

MOST-CBC	Mobile Operational Support Teams for counteracting Cross-Border Crime
MPF	Mobility Partnership Facility
MPR	media and public relations
MRCC	Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre
MS	Member State
MSS	Mobile Surveillance Systems
NACGF	North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum
NP	Negotiated procedure
OA	Operational Action
OAP	Operational Action Plan
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
OPC	Organised Property Crime
OPERA	Operational Resources Management Application
OPLAN	Operational Plan
OPS	Operations
ORD	Operational Response Division
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PAD	Public Access to Documents
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PGM M/IMPL	Programme management and implementation
PMO	The Paymaster Office
PRAN	Pre-Return Activities Network
PROC	Procurement sector
PRR	Post-Return and Reintegration
QCC	Quick Check Cards
RA	Risk Analysis
RASCI	Responsible, accountable, support, consulted, informed
RBI	Rapid Border Intervention

RECAMAS	Return Case Management System
REM	Remote Electronic Monitoring
RES DIR	Resource Director
RIAT	Reintegration Assistance Tool
RS	Return Specialist
RVA	Rapid Vulnerability Assessment
SAC	Schengen Associated Countries
SAMD	Situation Awareness and Monitoring Division
SAR	Search and Rescue
SAS	Statistical analysis software
SC	Standing corps
SC/OF	Specific contracts/order forms
SCIFA	Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum
SE	Simulation Exercises
SEACOP	Seaport Cooperation Project
SEC	Security
SEESAC	South-Eastern and Eastern Europe clearinghouse for the control of small arms and light weapons
SEMM	Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism
SG	Support Group
SIR	Serious Incident Report
SIS	Schengen Information System
SIENA	Secure Information Exchange Network Application
SLA	Service level agreement
SLS	Standard Level Service
SNE	Seconded National Experts
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPD	Single Programming Document
SQF	Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding
SURE	Sustainability and Resilience

SYSPER	Human Resource Management information system of the European Commission
SYSTAL	Talent Acquisition and Sourcing platform
TA	Temporary Agent
TC	Third Country
TCN	Third Country National
TE	Technical Equipment
TF	Task Force
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
TIM	SYSPER Time management module
TM	Team member
TO EIBM	Technical and Operational Strategy for European Integrated Border Management
TOP COORD	Top operational coordination
TWA	Tripartite working arrangement (Frontex, EMSA and EFCA)
TWP	Terrorism Working Party
UMF	Universal Message Format

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WCO	World Customs Organization
VA	Vulnerability Assessment
VAP	Vulnerability Assessment Platform
VAU	Vulnerability Assessment Unit
VAN	Vulnerability Assessment Network
VC	Virtual Conference
VIS	Visa Information System
WA	Working Arrangement
WB	Western Balkans
WCO	World Customs Organization
WG	Working Group
WG FRaLO	(Working group on) Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations in the Aegean Sea
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

Article 106(4)(d) of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation ⁽¹⁾ (hereinafter: 'Regulation (EU) 2019/1896' or 'the Regulation') stipulates that each year the Executive Director shall prepare the consolidated annual activity report on the Agency's activities and submit it to the Management Board. Article 100(2)(j) of the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 states that the Management Board shall adopt an annual activity report of Frontex for the previous year and forward it, by 1 July at the latest, to the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors.

This annual report follows the instructions received from the European Commission in the form of guidelines ⁽²⁾ and contains those new elements required. To guide the readers and recipients of the information the report has been divided into five main parts which form the annual activity report 2021, supplemented by 11 annexes.

The document begins with a reflection on the conditions and challenges at the political and policy level, followed by an executive summary complemented with the key achievements of the Agency during 2021. At the end the key conclusions are presented in the form of a synthetised list of attainments.

Part one of the report provides comprehensive information on the specific achievements measured against the activities set in the annual programme of work 2021 following the logical framework of the strategic and horizontal objectives set.

Part two of the document presents further details on the Agency's performance based on a series of aspects related to the governance and use of resources:

- work of the Management Board;
- major developments of the Agency;
- management of human and financial resources;
- efficiency and effectiveness of the internal control systems, including an overall assessment of the costs and benefits of controls;
- assessment by management.

Parts three to five are devoted to presenting conclusions on the internal control system of the Agency, the elements upon which the Authorising Officer bases his Declaration of Assurance.

The core document is supplemented by 11 annexes enhancing the information provided as to the use of resources as well as detailed information on specific aspects of the Agency's work during the year such as an evaluation of the results of return activities and with regard to the annual implementation of the tripartite working arrangement.

As stated in Article 47 and Article 50(7) of the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, the main activities in each of the strategic action areas also provide a comparative analysis of the results of evaluations of core operational activities with a view to enhancing the quality, coherence and effectiveness of future activities.

As stated in Article 48 of the Frontex Financial Regulation ⁽³⁾, the Authorising Officer shall report to the Management Board on the performance of his duties in the form of a consolidated annual activity report

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard (OJ L 295, 14.11.2019, p. 1).

⁽²⁾ C (2020) 2297 final, Communication from The Commission on the strengthening of the governance of Union Bodies under Article 70 of the Financial Regulation 2018/1046 and on the guidelines for the Single Programming Document and the Consolidated Annual Activity Report.

⁽³⁾ Management Board Decision No 19/2019 of 23 July 2019 adopting the Frontex Financial Regulation.

and submit it for the assessment of the Management Board. No later than 1 July each year the report shall be sent by the Management Board, together with its assessment, to the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors.

Mission, vision, values and objectives

Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 entered into force on 4 December 2019. When adopting the programming document 2021-2023 the Management Board also adopted the mission, vision and values of the Agency.

Mission ⁽⁴⁾

Together with the Member States, we ensure safe and well-functioning external borders providing security.

Vision

The European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

Values

- **we are professional,**

we have the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to fulfil our mission efficiently with high ethical standards and we continuously strive for excellence to improve our performance;

- **we are respectful,**

we recognise people, institutions and their roles and demonstrate respect by treating these as valuable and important;

- **we seek cooperation,**

together with the Member States' relevant national authorities and with participation of other stakeholders we manage the EU external borders together and seek cooperation with non-EU countries;

- **together,**

we cooperate and collaborate across the organisation as well as with external stakeholders in order to accomplish common goals and objectives;

- **we are accountable,**

we are trusted with a shared responsibility to implement European Integrated Border Management;

we are trustworthy in fulfilling our responsibilities in our work, its timeliness and quality;

- **we care,**

as European public agents we serve the interests of citizens because we care about people and believe in European values.

⁽⁴⁾ As adopted by the Management Board 66th meeting 26-29 September 2017.

Tasks

Frontex should carry out its tasks without prejudice to the responsibilities of the Member States with regard to the maintenance of law and order and the safeguarding of internal security in accordance with EU and international law.

The specific tasks of the Agency received in the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 are set forth in article 10:

1. monitor migratory flows and carry out risk analysis as regards all aspects of integrated border management;
2. monitor the operational needs of Member States related to the implementation of returns, including by collecting operational data;
3. carry out vulnerability assessments, including assessments of the capacity and readiness of Member States to face threats and challenges at the external borders;
4. monitor the management of the external borders through liaison officers of the Agency in Member States;
5. monitor compliance with fundamental rights in all of its activities at the external borders and in return operations;
6. support the development and operation of EUROSUR;
7. assist Member States in circumstances requiring increased technical and operational assistance at the external borders by coordinating and organising joint operations, taking into account that some situations may involve humanitarian emergencies and rescue at sea in accordance with Union and international law;
8. assist Member States in circumstances requiring increased technical and operational assistance at the external borders by launching rapid border interventions at the external borders of those Member States facing specific and disproportionate challenges, taking into account that some situations may involve humanitarian emergencies and rescue at sea in accordance with Union and international law;
9. provide technical and operational assistance to Member States and third countries in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 656/2014 and international law, in support of search and rescue operations for persons in distress at sea which may arise during border surveillance operations at sea;
10. deploy the standing corps in the framework of border management teams, migration management support teams and return teams (collectively referred to as 'teams') during joint operations, as well as in rapid border interventions, return operations and return interventions;
11. set up a technical equipment pool, including a rapid reaction equipment pool, to be deployed in joint operations, in rapid border interventions and in the framework of migration management support teams, as well as in return operations and return interventions;
12. develop and manage, with the support of an internal quality control mechanism, its own human and technical capabilities to contribute to the standing corps, including to the recruitment and training of the members of its staff acting as members of the teams, and the technical equipment pool;
13. within the framework of the migration management support teams at hotspot areas:
 - a. deploy operational staff and technical equipment to provide assistance in screening, debriefing, identification and fingerprinting;
 - b. establish a procedure for referring and providing initial information to persons who are in need of international protection or wish to apply for such protection, including a procedure for the identification of vulnerable groups, in cooperation with EUAA and competent national authorities;
14. provide assistance at all stages of the return process without entering into the merits of return decisions, which remain the sole responsibility of the Member States, assist with the coordination and organisation of return operations and provide technical and operational support to implement the obligation to return returnees and technical and operational support to return operations and interventions, including in circumstances requiring increased assistance;
15. set up a pool of forced-return monitors;
16. deploy return teams during return interventions;
17. within the respective mandates of the agencies concerned, cooperate with Europol and Eurojust and provide support to Member States in circumstances requiring increased technical and operational assistance at the external borders in the fight against cross-border crime and terrorism;

18. cooperate with EUAA within their respective mandates, in particular to facilitate measures in cases where third-country nationals whose applications for international protection have been rejected by means of a final decision are subject to return;
19. cooperate with the FRA, within their respective mandates, in order to ensure the continuous and uniform application of the Union *acquis* on fundamental rights;
20. cooperate with the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), within their respective mandates, in order to support national authorities carrying out coast guard functions including the saving of lives at sea, by providing services, information, equipment and training, as well as by coordinating multipurpose operations;
21. cooperate with third countries in relation to the areas covered by this Regulation, including through the possible operational deployment of border management teams in third countries;
22. assist Member States and third countries in the context of technical and operational cooperation between them in the matters covered by Regulation (EU) 2019/1896;
23. assist Member States and third countries in the training of national border guards, other relevant staff and experts on return, including through the establishment of common training standards and programmes, including on fundamental rights;
24. participate in the development and management of research and innovation activities relevant for the control of the external borders, including the use of advanced surveillance technology, and develop its own pilot projects, where necessary, for the carrying out of activities as provided for in Regulation (EU) 2019/1896;
25. develop technical standards for information exchange;
26. support the development of technical standards for equipment in the area of border control and return, including for the interconnection of systems and networks, and support, as appropriate, the development of common minimum standards for external border surveillance, in line with the respective competences of the Member States and of the Commission;
27. establish and maintain communication network referred to in Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896;
28. develop and operate, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, information systems that enable swift and reliable exchanges of information regarding emerging risks in the management of the external borders, illegal immigration and return, in close cooperation with the Commission, Union bodies, offices and agencies as well as the European Migration Network established by Council Decision 2008/381/EC (36);
29. provide the necessary assistance for the development of a common information-sharing environment, including interoperability of systems, as appropriate;
30. follow high standards for border management allowing for transparency and public scrutiny in full respect of the applicable law and ensuring respect for, and protection and promotion of, fundamental rights;
31. manage and operate the False and Authentic Documents Online system referred to in Article 79 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 and support the Member States by facilitating the detection of document fraud;
32. fulfil the tasks and obligations entrusted to the Agency under Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 of the European Parliament and of the Council and ensure the setting up and operation of the ETIAS Central Unit in accordance with Article 7 of that Regulation (EU) 2019/1896;
33. assist Member States in facilitating persons to cross the external borders.

Conditions and challenges, political and policy context

The year 2021 was marked by the negotiations in the Council working groups on the different legislative components of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, proposed by the European Commission in September 2020, and the adoption of the ETIAS consequential amendments.

One of the most important new legislative proposals by the European Commission in 2021 was the **updated Schengen Borders Code** which aims at reinforcing the governance of the Schengen area, enhancing the role of EU coordination and better equipping Member States to deal with emerging challenges when managing both the EU's common external border and internal borders within the Schengen area. The update seeks to ensure that reintroducing internal border controls remains a measure of last resort. The new rules also introduce common tools to manage the external borders more efficiently in

case of a public health crisis, building on the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic. The instrumentalisation of migrants is also addressed in the update to the Schengen rules, as well as through a parallel proposal for measures that Member States can take in the fields of asylum and return in such a situation.

In support of the Member States affected by disproportionate asylum pressure, MS will have the possibility to put in place an emergency return management procedure. Where requested, EU agencies (EUAA – European Union Agency for Asylum, Frontex, Europol) should provide operational support to the Member State concerned as a matter of priority.

At the same time, in December 2021 the European Commission proposed an EU Police Cooperation Code to enhance law enforcement cooperation across Member States, which is an effective way to address security threats in the Schengen area and will contribute to sustaining an area without controls at internal borders.

Adopted legislation in 2021:

Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum (OJ L 468, 30.12.2021), repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010. The adoption of this new legislation represented a break in the ‘package’ approach to the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA) **Regulation (EU) 2021/2303** strengthens the previous EASO mandate and facilitates the deployment of experts to Member States that have requested operational support. Cooperation with Frontex is foreseen.

Consolidated version of the Regulation (EC) No 767/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 concerning the Visa Information System was published in the OJ R 767, 03.08.2021, on the basis of two new adopted acts on 7 July 2021: **Regulation (EU) 2021/1133** on the establishment of the conditions for accessing other EU information systems for the purposes of the Visa Information System and **Regulation (EU) 2021/1134** on reforming the Visa Information System.

The same procedure for **ETIAS Consequential Amendments** – a **consolidated version of the Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 September 2018 establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)** was published in the OJ R 1240, 03.08.2021, on the basis of two new adopted acts on 14 July 2021: **Regulation (EU) 2021/1152** on the establishment of the conditions for accessing other EU information systems for the purposes of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System and **Regulation (EU) 2021/1150** on the establishment of the conditions for accessing other EU information systems for the purposes of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System.

Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down financial rules for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (**OJ L 231, 30.6.2021**) and **Regulation (EU) 2021/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021** establishing, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (**OJ L 251, 15.7.2021**).

Council Decision (EU) 2021/1312 of 19 July 2021 authorising the opening of negotiations for a cooperation agreement between the European Union and the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO-INTERPOL) (OJ L 287, 10.8.2021).

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/581 of 9 April 2021 on the situational pictures of the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR), OJ L 124, 12.4.2021.

Other legislative developments in 2021:

- **Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation 2016/399 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Revision of the Schengen Borders Code) COM/2021/891 final** – this proposal contributes to the effective implementation of European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) by the European Border and Coast Guard. The proposal will be also reflected in the upcoming Multiannual Strategic Policy Cycle (policy document to be tabled by the European Commission at the beginning of 2022). Recitals 13 and 14 refer to possible Frontex support to MS, including that of the standing corps and the vulnerability assessment. Article 8 refers to a stronger cooperation and assessment: EC, EU institutions, agencies and Member States shall cooperate and regularly inform each other on the implementation.
- **Proposal for a Regulation on situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum COM/2021/890 final** – provides for an emergency migration and asylum management procedure in relation to third-country nationals and stateless persons apprehended or found in the proximity of the border with a third country instrumentalising migrants after an unauthorised crossing or after having presented themselves at border crossing points. Article 5(4) specifically lays down possible support by Frontex. If the Member State facing instrumentalisation of migrants requests support from EU agencies, the agencies should prioritise their operational support. For Frontex these refer to supporting border control activities, including screening, and return operations.
- **Proposal for a Council decision on provisional emergency measures for the benefit of Lithuania, Latvia and Poland** – Article 6: upon a request, the Frontex Executive Director should launch a rapid border intervention or return intervention for a limited time on the territory of the host Member State concerned. Frontex should prioritise the provision of any other type of assistance e.g. EUROSUR Fusion Services, risk analysis, necessary border surveillance equipment.
- **Proposal for an EU Police Cooperation Code (Proposal for a Council Recommendation on operational police cooperation and Proposal for a Directive on information exchange between law enforcement authorities of Member States)** – The Council Recommendation foresees that Member States use targeted joint operations in specific intra-EU border areas, based on analysis (refers here to Europol SOCTA (EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment) but also Frontex risk analysis), to counter migrant smuggling, prevent and detect illegally staying migrants and cross-border crime, like trafficking of human beings (THB), linked to irregular migration. Member States should expand the current tasks of existing Police and Customs Cooperation Centres (PCCCs) by producing joint analysis of cross-border crimes specific to their intra-EU border area and sharing such analysis through the national Single Point of Contact with all other Member States and competent Union agencies and bodies. Member States should equip their police officers with tools that allow them to access remotely and securely their own databases in line with national law, as well as EU international and international databases via the European Search Portal. Member States should make use of the technical solutions to be provided by Europol's innovation lab, to ensure the interconnectivity of secure communication means across borders.
- **Council Regulation No 1053/2013 of 7 October 2013 establishing the Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism (SEMM)** – Schengen Evaluations will be able to verify the activities of EU agencies 'in so far as they perform functions on behalf of the Member States to assist in the operational application of provisions of the Schengen acquis'. The European Commission should inform the Frontex Management Board in case of deficiencies identified. The proposal envisages to allow Frontex to make full use of the information gathered through SEMM activities and ensure synergies with the vulnerability assessment (VA). SEMM and VA recommendations should be complementary.
- **Proposal for a Regulation on artificial intelligence (AI Act/AIA)** – the systems relevant for the Justice and Home Affairs are listed in Annex IX: SIS, VIS, Eurodac, EES, ETIAS, ECRIS-TCN (Centralised system for the identification of Member States holding conviction information on third country nationals and stateless persons), and specific components of the interoperability package (i.e. s-BMS). There will be no application of the AIA for those systems placed on the market or put into service before a date that is 36 months after the entry into force of the AIA. Based on this, the European Commission expects that the AIA will not bring significant changes to the interoperability framework. The proposal sees the risks posed by the use of real-time remote biometrics identification (RBI) in publicly accessible spaces for law enforcement purposes, considering it a particularly intrusive tool because of the immediacy of its impact and also because it may evoke

feelings or perceptions of constant mass surveillance. Such risks are considered unacceptable, and the use of such systems is therefore prohibited, except in limited particular situations.

- **Proposal for a Regulation on automated data exchange for police cooperation ('Prum II') COM/2021/784 final** – Interoperability between the router and the Common Identity Repository for the purposes of law enforcement access. The router shall query the Common Identity Repository via the European Search Portal. The router should be developed and managed by eu-LISA. The use of the router shall be reserved to the MS' authorities that have access to the exchange of DNA profiles, dactyloscopic data and facial images, and Europol in accordance with this Regulation and Regulation (EU) 2016/794.
- **Proposal for a Regulation on asylum and migration management (AMMR)** – Article 55(4) of the proposal states that return sponsorship may include activities such as return counselling, reintegration or organising return operations, which fall within the Frontex mandate. The proposal states that Frontex and the EUAA shall draw up the list of eligible persons to be relocated and subject to return sponsorship. The agencies shall assist the European Commission in monitoring the use of the solidarity pool and in drawing up the assessment of migratory pressure. Deployed Frontex/EUAA experts may also assist in the operational aspect of relocation and return sponsorship. Frontex vulnerability assessments results must be taken into account by the Member States when drawing up their national strategies. The European Commission will also rely on the information gathered as part of the Migration Preparedness and Crisis Network. The mechanism to incentivise returns in Article 7 of the proposal will be an important tool for the EU Return Coordinator.
- **2022 Annual EU Budget** – The Institutions adopted the EU Budget 2022 at the end of November 2021.

Executive summary

The year 2021 proved to be a remarkable step forward for the Agency in the discharge of its extended mandate. Frontex elaborated its annual report on the progress as of end of 2021, which is hereby presented. The Agency considers this document to be well suited to meet the information requirements of its stakeholders, achieving the right balance in terms of level of detail of the information provided.

In the area of situational awareness and monitoring, the commencement of the implementation of the provisions regarding EUROSUR integrated framework is noteworthy. Additionally, the methodology for attribution of impact levels for 2022 was agreed and is already applicable, and the Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM) 2.1 was adopted addressing all analysis requirements set in the extended mandate.

With regard to the standing corps (SC) category 1, close to 120 000 person-days deployments were carried out during the year. This operational effort was complemented with over 215 000 and 335 000 person-days deployments of categories 2 and 3 respectively. The development of internal processes for the management of the standing corps progressed through effective selection of candidates, assignment of profiles (category 1), evolution of the extended basic training programme for candidates without prior law enforcement background, and acquisition of equipment including 186 vehicles (patrol cars and transport vehicles).

The Agency strove to maintain its operational outreach in the reporting period which is manifested through the implementation of a total of 19 joint operations. Moreover, the Rapid Border Intervention Lithuania in support of the migration crisis at the land border between Lithuania and Belarus, JO Opal Coast at the English Channel as well as a new JO in a third country, JO Serbia-Land 2021, are proof of the Agency's flexibility.

A second set of operational activities carried out in 2021 relate to the fight against cross-border crime, terrorism, document fraud and cooperation on coast guard functions. In this regard the Agency coordinated five joint action days and co-led two others under EMPACT, supported Romania and Bulgaria through MMO Black Sea and contributed to ISA-CBD and MOST-CBD operational activities through operations TAYRONA, KARACHI, AZUL and WHITE SEA.

In the reporting period, the Agency supported the return of 18 301 non-EU nationals. Among the new return related initiatives, Frontex deployed return teams from the SC to host Member States and to four key EU airports. In parallel the Agency completed extensive preparations for its first fully-fledged Frontex-led return operation which has been carried out in January 2022.

In the domain of capacity development the relevant achievements include the provision of training to 9 893 participants from MS and SAC, with over 6 300 participants on IBM-related topics and 3 500 active users of online EES training. Further to this, 2 884 SC received specialised training during 2021. Another area of particular focus regarding training activities was the mainstreaming of fundamental rights-related training, embedding the relevant concepts into the educational catalogue as well as specialised tailored training for FROM and ETIAS operational staff.

Frontex rolled out Opera Evolution covering planning, allocation, deployment and financial management of operational capabilities. Human operational capacities were supported with technical equipment. In general MS remain the main providers of assets, however in 2021 the Agency became the main provider of aerial surveillance capacities.

To ensure interoperability and compatibility of the equipment listed in the technical equipment pool, four technical standards were developed, specifically on maritime, equipment, land border surveillance and document inspection.

In the domain of international cooperation, the progress highlights refer to the renewal of the working arrangement with Georgia and Albania, the first Euro-Arab border security conference organised by the Agency and the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AMIC) in Jordan and the deployment of the first batch of nine liaison officers from MS and SAC to the Agency.

In terms of recruitment, the Agency grew by 320 positions (net increase) reaching 1 554 occupied posts, still far however from the 2 000 posts authorised in the establishment plan. In detail, the number of standing corps recruited reached 629 positions by the end of the reporting period. Further to this, 20 FROMs were recruited while the recruitment for the remaining 20 posts commenced and will be finalised during 2022. In addition to this, 42 members of ETIAS were onboarded in the context of the gradual build-up of the Central Unit.

Internally, the Agency finalised its restructuring for effectively addressing the extended mandate. The three Deputy Executive Directors were recruited with one taking up duties in 2021 and the remaining two in the first quarter of 2022. The portfolio of activities is divided now across nine Divisions where return, deployment of standing corps and ETIAS became stand-alone divisions. The work on the internal organisation was completed with the update of internal rules and procedures (FISRoP), setting a clear internal framework for collaboration.

Other relevant milestones within the internal domain relate to the Interim Authorisation to Operate (IATO) 2022 for EUROSUR communications network, updated and signed by the Frontex Security Authority as well as the modernisation of the EU RESTRICTED EUROSUR network. The progress made in the budgetary absorption capacity led to implementing additional EUR 147.3m or +41 % of year 2021 commitment appropriations when compared to 2020.

In relation to Data Protection, the Agency highlights the adoption of three Management Board Decisions on the tasks, duties and powers of the Data Protection Officer as well as in relation to the rules concerning Designated Controllers in Frontex, the rules on processing personal data by the Agency and on the rules on processing operational personal data by the Agency.

Fundamental Rights remained a priority in the performance of operational activities. After completing a specialised training programme, the FROMs initiated their integration into the operational framework during the second half of 2021 and completed well over 200 deployment days visiting 10 countries and taking part in 15 return missions. Further to this, the Fundamental Rights Strategy (FRS) and Action Plan (FRAP) were adopted by the Management Board in 2021 to define and operationalise the compliance with fundamental rights in our activities.

The Agency concludes this brief summary of its performance during the reporting period by outlining the result of the inquiries on the allegations of involvement in fundamental rights infringements in operations in the Aegean Sea (detailed information is in Part II – Management of this annual report).

The Management Board investigated the allegations through the Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations in the Aegean Sea (WG FRaLO). Its final report established that no conclusive evidence of the involvement of Frontex staff in fundamental rights violations could be found.

At the same time, the Civil Liberties Committee (LIBE) of the European Parliament established a Frontex Scrutiny Working Group (FSWG) to conduct a fact-finding investigation into the alleged violations and to monitor the Agency's compliance with fundamental rights. FSWG report concluded that no conclusive evidence supporting allegations of direct pushbacks and/or collective expulsions by Frontex could be found.

Key achievements

SO 1: Reduced vulnerability of the external borders based on comprehensive situational awareness

Simulation exercises for readiness assessment

The year 2021 in the area of situational monitoring was marked by a record number of special simulation exercises (SE) that were carried out by Frontex in cooperation with the EU Member States. Such exercises assess the capacity and readiness of Member States to face present and upcoming challenges in a certain geographical area and/or particular field of border control. Their purpose is to identify systematic and structural vulnerabilities of Member States while the final aim is to prevent a crisis situation in the event of increased pressure at the external borders, under three categories: 1) strategic table-top exercises concentrating on contingency planning, 2) BCP-level exercises focusing on the capacity to detect document fraud, and 3) BCP-level exercises focusing on the capacity to detect and adequately handle victims of trafficking in human beings. Following the positive experience from the joint RVAs and considering the recommendation by ECA to 'identify and assess any eventual overlapping vulnerabilities affecting multiple countries in specific regions', the 2021 table-top exercises focused not only on assessing the preparedness of a single Member State, but also on creating a regional overview. In 2021, the development of a new operational SE on travelling terrorists/foreign terrorist fighters commenced with the support of Europol.

Copernicus/EUROSUR integrated framework

The Copernicus Delegation Agreement (2015-2021) entrusting Frontex with the provision of the Copernicus Border Surveillance Service expired on 31st December 2021 after a successful implementation from 2015 of the delegated budget of EUR 53m, on 15 November 2021 the new Copernicus Contribution Agreement was signed between the European Commission (DG DEFIS) and Frontex to ensure the continuity of the service provision for the years 2022-2028 with a financial envelope of EUR 67m.

EUROSUR

In 2021, the implementation of the provisions regarding the EUROSUR integrated framework commenced. A specific EUROSUR roadmap was agreed upon between the European Commission and Frontex and shared with the Member States. A sub-working group including experts from Frontex, and the Member States was established to define the Attribution of Impact Levels methodology for 2022, which were agreed and are applicable. The development of common EUROSUR data models for the different data categories and policies enabling automated information sharing was initiated and further development is ongoing.

Furthermore, Copernicus/EUROSUR Fusion Services continuously contributed to short/immediate-term informed decision-making processes and situation awareness, including saving lives at sea and tackling cross-border crime. These services were provided in collaboration with the EU SatCen and EMSA respectively as well as with commercial suppliers. While EFS supported many different internal and external service requests covering a large geographical area, note is to be taken on the services delivered in support of RBI Lithuania and NCC (national coordination centre) France at the Channel coast and JO Opal Coast for enhanced situational awareness.

24/7 Situation and crisis monitoring – near real-time reporting

Frontex closely monitored the situation at the external border of the European Union and the pre-frontier area during 2021 and enhanced the operational information exchange with national coordination centres under the EUROSUR framework in particular in the areas covering Italy, Malta, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia and France.

Frontex issued near real-time 49 'ad-hoc' situation reports on outstanding events in the Central Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean, Channel, EU/Belarus border, Canary Islands and Albania. These re-

ports were shared with all National coordination centres and the European Commission. The enhanced operational cooperation with the Polish, Lithuanian and French national coordination centres allowed to report on incidents near real-time and to issue early alerts concerning potential escalation of the situation especially at the Polish/Belarusian border.

With the deployment of standing corps – information officers in Lithuania within RBI Lithuania and France under the framework of Joint Operation Opal Coast near real-time reporting and hence a near real-time situational picture was achieved that facilitated to share information with all Frontex stakeholders.

Adoption of CIRAM 2.1

The Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM 2.1) was adopted by Management Board Decision No 50/2021. The revised CIRAM 2.1 addresses all the requirements for risk analysis in response to the extension of the Agency's mandate that emerged with the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 and allows for the flexibility and adaptivity to take on board new requirements that may arise in the future. Further to this, CIRAM 2.1 addresses identified weaknesses of the CIRAM 2.0 of 2012 and it provides for the enhancement of the understanding of the risk analysis components while facilitating a better communication and delivery of the risk assessments.

CIRAM 2.1 also implements the recommendation No 2, a(ii) of the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 08/2021, by addressing the requirement for a CIRAM update in response to the extension of the Agency's mandate (point 67 of the ECA report) and sets the framework to address the findings of the report regarding the use of vulnerability assessment data for risk analysis when available and applicable (point 38 of the ECA report).

Frontex supports the Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint Network ⁽⁵⁾

Frontex has been regularly and actively participating in the Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint Network set by the EU Commission Recommendation of 23 September 2020. Since the establishment of the network, an internal mechanism has been set up to sustain Frontex participation. In addition to the quarterly meetings held in February and May 2021, feedback to the weekly meetings organised by the network was provided with regard to the situation on EU-Belarusian border and the situation in Afghanistan. An ad-hoc meeting on the situation along the Central Mediterranean route was held in August 2021.

Analytical support for operational initiation

In 2021, following strategic discussions with the MSs, Frontex revitalised its operational planning cycle. The former analysis for operational deployment was redesigned, and the first assessment for operational initiation with EU-wide key risks and vulnerabilities was drafted. This strategic product is a cornerstone and a starting point in the operational cycle. It supports the operational initiation phase by providing a basis for the decision-makers to discuss the goals of the EBCG operational activities at a strategic level, providing guidance on which key risks should be addressed with the EBCG joint operational activities and it supports the management in setting the priorities and making operational recommendations to address those risks in an integrated manner.

ETIAS and Interoperability Task Force

The year 2021 allowed to continue the progress made during the previous year and thus moving closer to the start of operations. The Agency formally established the ETIAS Central Unit Division, which took over the implementation of the activities from the ETIAS and Interoperability Task Force. This also entailed the growth of the human resources allocated: from 8 staff members on 1st January 2021, the ETIAS Central Unit Division expanded to 52 staff members at the end of 2021 including the first batch of application handlers, as well as traveller and carrier support operators. ETIAS EES and Central Unit will enter into operations respectively in September 2022 and in May 2023.

⁽⁵⁾ Brussels 23.9.2020, C (2020) 6469 final.

The newly established Division continued to progress on the build-up of the ETIAS Central Unit while managing the ETIAS and Interoperability Programme, overseeing the project for the access of the EBCG Team Members to Schengen Information System (A2SISII) as well as the activities related to the support of the MS for the entry into operation of EES and for the implementation of the 'Multiple Identity Detection ('MID')' project.

The ETIAS Central Unit Division regularly supported high-level meetings between the DG HOME, eu-LISA and Frontex to coordinate the implementation activities on the development of EES, ETIAS Interoperability. Together with other entities at Frontex, the ETIAS Central Unit continued supporting the European Commission in the development of the delegated and implementing acts provided for in the ETIAS regulation. Further to this, building blocks of internal ETIAS elements were started i.e., the development of the public website, contributions to the development of the data protection impact assessment for the ETIAS Central System and the elicitation of business and technical requirements for the software enabling the ETIAS Central Unit and the ETIAS National Units to process applications and to manage consultations with other ETIAS National Units and with Europol.

SO 2: Safe, secure and well-functioning EU external borders

Land joint operations (JOs)

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and related challenges, both Frontex and the host MS/TC undertook the necessary preventative measures to ensure smooth and effective implementation of the operational activities. Despite difficult circumstances, Frontex managed to maintain a complete operational footprint in its joint operations with the support of the high engagement of all stakeholders.

In 2021, Frontex maintained the strategic operational response. Based on risk assessment and requests from the Member States, the JO Flexible Operational Activities-Land 2021 and JO Focal Point-Land 2021 significantly enlarged Frontex operational area. At the same time, Frontex implemented one rapid border intervention (RBI) at the external land border between Lithuania and Belarus. The year 2021 was also the time of the operationalisation of the EU status agreement with Serbia, which in consequence led to the launch of the new joint operation in a third country, the JO Serbia-Land 2021 in June 2021.

VEGA activities and awareness sessions continued to be implemented in 2021 in the EU MS and for the first time were conducted in a third country, in Montenegro, with field presence and participation of the Consultative Forum members. The deployment of third country observers in MS as well as in third countries, Montenegro and Albania, was reactivated in 2021 after being suspended in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

New rapid border intervention in Lithuania

The rapid border intervention in Lithuania was launched at the request of the Lithuanian state border guard service in order to respond to migratory pressure at the Lithuanian-Belarusian land border and to control illegal immigration flows towards the territory of Lithuania and the European Union. It was conducted from 15 July 2021 until 30 November 2021 under the multipurpose operational activities land cluster and resulted in 380 reported incidents and apprehension of 2 396 irregular migrants, 93 smugglers of goods and 4 people smugglers.

Operational results of the JO Serbia land 2021

During the implementation of the JO Serbia-Land 2021, the following results were reported: 810 irregular migrants and 15 people smugglers were apprehended, 1 refusal of entry was issued, 1 database hit and 1 person hiding in transportation means was found. Furthermore, 270 incidents of border surveillance and border check activities at the border crossing points were reported, out of which 83 were related to illegal border crossings, 152 to smuggling of goods, 23 to document fraud and 7 to stolen vehicles.

Relevant operational results achieved under all land joint operations in 2021

In total, the operational activities conducted on land borders in 2021 resulted in 3 546 incidents reported, involving 16 034 apprehended irregular migrants, 6 461 irregular migrants and 368 people smugglers were arrested. Additional 5 new host MS joined joint operations in 2021. Altogether, 9 host MS and 23 participating MS with 32 authorities and 4 third countries were involved in the activities.

In terms of cooperation, 32 countries, including 6 third countries, representing 39 national authorities participated in the JO Focal Points-Land 2021. The operational activities resulted in detection of 34 438 persons who were refused entry, 4 517 overstayers, 55 asylum request applications received, 777 persons hiding in transportation means, 2 582 false documents, 1 063 hits in databases and 1 138 smugglers of goods. Additionally, seizures included 133 stolen vehicles, 329 vehicle parts and 50 293 pieces of ammunition, 153 weapons, variable quantities of drugs, cigarettes, tobacco and alcohol.

JO Albania-Land 2021 comprised both border check and border surveillance activities. The operational activities in 2021 resulted in 2 935 reported incidents out of which 2 852 involved border crossing, 14 were related to smuggling of goods, one involved document fraud and one was related to stolen vehicles. In total, 16 100 migrants and 25 people smugglers were apprehended, one person was refused entry, 9 returned hits in databases, 10 persons were hiding in transportation means and 72 irregular migrants were prevented on exit from Greece.

The fully-fledged JO in Montenegro was launched for the first time in the middle of 2020 with one focal point established at the land border. In 2021, the JO Montenegro-Land was relaunched, and 57 incidents were reported out of which 22 concerned irregular migration and 7 smuggling cases. During the JO, 51 irregular migrants, 3 people smugglers, 9 smugglers of goods were discovered, and 10 persons were refused entry.

The most significant incidents, which occurred during the land joint operations in 2021 are described below, representing an overview of variety of tasks and achievements in this area.

Illegal border crossings (with any type of Frontex involvement – top incidents involving the highest number of migrants) JO FOA – Land

- July 2021: 293 irregular migrants were apprehended after crossing the border from Belarus to Lithuania;
- May 2021: 75 illegal migrants were detected in the area of Greek – Turkish border;
- November 2021: 56 irregular migrants (46 Afghans, 1 Pakistani, 9 Syrians) were detained in the area of Bulgarian-Serbian border;
- December 2021: Bulgarian border patrol detained 56 Afghanis, with AFIS and EURODAC registrations at the Bulgarian-Serbian border.

Seizure of smuggled drugs (with any type of Frontex involvement – top incidents involving the largest quantity of smuggled goods)

- Seizure of 53 kg of cannabis (October 2021: JO Serbia – Land);
- Seizure of 44.5 kg of cannabis (December 2021: JO Albania – Land);
- Seizure of 39.1 kg of cannabis (April 2021: JO Montenegro – Land);
- Seizure of 37.3 kg of cocaine (November 2021: JO Montenegro – Land);
- Seizure of 13.2 kg of heroin (August 2021: JO Serbia – Land).

Other significant detections at the land Focal Points:

- A Frontex Team Member with a profile of a Motor Vehicle Crime Detection Officer deployed to a BCP at the Croatian/Bosnia and Herzegovina border, in cooperation with Croatian and Frontex Team Members, as well as officers from several EU MSs authorities, detected half of the missing fleet (22) out of approximately 50 trucks in the proximity of the Croatian/Bosnia and Herzegovina border. The trucks were confiscated before exiting the EU.

- On 8 October, a stolen Lamborghini Aventador with a market value of over EUR 400 000 was detected with the support of the deployed officers at the Greek–Turkish border. The car was driven by an Iranian national with a Spanish residence permit. The Iranian national was arrested and the vehicle seized by the local authorities for further investigation.
- On 21 September, a person who escaped from prison in Germany on 7 September and participated in a bank robbery on 15 September in Austria was detected with the support of a deployed Frontex officer. Bulgarian authorities arrested the person. Over EUR 116 000 was found in his car.

Joint operations in 2021 in the maritime domain

In 2021, the maritime operations were marked by JO Canary Islands 2021 and JO Cyprus 2021 which were implemented for the first time as a stand-alone joint operation under the multipurpose operational activities – sea cluster. Moreover, a new maritime joint operation in a third country i.e. JO Albania – Sea was also launched to cover Albania's needs at the maritime border.

Another significant operational activity in the maritime domain was the new JO Opal Coast 2021 hosted by Belgium and France, launched on 1 December 2021, immediately after the ministerial meeting held in Calais (France) on Sunday 28 November 2021 attended by the Frontex Executive Director (ED). Frontex ED was requested by the Belgian and French authorities to provide support for the aerial surveillance in the coastal area of Belgium and France.

Recognising the strategic importance of the Western Balkan countries and their commitment to follow the path towards the EU accession, Frontex continued supporting Western Balkan partners in their efforts to gradually align their border management standards and practices with those of the EU.

Following the entry into force on 1 May 2019 of the Status Agreement between the European Union and Albania on actions carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in Albania ⁽⁶⁾, on May 2019 Frontex launched its first joint operation on the territory of a non-EU/SAC country, namely JO flexible operational Activities Western Balkans 2019, implemented at the Albanian – Greek land borders. This achievement was further enhanced by the launch of the operational activities at Albania's maritime borders under the JO Albania Sea 2021 on 24 March 2021. The specific operational aim of the JO was to provide technical and operational assistance to Albania by coordinating operational activities at the maritime border and boundaries of Albania, with the focus on cross-border crime from the Western Balkans region towards the EU, as well as aiming to control illegal immigration flows and to enhance European cooperation on coast guard functions and law enforcement activities.

Relevant operational results achieved under JO Albania Sea 2021

During the implementation of the JO Albania Sea 2021, there were 85 incidents related to irregular migration with 157 persons involved, namely 14 incidents of illegal border crossing, 62 incidents of persons hidden in transportation means, 7 incidents of avoiding border control, one incident of readmission and one other. In addition, 76 incidents related to cross-border crime were reported by the Albanian authorities, namely 26 incidents of smuggling of goods, 33 incidents of document fraud/impostors, 17 incidents of stolen vehicles.

Relevant operational results achieved under all maritime joint operations during 2021

Overall, the operational activities involving both Frontex co-financed assets and host MS assets not co-financed by Frontex resulted in the detection of 639 facilitators, 2 traffickers of human beings and a wide variety of other types of cross-border crimes, illegal goods and substances such as: 56 pieces of ammunition, approximately 604 kg of cocaine, more than 13 tons of hashish, 684 kg of cannabis, 62 kg of heroin and 2 367 grams of other types of drugs. Furthermore, 17 stolen vehicles were detected.

⁽⁶⁾ Status Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Albania on actions carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in the Republic of Albania (OJ L 46, 18.2.2019, p. 3).

The most significant incidents that occurred during the maritime joint operations of 2021 are described below, representing an overview of variety of activities and tasks in this area.

Illegal border crossings (with any type of Frontex involvement – top incidents involving the highest number of migrants)

JO Themis

- May 2021: A fishing vessel with 753 migrants;
- June 2021: A wooden boat with 384 migrants;
- August 2021: A wooden boat with 533 migrants and 5 smugglers of human beings identified;
- December 2021: A wooden boat with 386 migrants.

Seizure of smuggled drugs – top incidents involving the largest quantity of smuggled goods by Frontex co-financed assets.

- Seizure of 1 260 kg of hashish and arrest of 3 smugglers (January 2021 – JO Indalo 2020);
- Seizure of 800 kg of hashish from 29 floating bundles marked with buoy (May – JO Indalo 2021);
- Seizure of 144 kg cocaine hidden inside a container (April – JO Albania 2021);
- Seizure of 324,4 kg of cocaine inside a lorry (June – JO Albania Sea 2021);
- Seizure of 360 kg of hashish on a pleasure boat adrift (July – JO Indalo 2021).

Search and rescue (with any type of Frontex involvement – top five incidents involving the highest number of migrants rescued)

JO Themis

- September 2021: A fishing boat with 272 migrants safely disembarked;
- October 2021: A fishing vessel with 330 migrants safely disembarked;
- November 2021: A fishing boat in distress with 348 migrants safely disembarked;
- November 2021: A fishing boat with 303 migrants safely disembarked;
- December 2021: A wooden boat overloaded with 386 migrants safely disembarked.

Joint operations 2021 in the air domain

In 2021, the new concept of coordinated operational activities in third countries was introduced. Under this cluster, common for all domains, JO coordination points – air, land and sea 2021 were implemented by activating (deploying standing corps officers) 13 coordination points at airports, 17 coordination points at land border crossing points and two coordination points at seaports.

In 2021, four new clusters of operational area were introduced, and a similar need was recognised in the air domain in the third countries during the implementation of the JO coordination points – air, land and sea. The concept of middle/tactical coordination level was proven to be a successful management tool and will be continued in 2022.

Cooperation/support of INTERPOL within operational activities at the air border crossing points

In 2021, INTERPOL continued its support by field presence of the IBMTF (Integrated Border Management Task Force) at five different focal points. The IBMTF officers ensured access to the INTERPOL data search application, making possible searches in the respective INTERPOL databases using passenger data provided by the local border police. During their field presences, in total 103 hits were detected. Additionally, upon a request of one of the MS, 35 437 checks were performed against stolen motor vehicles, resulting in 119 hits (all the cars were registered in requesting MS). Furthermore, INTERPOL provided its support at two airports in a third country. During that deployment of the IBMTF officer, 3 444 hits (most of them administrative notices) were detected.

To enhance border guards' document expertise and their capabilities to examine passports, EU residence permits, EU national ID cards and Schengen visas, Frontex organised dedicated document workshops, so-called 'Roadshows', held at five airports and involving specialist trainers and experts from Frontex and volunteering MS. In total, 262 persons participated in the roadshows including 14 standing corps officers.

The VEGA activity was implemented at two MS airports and for the first time at two third country airports as well. The experts provided support to the local authorities in detecting children at risk, on the move at the external borders, and referring them to the relevant national entities, according to the VEGA Children Handbook and the national legislation. This activity incorporated the participation of IOM and UNHCR.

Law enforcement activities in 2021

During the reporting period the Agency gradually increased the support to the EU Member States in the area of border control, including tackling cross-border crime at the external borders, as one of the key components of the European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) and the EU Maritime Security Strategy. In 2021, Frontex did not only increase the operational support in counteracting migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, but also in relation to other cross-border crimes such as smuggling of stolen vehicles and its parts, drugs, firearms and ammunition or excise goods. Moreover, environmental crimes such as waste trafficking were an important part of support provided to the EU Member States. The active involvement of Frontex in the prevention and detection of cross-border crime not only contributed to the objectives of EMPACT against organised and serious international crime, but also resulted in several examples of successful multiagency cooperation.

In 2021, the development of Frontex law enforcement functions focused on:

- Involvement in majority of EMPACT operational actions and joint action days (JADs), as well as EMPACT action days;
- Enhancing the law enforcement modules under joint operations and enabling synergies with JADs;
- Development of Investigation Support Activities on Cross-Border Crime (ISA-CBC) Pilot Project 2.0 targeting drugs smuggling, especially from North Africa (hashish) and Latin America (cocaine) and enhancing this pilot project to other types of cross-border crime and new geographical areas endangered by the transnational crime;
- Implementation of law enforcement functions under multipurpose maritime operation Black Sea 2021;
- Implementation of the mobile operational support teams for counteracting cross-border crime pilot project which focused on the counteraction of the smuggling of stolen vehicles and its parts at, along and in the proximity of the borders;
- Counteraction of trafficking in human beings and VEGA concept;
- Training and planning of deployments of the cross-border crime detection officers under the standing corps and joint operations;
- Enhanced awareness and capacity building on counteracting firearms trafficking through the finalisation of the Handbook on Firearms for Border Guards/Police and Customs, its distribution and initiation of the development of the train the trainer course to facilitate its implementation by border and customs authorities in the EU Member States;
- Supporting EU Member States in cross-border crime and counter terrorism counteraction through implementation of JO Neptune 2021 – targeting travelling terrorist movements via passenger ferries operating in the Mediterranean Sea between the North African countries, Italy and France;
- Increased the strategic and operational collaboration with the Council's Law Enforcement Working Party on Customs, DG TAXUD and its Customs Eastern and South-eastern Land Border Expert Team (CELBET).

A strategic approach, aimed at increasing the cooperation between border police and customs authorities was implemented during the multipurpose maritime operation in the Black Sea in Romania. A joint analytical border police – customs – Frontex centre was established in Constanta. Such cooperation led to significant results in preventing, detecting and combating serious crime with a cross-border dimension area: 18 cases of illegal waste amounting to over 3 575 tons of waste loaded in 151 containers,

and one criminal investigation initiated for illegal transport of 7 containers with raw tree logs; 6 cases of cigarette smuggling with more than 5.26 m cigarettes, three cases of IPR infringements – 10 containers carrying 188 905 items suspected to infringe property rights, with an estimated value of EUR 1.3 m and one case of fraud related to import – two containers involving four vehicles with the value of circa EUR 50k in duties and taxes.

EMPACT activities in 2021

Frontex further enhanced its support and active role with regard to EMPACT as stipulated in the Council conclusions 8654/17 on setting the EU's priorities regarding the fight against organised and serious international crime between 2018 and 2021. The Agency participated in the drafting of the annual operational action plans and took a leading role in 13 operational actions throughout 2021.

Despite COVID-19 limitations, in 2021 Frontex increased its contribution to the EMPACT Operational Actions (OAs) priorities and was broadly engaged in contributing to the draft of the new Policy Cycle 2022-2025. The Agency was involved in 100 operational actions in the frame of the EMPACT. As a highlight of 2021, during the implemented joint action days coordinated by Frontex the following results were achieved: 223 arrested people smugglers, 8 400 irregular migrants apprehended, more than EUR 460 000 cash seized, 549 stolen vehicles detected, more than 170 000 litres of alcohol, 25 weapons, 452 pieces of ammunition, 46.7 million cigarettes, 4 stolen boats, 9 tonnes of raw tobacco, 6 000 litres of mineral oil, 8000 litres of illegal fuel were seized, ca. 840.9 kg of drugs confiscated.

Coast guard functions related activities in 2021

The European cooperation on coast guard functions and related activities kept strengthening on the basis of two main pillars: enhancing the cooperation among coast guard functions stakeholders at the European and international level and fostering the exchange of best practices among the European coast guard community. In 2021, Frontex contributed to various coast guard fora i.e., Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation (BSRBCC), European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF), North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum (NACGF) and Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS).

In particular, in the frame of the European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF), on 11 and 12 May 2021, the French presidency of the forum under the coordination of the *Secrétariat Général de la Mer* and with the support of Frontex Coast Guard Sector organised a legal seminar on 'European cooperation to combat illicit activities at sea through the example of the fight against drug trafficking: opportunities and challenges of the legal framework and its practical implementation'. The participants discussed the legal modalities of the cooperation at sea to fight against illegal activities in accordance with international, European, and national law. Following the event, in November 2021 a booklet with the main recommendations for the follow-up was published.

Further to this, in 2021, new steps were taken in developing cooperation with third countries that included, e.g. the participation in an online technical meeting with Lebanon coast guard functions administrations, as well as a familiarisation visit of a Pakistani delegation to Frontex HQ.

Frontex kept strengthening cooperation with the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) under the framework of the Tripartite Working Arrangement (TWA) and as of July 2021 took over the rotative chairmanship of the inter-agency cooperation. In March 2021, the three European Agencies (Frontex, EFCA and EMSA) renewed their TWA for an indefinite period.

Another important milestone achieved was the adoption by the European Commission of the Recommendation (EU) 2021/1222 of 20 July 2021 establishing a 'Practical Handbook' on European cooperation on coast guard functions, which focuses on the five inter-agency cooperation areas, with the aim to create synergies and avoid duplication in the cooperation between the Member States and the three Agencies.

As an example of multipurpose maritime operation (MMO), the MMO Black Sea was implemented for 190 days, from 31 March to 6 October 2021. As a major step related to this MMO, a dedicated terms of reference for enhanced operational cooperation between Frontex, EFCA and EMSA in relation to the support to the Bulgarian and Romanian authorities was agreed, which will significantly develop the co-operation between Frontex and Romanian Customs authorities.

Activities related to combatting document fraud in 2021

Cooperation with OSCE – Development of a commonly agreed capability framework in support of coordinating capacity building engagements in the fight against document fraud in third countries. Coordination and cooperation with international partners aimed at implementing activities to combat document fraud is a Frontex priority. In this context, in September 2019, the Agency organised a joint conference with the OSCE on preventing document fraud in the Western Balkans region. The conference identified numerous needs that led to drafting a common framework for the coordination of capacity building activities in the fight against document fraud in third countries. Following discussions and a presentation to the Western Balkan countries, the final draft was ready for a presentation to the Commission and for a pilot implementation in the Western Balkans region under the IPA III Border Security Project.

Establishment of an advanced-level document officer (ALDO) community within the EBCG standing corps. The creation of a 'Standing corps ALDO community' aims to allow for a regular exchange of information. In this context, online events were held in which 34 deployed standing corps ALDO took part (in April) and 89 (in October). Further to this, during 2021, Frontex Centre of Excellence for Document Fraud delivered several training sessions on document fraud detection to the new standing corps as well as 'ALDO course preparatory session' for the standing corps already deployed under another profile but willing to become ALDO.

Return-related activities

With the development of the revised structure of the Agency, as of 1 June 2021, the European Centre for Returns Division was established. It is led by the Director of the European Centre for Returns Division who reports to the Deputy Executive Director for Returns and Operations. The Division is divided into three units: Pre-return Unit, Return Operations and Voluntary Returns Unit and Post-return Unit. The tasks and activities of the Division are coordinated by the Coordination Office of the Division.

Pre-return assistance

While COVID-19 still continued to impact the area of pre-return, the Agency continued to provide support in the pre-return stage of the return process. Several identification missions, familiarisation visits and workshops were organised to allow MS practitioners, the European Commission and Frontex to exchange information and practices in relation to cooperation with dedicated third countries. In addition, evaluation and monitoring meetings were held under the project with Afghanistan on using videoconferencing for identification. Nine European return liaison officers (EURLO) were deployed by the Agency covering fifteen key third countries of return. Finally, support was provided to MS through the deployment of return specialists, interpretation support and a pilot of the mobility programme.

Return operations and voluntary returns

During the reporting period, the Agency focused on continuing to provide comprehensive support to Member States, to allow the maximum flexibility in this ever-changing environment: new operational solutions, supporting tools and financial support. A total of 18 301 non-EU nationals were returned with Frontex support by air. In 2021, 10 193 persons (56 %) were returned on 337 operations by charter flights to 33 countries of return, while 8 108 persons (44 %) were returned by scheduled flights to 107 countries of return. In comparison to 2020, the total number of non-EU nationals returned increased by 53 % and, in comparison to 2019, it increased by 17 %. At the same time, 21 new destinations were reached for the first time with returns by scheduled flights, namely: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gabon, Japan, Kuwait, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, New Zealand, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

In 2021, the monthly average number of non-EU nationals returned with Frontex support reached 1 525. November was the most successful month in the history of Frontex-supported returns (2 061 non-EU nationals returned). In addition to returns by air, five persons were returned by land (bus). All in all, 107 countries of return were reached. No readmission operations from Greece to Turkey were carried out as Turkey suspended all activities of this type in 2020.

These remarkable results were achieved mainly due to the **growing share of voluntary returns** supported by the Agency, which compensated for the still existing gap – due to COVID-19-related restrictions – when compared with the number of forced returns coordinated by Frontex in previous years. Voluntary returns and departures were carried out mainly with the use of Frontex scheduled flights mechanism. In 2021, returns in a voluntary manner constituted 57 % of all returns by scheduled flights. The requests for technical support were on the rise as more Member States requested the Agency to charter aircrafts. Overall, in 2021, Frontex chartered 22 aircrafts for return operations. Further to this, in 2021 the Agency made the preparations for the first fully-fledged Frontex-led return operation, a project which will **organise end-to-end return operations by Frontex**, thereby taking over the role of the organising Member State. During 2021, extensive preparations were undertaken for the organisation of such first Frontex-led operation, which took place on 25 January 2022.

Post-return assistance

As regards the activities in the field of post-arrival and post-return, major steps have been taken to establish the Frontex Reintegration Programme. In relation to Joint Reintegration Services, the Agency has successfully implemented a pilot project with six participating MS, delivering reintegration assistance to 68 persons in Armenia, Brazil, Ethiopia and Ukraine. Based on this first endeavour, further steps were taken to ensure a full roll-out of joint reintegration activities in 2022. To that end, a Call for Proposals for Framework Partnership Agreements, was published in December 2021, with the aim to contract reliable and experienced reintegration partners to deliver reintegration assistance in a broad geographical scope, starting from April 2022. On top of that, the Agency developed a fully-fledged training curriculum for return counsellors as part of the standing corps and cooperated closely with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development to align it with the activities in the context of the capacity development and training for return counsellors.

Return-specific standing corps deployment

In 2021, for the first time the Agency deployed return teams from the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps. The two profiles of the standing corps officers that were deployed to support return activities are return specialists (RS) and forced return escort and support officers (FRESO).

Return Specialists (RS) provided support to pre- and post-return activities as well as the management of relevant return IT systems. Return Specialists provided support to pre- and post-return activities as well as to the management of relevant return IT systems. In 2021, in total 44 RS were deployed to the host Member States. Their main activities focused on supporting cooperation with third countries of return (in particular in the area of identification and issuance of travel documents), return counselling and booking flights in the Frontex Application for Return (FAR).

After thorough assessment and discussion with MS, the Agency deployed FRESO to four key EU airports (in Rome, Frankfurt, Amsterdam and Vienna) contributing to improving the overall effectiveness of the return at the EU level. Building on the success of these deployments, the Agency engaged with several other Member States (Spain and Belgium) to explore the needs and possibilities of FRESO deployment in respective countries in the future.

Other return-related projects

The adoption of 'Health and safety guidelines in return operations during pandemics or outbreaks' aimed at enhancing the safety and effectiveness of all return-related activities. In line with the Green Deal priorities set out by the European Commission, in June 2021, ECRET started to minimise its impact on the environment by offsetting the carbon footprint of each supported flight or passenger by com-

pensating the financial equivalent of the excess carbon footprint for each passenger, thus making the ticket climate neutral.

Return-related digitalisation

During 2021 on the basis of the RECAMAS reference model three gap analyses were carried out (in Cyprus, Lithuania, and Luxembourg) and one was partially completed (in Switzerland). Based on the previous gap analysis and implementation proposals agreed, Frontex supported implementation of the follow-up recommendations in Italy (3 grants), Finland (1 grant) and Belgium (1 grant). Although it was foreseen to also implement the recommendations from gap analysis in Portugal, unfortunately the grant issued at the end of 2020 was not consumed by the beneficiary in 2021. In view of COVID-19 restrictions some gap analysis as well as RECAMAS workshop took place online.

Additionally, in order to support IPA III project implementation, an international version for non-EU countries of RECAMAS reference model was prepared.

IRMA 1.0. has been continuously improved from the perspectives of content, access management and usability. New content was added to the platform to include up-to-date state of play in terms of returns to TCs, ECRET newsletters displaying the main events, statistics, dedicated workspaces, etc. In terms of access management, new workflows were added for FAR for the convenience of MS users.

IRMA 2.0. project development phase was initiated and during 2021 one module was deployed for testing, 3 modules were under the development and 2 modules were prepared for contracting.

IRMA Return Data Collection continued in 2021 with monthly statistical data reporting and yearly qualitative assessment for 2020. The data necessary for the European Commission evaluation under the obligations of Visa Code Art. 25a, were timely submitted as well as monthly IRMA statistical data was regularly provided along with updated guidelines and as of mid-2021 two indicators on asylum agreed with EUAA were added as part of the pilot exercise.

Frontex Application for Returns (FAR)

New releases of **FAR scheduled flights** module were launched, introducing new features to the software and fixing identified shortcomings. These included (non-exhaustive list):

- Creation of new Member States' groups and new user groups;
- Improvement of financial tools;
- Launch of new visualisation tools;
- Update of FAR disclaimers and operational plans;
- Improvement of booking procedures;
- Inclusion of FRESO under passenger types.

During the 2nd semester of 2021, the Agency worked on the development of a new feature for FAR scheduled flights module, i.e., the tool to fill in and send the transit request form to the transiting Member State via FAR. This new tool will allow Member States to handle one additional step of organising a return under one platform and will also give Frontex the possibility to monitor these procedures.

FAR Charter Flights module saw several releases in 2021, which introduced a number of developments:

- A new module to support the organisation and implementation of voluntary returns, both as national as well as joint initiatives of the MS;
- New FAR workstream to support the management of return operations organised by Frontex on its own initiative;
- EURLO access related functionalities for forced and voluntary returns – correlated with the country of return for which they are responsible;
- Implementation of a 24/7 service support for all forced and voluntary returns;

- Mandatory MS justification requirements aimed at speeding up the decision-making process and ensuring the sound operational and financial management of return operations.

A number of several other features were introduced to cater for the launch of and interdependencies with the new operational activities and to improve the user experience.

SO 3: Sustained European Border and Coast Guard capabilities

Committed to fulfil the mandate set in the Regulation, the Agency progressed towards the consolidation of its integrated planning, based on the multiannual strategic policy cycle for EIBM. Key to this process was the establishment of the methodology and procedure to design and define national capability plans on one hand, and on the other the adoption by the Management Board ⁽⁷⁾ of the methodology and process for contingency planning now effectively guiding the Member States on how to develop and establish their contingency plans. This ultimately enables the Agency to build its own short-, mid- and long-term capability development plans focused on contingency support to the Member States.

The year 2021 is also the first complete year of deployment of the standing corps. A major progress was evidenced in the management of different categories, in effective assignment of profiles (category 1) and in terms of the successful selection of candidates to fulfil the required numbers assigned by the Regulation to each Member State (category 2). The full operational functionality of the standing corps was ensured by provision of uniforms, equipment, including new vehicles, patrol cars etc.

While Member States continued to be the main overall providers of operational assets established and managed in the technical equipment pool, the Agency effectively made available the biggest share of aerial surveillance capabilities through the management of its own contracts. The Agency more than tripled its aerial surveillance capacity with the ability to operate in more than six different geographical locations.

Research continued playing an essential role in informing all planning processes on opportunities deriving from emerging technologies, and in providing scientific evidence where it is most needed. In 2021 advanced research studies were performed looking into biometric technologies and their role in the future of travel, and on the impact, challenges and opportunities for the European Border and Coast Guard deriving from the EU Green Deal.

Testing solutions, systems and technologies with a high readiness level continued to be a priority for the Agency. This time, an integrated system for maritime and coastal surveillance, using aerostatic platforms and, in the area of border checks, a fully-fledged Entry Exit System (EES) integral technology solution (including self-service systems, mobile devices, seamless biometric corridors, touchless technologies, etc.) were subject to testing, implementation and evaluation.

In developing future capabilities, the training of the European standing corps faced the biggest challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring high level of flexibility and adaptability. Great efforts were made to re-design the standing corps basic training to adapt the programme to recruits without law-enforcement background. The development of the extended basic training programme was finalised by end of 2021 and implemented in 2022.

Finally, over 2021, the Agency continued to offer a wide range of training programmes to the standing corps of all categories as well as to the MSs and SACs with a total of 9 893 training participants and 93.3 % satisfaction rate. The principles of fundamental rights were mainstreamed in all training contents, further to a close cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Officer and the Consultative Forum while special focus was put on identification and treatment of persons in vulnerable conditions.

⁽⁷⁾ Management Board Decision 63/2021 of 17 November 2021 adopting the Contingency Planning Methodology and Procedure.

Planning Capabilities

Capability planning framework

Following the adoption of the Management Board Decision on the Contingency Planning Methodology and Procedure, the Capability Development Network was set up to facilitate the process of establishing national CDPs, and the overview and capability roadmap. In 2021, the focus was put on aligning expectations as to what national CDPs should be configured, benchmarking what exists in other sectors and putting together a template for voluntary use by MSs and SACs. In support to this overarching goal, Opera Evolution capabilities for implementing operational activities were rolled out. While the project suffered delays by the supplier, the current scope of Opera Evolution covers the planning, allocation, deployment, and financial management of operational capabilities.

Annual planning process

The Annual Implementation Report for 2020 was adopted by the Management Board through MB Decision 41/2021 and published on Frontex website. The following milestones were reached with regards to the planning for 2022 activities:

- The Management Board decisions on Minimum Number of Items of Technical Equipment and Standing Corps (numbers and profiles per Member State and indicative multiannual planning) were adopted, and
- The Annual Bilateral Negotiations process for 2022 was also carried out successfully.

Over 2021, the Pooled Resources Network continued to be the forum of reference to prepare informed decision-making in the Management Board as regards the annual planning of capabilities and the establishment of pools. All four meetings were conducted online due to the pandemic. The iteration of December enabled fruitful discussion to shape the Pooled Resources Network to meet future needs and become the main capability-related forum on EBCG matters.

Sustainability and resilience

The work strand on sustainability and resilience was launched gathering stakeholders from MSs/SACs to benchmark existing best practices for going green to reduce emissions, cut costs and increase operational effectiveness. Further to this, a strategy was drafted with a plan to map the baseline footprint for the operational activities.

Developing and deploying existing capabilities

Recruitment of standing corps.

The recruitment of the standing corps was conducted following the regular comprehensive recruitment of the Agency which focuses on equal opportunities, fair competition, and full transparency. During 2021, the Agency's increase in positions recruited in this area – excluding internal turnover – reached 272 positions, out of which 210 refer to deployable standing corps, 44 positions for ETIAS and 18 within the Fundamental Rights Office.

Training of the standing corps

The focus of training in 2021 was on one hand the fine-tuning of the existing 6 months basic training programme (BTP) and, on the other hand, the development of the one-year extended basic training programme (EBTP) for the recruits without law-enforcement background which includes a 9 weeks of on-the-job learning scheduled from January 2022 until December 2022.

The basic training programme intends to ensure that members of the standing corps have the necessary theoretical and practical competences, including in relation to the prevention of violence and use of force, to operate in a unitary manner in any particular operational area, while complying with the provisions of the Schengen Borders Code and fundamental rights together with the MS/SAC officers.

Over 2021, batches 2, 3 and 4 of the standing corps category 1 received and completed their basic training, in total 368 cadets received their certification of completion. In addition, the Agency offered two iterations of 'delivery skills course' training to 40 trainers of the standing corps category 1 with the objective to ensure the highest standard and quality of the programme implementation.

In 2021, the Agency continued to develop the standing corps as a professional and flexible capability ready to be deployed to tackle the hybrid challenges posed on the EU external borders. Part of the career development path for categories 1 and 2 staff include the provision of profile-related advanced training programmes that qualified them for performing highly specialised operational tasks, increasing the flexibility for their deployment but also their capacity to generate added value through their operational activity. The advanced training included modules for x-ray imagery analysis, documents examination and identity checks, detection of firearms and explosives, managerial training for selected reporting officers, and operational safety and health. Further to this, during 2021 Frontex started the implementation of the annual training on the use of force for standing corps category 1 staff, a component of the control mechanism established. The program elaborates on the best practices identified together with experts from MSs/SACs and fully meets the requirements set by Annex V of the Regulation.

Staff seconded to the Agency as category 2 were trained together with their peers from category 1, to facilitate team integration. At the same time, more intensive advanced training programmes were provided to category 3 staff to prepare them for their deployment. Complementary to the profile-related specialised training programmes, standing corps members also received a comprehensive pre-deployment induction training package, designed to support their preparation for deployment and their participation in operational activities organised by the Agency.

In total, **2 884 standing corps of all categories** received specialised training(s) over 2021.

Career and personal development management

The Agency dedicated resources to the career management of standing corps with the aim to develop their abilities and adapt their skills and competences to the specific requirements of operational activities.

In this context, the following activities took place over 2021:

- The Agency launched an annual call for expression of interest for new and additional profiles. As a result, 149 standing corps category 1 officers participated in the call.
- The need for language skills was mapped. The improved language skills of the standing corps support their interaction with the authorities of host Member States and with migrants, asylum seekers and travellers. In total, 267 standing corps category 1 officers took part in Frontex language courses in 2021. Similar language courses are foreseen to be offered to the category 2 in the course of 2022.
- Training on managerial and leadership skills was developed to enable selected officers to take more responsibilities within the standing corps structure. Such training includes three development steps: basic, mid-level and advanced.
- A pool of instructors composed of standing corps category 1 staff was established to ensure the availability of sufficient number of teaching staff. Over 2021, 23 standing corps category 1 staff supported training as trainers/instructors in Avila Academy: 8 standing corps officers in the scope of use of force and firearms and 15 in other fields of expertise such as rescue swimming.
- A variety of online training was offered to the standing corps officers through the CEPOL platform.

Deployment of the standing corps

Following the development of the structure of the Agency, as of 1 June 2021, the Deployment Management Division was established, led by the Director of the Deployment Management Division who reports to the Deputy Executive Director for Standing Corps Management. The Division is divided into two units: Standing Corps Preparedness and Deployment Unit and the Logistics Unit. The tasks and activities of the Division are coordinated by the Coordination Office of the Division.

Deployments of standing corps are guided by the results of risk analysis and vulnerability assessments carried-out to assess known and foreseeable threats, as well as the capacity and readiness of Member States to manage these challenges at the external borders. These results are translated into operational needs for human resources and technical equipment as per border sections within specific period. Standing corps officers are deployed in teams, composed of officers from the categories 1, 2 and 3, and allocated to given operational locations in combination with the host Member State's coordinating staff.

To ensure a smooth deployment of the standing corps categories 1 and 2, the Agency established a new internal regulatory framework consisting of MB and ED decisions ⁽⁸⁾ related to the rules on the secondment of standing corps category 2 and on the authorisation to carry and use weapons for standing corps category 1, among others.

To ensure proper management of staff deployed, an administrative structure was also adopted, as an interim solution. For this purpose, the Agency selected and assigned the role of reporting officer by delegation to 28 officers selected among standing corps category 1 advanced level. This evolution marked the beginning of transferring managerial responsibilities to advanced level officers. The functioning of this approach will be assessed and eventually reviewed in the course of 2022.

Logistics support

Logistics support to field deployments is critical to ensure timely operational readiness. In this context, the Agency started to develop a model on how to address inherent dynamics in its operations. The development of this new model included smart and digital solutions aimed at streamlining procedures and processes and related to supply chain in the context of an Integrated Logistic Support model. More than 3 200 units of light technical equipment were managed in 2021 through an established network of 28 Frontex tactical support officers for support of logistics from standing corps categories 1, 2 and 3.

Weapons management

The Regulation stipulates that when performing their tasks, the standing corps category 1 officers may be required the use of force, including use of service weapons and non-lethal equipment. A framework contract for the supply of weapons and ammunition was signed in October 2021. A negotiated procedure was also prepared to outsource storage, transportation, and other services for the Agency to be ready for the first delivery of own weapons. As an interim solution the Agency organised the leasing of weapons for the standing corps category 1, while in parallel the Agency continued distributing selected non-lethal weapons and accessories such as batons, lachrymatory agents, carrying belts and bullet proof vests.

Fleet management

In 2021 the size of the vehicle fleet increased almost fivefold. Vehicles have been provided with fuel cards following the establishment on contractual mechanisms. Vehicle maintenance has been executed on-the-spot to eliminate transportation costs, winter tires and snow chains have been provided. As a result of these efforts, in the fourth quarter of 2021, all Frontex patrol vehicles were equipped with blue lights used in accordance with host Member State legislation.

⁽⁸⁾ Management Board Decision 3/2021 of 15 January 2021 adopting rules for the Executive Director to authorise statutory staff to carry and use weapons, including on mandatory cooperation with the competent national authorities, and ensuring that the conditions for issuing such authorisations continue to be met by statutory staff.

Management Board Decision 4/2021 of 18 January 2021 establishing specific rules to facilitate the storage of weapons, including firearms and non-lethal weapons, ammunition and other equipment owned by the Agency in secured facilities and their transportation.

Management Board Decision 22/2021 of 25 March 2021 amending Management Board Decision 3/2021 of 15 January 2021 adopting rules for the Executive Director to authorise statutory staff to carry and use weapons, including on mandatory cooperation with the competent national authorities, and ensuring that the conditions for issuing such authorisations continue to be met by statutory staff.

A total of 86 patrol vehicles, Volvo XC 60 and Land Rover Discovery Sport, and 100 transportation vehicles carried out missions in 10 joint operations. The total mileage driven by Frontex fleet exceeded 1.2 million kilometres, proving that mobility is a key-factor for an effective deployment of standing corps.

Travel management

Flexibility remains a key vector for successful standing corps management, thus planning of deployments and redeployments requires efficient travel and accommodation arrangements. The Agency dealt with these matters for standing corps categories 1 and 2 and facilitated communication with the contracted travel agency to ensure timely and accurate delivery of services. The travel agency provided bookings of hotels, apartments, transportation arrangements, rental vehicles and other services adjusted to the needs of the deployments.

Occupational safety and health

Occupational safety and health (OSH) is an obligation as well as an instrument for the Agency to prevent negative consequences for its staff which may impact our overall operational effectiveness. The Agency has the duty to establish, implement, monitor and continuously improve the OSH policies and procedures, covering the headquarters, antenna offices and operational areas.

Based on the OSH internal framework developed, the needs of staff deployed were mapped including roles and responsibilities for each internal entity involved. In August 2021, an internal working group on OSH was set up to ensure effective internal coordination, consultation, identification of gaps and priorities. Further to this, Frontex has compiled a list of actions and measures proposed to be implemented under the OSH framework. This proposal was discussed at the working group on OSH with the aim to start its implementation in 2022.

Equipment provided to support operational response, including standing corps

Over 2021, the Agency continued the development of its equipment and service capability to support the EBCG community and Frontex operations including:

- Personal protective equipment and service uniforms;
- First batch of 200 sets of radio communication devices and the activation of satellite communication services for the vehicles for migration management;
- 50 new patrol cars and 100 new transportation cars deployed to operational areas from August 2021 and 10 vehicles for migration management and 3 prototypes of the mobile surveillance system for testing in the fourth quarter of 2021;
- Maintenance of 43 mobile offices and a chemical toilet in the operational areas;
- Interpretation and cultural mediation services to all operational areas and some return operations ranging from ~70 to over 90 contracted specialists throughout all 13 deployment periods using the pilot framework contract;
- 7 aircrafts for surveillance purposes, mid-range and long-endurance (MALE) fixed wing aircraft and Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (MALE-RPAS).

Future capabilities

Strengthening the capabilities and capacities of MSs/SACs border and coast guards

Frontex continued to provide support for building-up Member States capacities and capabilities via training. The Agency provided assistance to those MSs/SACs that had recommendations for improvement under the vulnerability assessment process. Consequently, in 2021, 3 MSs/SACs received technical assistance in the form of specialised training in CIRAM-based risk analysis and 6 MSs received training sessions on countering document fraud. MSs/SACs were also assisted with bridging gaps identified in the context of Schengen evaluations and with developing capacities and capabilities in relation to the deployment of the newest large-scale IT systems, namely the Entry-Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS).

Over 6 300 participants from Member States attended specialised courses on Integrated Border Management related topics (e.g. EES, Automated Border Control, ETIAS, Schengen evaluators, advance information), on situational awareness and monitoring (such as the CIRAM-based analysis), on document and identity fraud (basic course on false documents detection I roadshow and course for specialists on identity and security documents) and other: such as the course for border surveillance officers – air crew and maritime operations, for pool of forced return monitors, and for escort leaders in forced return operations. The training provided received an overall satisfaction rate of 4.5/5.

Frontex offered a variety of training activities to support Members States, *inter alia* in preparation for the deployment of the entry exit system, or in return activities. Besides residential courses the Agency offered and serviced an online (self-study) training on the EES with around 3 500 active users by the end of December 2021. Also, the course for escort leaders in forced return operations is made available online for escort leaders from the EU MSs/SACs who already have relevant experience in forced return by air, as escort officers, escort leaders or back-up team leaders.

In addition, the Agency provided specialised training for non-EU countries. More than 300 participants were trained in the areas of documents fraud, screening/debriefing and fundamental rights for border guards. Besides, some participants received specialised training to become fully operational in one or more profiles such as escort officers, escort leaders and forced return monitors.

The third iteration of the European Joint Master's Programme in Strategic Border Management (EJMS-BM) was finalised in 2021 with 32 students successfully defending their dissertations and conferred an internationally recognised Master's Degree in Strategic Border Management. The programme also underwent a successful re-accreditation process and international re-accreditation was granted until 2027.

In 2021, Frontex published the Common Core Curriculum – Interoperability Assessment Programme (CCC-IAP) 2019–2020. The CCC-IAP evaluates how widely the CCC Basic has been integrated into the national training of border and coast guard, and the extent to which students have achieved the competences necessary. The review and update of the CCC Basic was launched in 2021.

Training of the Fundamental Rights Monitors and ETIAS CU staff

2021 was also the year when the first fundamental rights monitors and staff for the ETIAS Central Unit were onboarded. Prior to performing their duties, the Agency provided them with tailored specialised training programmes related to their tasks.

The training programme for the fundamental rights monitors was developed under the direct guidance of the Fundamental Rights Officer and targeted monitors and senior monitors assigned to the Fundamental Rights Office, as foreseen in the Article 110 of the Regulation. Encompassing a total of 288 learning hours, the course focused on aspects pertaining to monitoring the compliance with fundamental rights, performing monitoring tasks in operational activities, observation and note-taking skills, reporting and communication. The learning process is complemented by a 1 month of peer-support. For the senior fundamental rights monitors (FROMs), an additional 2-days training focusing on improving their managerial skills was delivered. The basic training on forced-return monitoring was provided to those FROMs assigned to the pool of experts of force return. A total of 20 fundamental rights monitors were trained in 2021.

The training programme of the ETIAS Central Unit staff benefited not only from direct steering of the newly established ETIAS Division but also from the cooperation with eu-LISA and from the guidance of the Frontex Data Protection Officer. A total of 40 staff members were trained in a two months' programme to perform specialised tasks related to ETIAS operations and carrier support.

Research for emerging capabilities

In line with the Regulation, Frontex proactively monitors and contributes to research and innovation activities relevant for European Integrated Border Management. Based on the terms of reference for cooperation in the EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme signed between Frontex and EU

Commission in 2020, Frontex provided feedback to the Horizon Border Management calls. The Agency supported the implementation of research and innovation projects, as well as proactively disseminated the results of these to the EBCG community in network meetings, and to the public through a dedicated section of the Frontex website.

During the reporting period, Frontex in cooperation with a contractor delivered the Technology Foresight Research Study on Biometrics for the Future of Travel. The results of the study will support the EBCG community in making decisions regarding the adoption of novel technological solutions and exploiting new opportunities mitigating associated risks.

In addition, the Agency completed and published the research study ⁽⁹⁾ on [artificial intelligence-based capabilities for the European border and coast guard and carried out a research study on the Green Deal and the EBCG whose findings will be published in 2022](#).

Technology Innovation

Frontex provides a technology-based capability development to the EBCG, by conducting testing and enabling acquisition of technological solutions. In 2021 the focus of technology innovation activities was on piloting new technological solutions relevant for the EBCG while continuing to enable structured industry dialogues for the EBCG community.

In 2021, Frontex, in cooperation with the host Member State Greece and the contractors, implemented the pilot project on Maritime Surveillance Aerostat. During the four months of its deployment, the two aerostat systems provided wide-area surveillance in the North-eastern Aegean Sea, utilising state of the art sensors (electrooptical and thermal camera, radar, and automatic identification system receiver). The project successfully implemented the proof of concept of multi-platform aerostat-based technology for maritime surveillance operations that provided an effective and reliable 24/7 service to operational users. A hybrid showcase was organised in November to share the main outcomes, lessons learned and challenges with MS, EU Agencies, and the industry consortium providing the technology solutions.

Also in 2021, Frontex organised industry days designed to meet the information needs on the state of the art of technologies in specific areas such as airborne maritime surveillance solutions, return and reintegration assistance and autonomous solutions for border surveillance technology. In total 130 products and solutions were presented to the EBCG community by 105 companies and consortiums.

Support to Member States capabilities in view of Entry Exit System entry into force

Frontex continued to support the EBCG community in the preparations for the entry into force of the Entry Exit System Regulation. In 2021 the Frontex Entry/Exit System (EES) Land Border Pilot Projects was implemented, in coordination with the host Member States Spain and Bulgaria, and EU-LISA. The pilot projects mapped and successfully presented a comprehensive implementation of the main EES processes enabling the development of a proof of concept for a universal and scalable technology-assisted solution supporting border workflows.

Further capability development activities supporting preparations for the EES included the publication on Frontex website of the Technical Guide for Border Checks on Entry Exit System (EES) related equipment ⁽¹⁰⁾. The Agency also contributed to the development of the EES Handbook prepared by the Commission.

⁽⁹⁾ <https://frontex.europa.eu/documents-and-publications/artificial-intelligence-based-capabilities-for-the-european-border-and-coast-guard-final-report-CYyjoie>

⁽¹⁰⁾ <https://prd.frontex.europa.eu/document/technical-guide-for-border-checks-on-entry-exit-system-related-equipment/>

Towards standardisation and interoperability

To ensure interoperability and compatibility of the equipment in the technical equipment pool, four technical standards were developed and adopted by the Management Board ⁽¹¹⁾. These are the technical standards on maritime equipment, aerial equipment, land border surveillance equipment and document inspection equipment.

In 2021, Frontex also held online its Third International Conference on Biometrics for Borders with thematic focus on biometric interoperability in the context of European Union's external border management. Following the request of Lithuania, and in cooperation with other MSs, Frontex supported the development of pilot Common Minimum Surveillance Standards. During the reporting period, the Agency engaged with a group of five Member States to develop a proposal for Common Minimum Surveillance focusing on land border. This initial work will be concluded in 2022 and shared with all MSs in view of its updating to cover all external land borders.

HO 2: Reinforce the external dimension aimed at multiplying Frontex operational impact through cooperation with the European Commission and EEAS, as well as through partnership with Member States, EU entities, non-EU countries and international organisations

Cooperation with third countries

Frontex renews commitment for cooperation with Albania and Georgia

At the beginning of 2021, Frontex renewed its working arrangements with the Ministry of the Internal Affairs of Georgia and the Ministry of Interior of Albania. The revised working arrangements reaffirm the commitment to work together in dealing with irregular migration and fighting cross-border crime, reflecting the strengthened mandate of Frontex and they will lead to a better response to today's operational needs in the area of border management and return, in full respect of fundamental rights.

Frontex Management Board meets Western Balkan partners for high-level talks

In November 2021, Frontex and the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU held a high-level meeting between the Agency's Management Board and the Heads of Border Police from the Western Balkans. During the meeting the partners agreed on joint conclusions where they pledged to further invest into joint operational activities, work together towards building capacities and capabilities and encouraged swift conclusion of the remaining Status Agreements between the EU and the Western Balkan partners. The document was endorsed by all members of the Frontex Management Board and the six Western Balkan partners.

Strengthened Euro-Arab dialogue on border security

In December 2021, Frontex and the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC) of the League of Arab States (LAS) co-organised the first Euro-Arab Border Security Conference in Amman, Jordan. Held under the patronage of the Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and with the support of the Public Security Directorate, the event was a major milestone in strengthening Euro-Arab dialogue on border security. The Conference gave a new impetus for a strengthened dialogue between EU and Arab border management authorities, who committed to hold the conference every two years and establish an expert working group to jointly identify and steer concrete priorities of cooperation.

⁽¹¹⁾ Management Board Decision 51/2021 of 21 September 2021 adopting Technical Standards for the equipment to be deployed in Frontex activities.

EU partners and international organisations

Frontex holds the Presidency of the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies' network

Throughout 2021, Frontex held the annual Presidency of the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies' Network (JHAAN), composed of nine EU agencies. As flagship topics for the Presidency, Frontex chose to explore cooperation among JHA agencies in two areas, aiming to contribute to European Green Deal and EU's priorities in relation to digitalisation. The network organised three seminars focusing on climate change and its impact on JHA, environmental crimes and corporate carbon neutrality, and invited JHA staff to a training about Green Deal policies. The Network developed ⁽¹²⁾ a paper that summarises *actions taken by the JHA Agencies to fight environmental crime* and signed ⁽¹³⁾ a *Joint Statement on the EU Green Deal*.

Frontex liaison officers' networks

Frontex deploys the second liaison officer to the Western Balkan region

In January, the second FLO to the Western Balkan region with a mandate to cover Albania, Kosovo ⁽¹⁴⁾ and North Macedonia started her deployment in the EU Delegation in Tirana, Albania. The FLO supports the operationalisation of the status agreements and the implementation of working arrangements facilitating contacts with local authorities in relation to Frontex joint operations and capacity building activities in the region. This deployment complements the work of the Frontex Liaison Officer based in Belgrade, Serbia since 2017.

The Agency welcomes the first liaison officers from Member States as part of a one-year pilot

In July, Frontex officially launched a pilot phase for the first deployments of liaison officers from Member States. The pilot will conclude in 2022 by early summer, with a total of nine liaison officers representing seven MS and SACs namely France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and Switzerland.

The aim of the pilot is to test and fine-tune the modalities of the deployment, as set by the Management Board, before the network of the liaison officers reaches its full size. During the first half of 2021, the pilot was already able to show-case the benefits of the deployments. Initiating this new concept with a small group of liaison officers and a dedicated team within the Liaison Officers Networks Unit allowed to test communication channels, set-up workflows and learn how to make the best use of the liaison officers' presence for both MS and Frontex.

HO 3: Develop upgraded management system aimed at ensuring accountability, regularity, and legality of all Frontex activities

Executive Affairs Unit

The Executive Affairs Unit (EAU) was established by Management Board Decision in November 2021 to provide support and advice to the members of the Executive Management of the Agency and ensure cross-divisional coordination. The unit includes the Brussels Liaison Office and the Document Management Office, and its main achievements in 2021 were the following:

- Implementation of the horizontal functions through the regular organisation of cross-divisional meetings at different levels, starting from the Operational Board and Directors' Briefing where strategic issues and current affairs have been discussed, to more technical meetings including a focus group on implementation of the Regulation (EU) 2019/186 and cross-divisional coordination meetings.
- Developing the new Frontex Internal Structure and Rules of Procedure (FISRoP) in consultation with relevant stakeholders including three appointed DEDs, the European Commission and the MB; the

⁽¹²⁾ https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Images_News/2021/JHA_Envicrime.pdf

⁽¹³⁾ https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Images_News/2021/JHA_Agencies_Joint_Statement_on_the_EU_Green_Deal.pdf

⁽¹⁴⁾ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status. It is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

FISRoP supported the structural transformation of the whole Agency including the onboarding of the DEDs.

- Providing advisory and executive support to the members of the Executive Management including coordination of the preparation of documents for meetings and missions of the Executive Management in close cooperation with the Agency's entities.
- Supporting the coordination and preparation of meetings and activities of the Frontex Management Board and its supporting bodies, namely the Executive Board, the Working Group on Budget and Accounts and the Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations.
- In relations with the EU Institutions, promoting the Agency's successes and raising awareness regarding the challenges in the implementation of the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896.
- Contributing to an active stakeholder engagement across many of the key files for the Agency: *inter alia* implementation of the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, Migration and Asylum Pact, law enforcement cooperation, interoperability, FSWG, budget process 2022 and the discharge procedure for 2020.
- Paving the way for the introduction of the Advanced Records System (Ares) in the Agency which is already operational in the first quarter of 2022.
- Ensuring the introduction of the qualified electronic signature (QES) solution and setting the internal rules for the use of such signatures at Frontex.

Human resources

Frontex strengthened its position as the largest EU Agency in terms of own staff recruiting **432** newcomers in 2021. Due to the internal turnover (44 staff members were appointed to new positions after having successfully participated in an external recruitment process) and an external turnover (68 staff members left the Agency) the net increase in staff was 320 (the second largest increase after 2020) with 1 234 staff at the beginning of the year and **1 554** positions filled (temporary agents, contract agents and seconded national experts) at the end of the year. Compared to December 2019 when the staffing numbers reached 749, the Agency has virtually doubled its size between 2019 and 2021.

These are the major achievements in the area of talent acquisition:

- 33 new external recruitment procedures launched;
- 200 non-standing corps posts filled (TAs, CAs and SNEs);
- 232 European Border and Coast Guard staff (standing corps category 1) recruited;
- 49 trainees engaged under Blue Book traineeship programme (spring and autumn);
- 115 new interim staff support filled (+ 55 % when compared to 2020).

These are the major achievements in the area of personnel administration:

- 432 newcomers onboarded, involving induction sessions, individual meetings, personnel files creation, encoding in data bases, advanced payments, etc.
- HR staff mission to Avila to complete the process of verification of personal documentation, which had not been possible earlier during the onboarding process due to COVID-19.
- In April 2021, SYSPER TIM module was rolled out for Frontex staff. At the same time, a badging system was launched, in order to facilitate the working time record (clock-in/clock out) for all staff members in the HQ.
- During 2021 preparatory work has been carried out to implement SYSPER HR Reporting module to be operational in 2022.
- Development of a tool to implement an agile, efficient and paperless standby duty verification and payment process initiated (work in progress).
- Agreements with 3 Accredited European Schools in Europe closed.
- More than 746 schooling reimbursement applications processed.
- 36 social measures applications processed, including the supplementary aid for the disabled.

These are the major achievements in the area of career development and training:

- Implementation of changes resulting from the major reorganisation of the Agency's administrative structure in June 2021 (with further changes in November 2021).
- Implementation of the new process of strategical learning needs analysis.
- Adaptation of training processes in line with the rules set up by the Management Board Decision 60/2021 on the Framework for Learning and Development adopted on 25 October 2021.
- Induction training run for 3 different target audiences (non-standing corps staff, standing corps and ETIAS Central Unit Division).

Financial management

The Agency continued its progress in terms of internal capacity for budget absorption and implementation. During the reporting period the level of commitment of C1 funds (2021 appropriations) increased by EUR 146.2m (+ 41 %) to EUR 506.9m. In parallel to this, the Agency introduced changes to improve several processes in the financial management area enhancing internal collaboration with the entities for the processes related to grants. This allowed to improve the quality of the draft documents for call for proposals and grant management allowing to implement the use of Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) for grants supporting the business unit in ensuring a longer-term stability for the activities.

Financial verification has continued with its high level of efficiency when reviewing files which allow for an early identification of improvements/changes that might be required. In terms of budget planning, control and monitoring the financial unit put in place certain mechanisms to improve budget execution. Namely, a closer link between the planning of activities (programming document) and financial forecasting was introduced by linking forecasted expenditure to the key activities in the annual work programme. Finally, several mechanisms were put in place to enhance reliability of cost forecasts associated with different activities.

Legal services

As the demand for legal support continued to grow in the reporting period, a total of 65 draft decisions of the Management Board and numerous draft decisions of the Executive Director were revised, thereby supporting the compliance on behalf of the Agency with the applicable legal framework. Legal services maintained its delivery of client-oriented and professional legal solutions to the different levels of the Agency management while flagging inherent legal risks. The legal service of the Agency remained successful in defending Frontex in litigation cases, both before national courts and the EU General Court.

Legal advice and support in operational matters to business units focused on a wide array of thematic areas, spanning from the operationalisation of the EBCG standing corps to the drafting and implementation of operational plans governing Frontex' operations and activities, among which the Rapid Border Intervention (RBI) in Lithuania, with a view to always ensure the legality of actions on behalf of the Agency and its staff. Furthermore, the transparency office demonstrated particular resilience in processing a continuously increasing number of applications for public access to documents with a record of 351 applications received in 2021.

Procurement service

All procedures included in the annual procurement plan of 2021 and timely submitted were published. The vast majority were complex and high value tenders related to standing corps, operational support, COVID-19 response and increased administrative needs. The planning and monitoring of the annual procurement plan was significantly improved by establishing new processes via formal exercises and consultation with the Management Board's Working Group of Budget and Accounts.

Security management

In this area, the management of a programme for personnel security continued, prioritising vetting all standing corps. Physical security requirements for future Brussels Liaison Office, ETIAS and Frontex

permanent premises were re-assessed, including specialised counterintelligence and terrorism assessments, provided on the basis of recognised assessment models. In 2021, the Interim Authorisation to Operate (IATO) for EUROSUR Communication Network was reviewed and updated and EUROSUR ECN IATO 2022 signed by Frontex Security Authority. Furthermore, the first two meetings of the EUROSUR Security Accreditation Board were organised and the recruitment of the Security Officer – Secretary to the EUROSUR Security Accreditation Board initiated.

In the area of corporate services, a significant achievement was the furnishing and opening for use of three office floors with 106 new workstations. An increasing number of meeting rooms were made available for operational use by the Frontex Situation Centre (FSC) and the Frontex Operational Coordination Centre (FOCC). Fit-out and furnishing works were completed in the Centre for Excellence of Documents (CED) Forgery desk room. Finally, health and safety measures to enhance sanitary protocols were continued with a view to providing safe working environment in times of COVID-19 pandemic.

Digital services and cybersecurity

Cybersecurity sector was created with the main objective to improve internal cybersecurity, enhance organisation and management of services ensuring security of digital services and product development lifecycle, security monitoring and response capabilities and technical support of accreditation of the Agency's managed EUCI network.

The architecture of the EU-RESTRICTED EUROSUR network was modernised and the technical gap was bridged while extended digital support was continually being provided to the growing staff of the Agency – and particularly to the standing corps. To that end a new framework contract was concluded which will cover the support outside working hours and during stand-by. Additionally, digital-profiled standing corps officers were deployed to DIG to gain experience in providing off-site support in operational areas.

Data protection

In the domain of data protection, the year 2021 saw the continuation of complex files that had been initiated in 2020, such as the processing on the Microsoft Cloud with the outcome of the EDPS investigation in August 2021, as well as the continuation on the provision of advice on the processing activities undertaken by the Agency.

The main achievement of the Agency in 2021 in the area of data protection was the adoption of three Management Board decisions. The first one relates to the tasks, duties and powers of the Data Protection Officer as well as rules concerning Designated Controllers in Frontex. This document was sent by the Agency to the European Data Protection Supervisor for information, following the legal obligation set in Article 41 of the EUI Data Protection Regulation.

The other two Management Board Decisions adopted in this domain refer to the rules on processing personal data by the Agency and on the rules on processing operational personal data by the Agency. Further to this, the Agency prepared the Management Board decision on restrictions of rights of data subjects.

Equally, under obligation set in Articles 39 and 40 EUI DPR, the Agency prepared the Data Protection Impact Assessment on the processing activities under Integrated Return Management Application, and received the EDPS formal opinion on the consultation launched in December 2021. Another major development in data processing activities by the Agency was the move to Microsoft Cloud. Following Article 40 EUI DPR, the Agency received the provisional EDPS opinion on the processing activities undertaken by Frontex, with the request to make allegations on their opinion.

Fundamental Rights

A very important domain within the operational activities of the Agency relates to our compliance with Fundamental Rights. During the reporting period, 20 of the 40 Fundamental Rights Monitors (FROMs) required by Article 110(6) of the Regulation were recruited. This first batch of 20 took up their posts in

the summer period while the recruitment for the remaining posts started in 2021. In parallel, the newly appointed Fundamental Rights Officer took up his duties on 1 June 2021.

The FROMs followed a specific training programme upon engagement and before being deployed. Within the reporting period the staff of the Fundamental Rights Office, conducted well over 200 deployment days, visiting 10 countries, with a significant focus on Lithuania and Greece. This focus was based on a risk assessment and on Frontex operational engagement in those border sections within the reporting period.

Since some of the monitors also serve as forced return monitors, they took part in 15 return missions contributing to the full compliance of our activities with the legal framework in place. At the end of 2021, the Fundamental Rights Office took over the coordination of the pool of national return monitors, which will enhance the independent monitoring of return flights going forward. The Fundamental Rights Office also delivered training to the standing corps as well as national officers on relevant standards and practices. In total, over 50 training days were provided.

The Fundamental Rights Office continued handling serious incidents reports, with the number of cases related to fundamental rights increasing markedly, from 10 in 2020 to over 60 in 2021 and with an even larger number of incidents pending processing, potentially significantly raising the recorded increase. Most serious incidents reports related to Lithuania, but also Greece was a major contributor in this respect. Furthermore, the complaints mechanism saw a slight increase in cases during the year (27 cases in 2021 compared to 24 in 2020, with 7 and 6 cases respectively being admissible).

The office continued to provide input to the wide range of Frontex processes, from operational plans to evaluations and working arrangements, providing comments to more than 50 dossiers during 2021 including all operational plans and evaluations. The Fundamental Rights Officer also issued opinions on significant fundamental rights concerns, including in relation to Lithuania and the overall crisis situation at the border with Belarus. The Fundamental Rights Officer advised on the revision of 'The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) – Use of Force And Incidents Involving the Use of Force Reporting' whereby all incidents involving use of force are shared with the Fundamental Rights Officer, who receives a monthly overview of all the use of force incidents reported in this period in order to issue an annual assessment of the new procedure.

The adoption by the Frontex Management Board of the Fundamental Rights Strategy at the beginning of 2021 and the Fundamental Rights Action Plan (FRAP) in November 2021, prove the commitment of the Agency to define and operationalise the compliance of fundamental rights on its activities. The FRAP outlines specific outputs on fundamental rights-based migration management for the whole EBCG (section 1) and related specifically to the Agency (section 2). Time-bound activities on fundamental rights are assigned to the specific units within the Agency, such as improving data collection on identification and referrals of persons in vulnerable situations or ensuring that deployed staff have an advanced knowledge and/or expertise in fundamental rights and child protection where necessary. Frontex, including its Fundamental Rights Officer, will monitor the implementation of the Action Plan, and an update on the progress will be featured in the Fundamental Right Office annual report.

Media and Public Relations

Within this domain of our activities the Agency continued its efforts to inform the public about the development and deployment of the European standing corps and Frontex operations through dedicated videos, posts and targeted campaigns. Audio-visual materials were produced to promote operational activities, amongst others:

- On standing corps recruits and their training at Avila training centre,
- The set-up of ETIAS Central Unit, Entry-Exit System and other technological developments.
- Fundamental rights safeguards in Frontex, including the work of the fundamental rights monitors,
- Operations such as MMO Black Sea or the Rapid Border Intervention in Lithuania including updates from all 19 Frontex operations.

- EMPACT activities, the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats, which tackles the most important threats posed by organised and serious international crime affecting the EU.
- Production of the 'Handbook on Firearms for Border Guards and Customs'.

Frontex continued to expand its presence on three social media channels: Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, ending the year with more than 138 000 followers in total.

Handling COVID-19 – the Crisis Cell and Frontex Exit Strategy

Following the outbreak of the pandemic, in 2020 Frontex set up the crisis cell and a COVID-19 helpline which supports the Executive Management in leading the Agency through the COVID-19 crisis. Ensuring occupational safety and health became of paramount importance and commitment of the Agency to maximise its effectiveness and efficiency during the COVID-19 pandemic; a fully-fledged policy under the exit strategy is in place at Frontex. The same objectives were pursued throughout 2021, which brought new and additional challenges, caused by the variants of the coronavirus and further waves of the phenomenon.

The Agency remained in active contact with public health authorities, including national authorities, as well as medical experts and medical service providers who supported further implementation of analysis and actions within safety and health arenas, reinforcing protection for the Frontex personnel.

The priority areas of the crisis cell have been summarised below.

Supporting the Executive Management in decision-making to ensure business continuity. The crisis cell held regular meetings with Executive Management on COVID-19 to report on community transmission in the HQ and to staff deployed as well as on mission. Crisis cell raised relevant issues related to business continuity and staff well-being proposing Executive Management solutions to improve policies within the Agency. In particular, crisis cell monitored and assessed COVID-19 situation providing regular updates, indicating impact on Frontex staff at the HQ, training centres and in joint operations, weekly and tailored reports, provided assessment of the epidemiological situation in Europe and Poland.

Minimising disruption to Agency's operations and ensure safe working environment. To ensure the business continuity, minimising disruptions caused by COVID-19, and enhancing a safe working environment, crisis cell put strong focus on detecting and preventing the outbreak of COVID-19 among Frontex staff. To this end, the cell implemented a decision from the Agency to run two projects: COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, both performed by outsourced medical services providers where the coordination of these processes aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of the services delivered.

To ensure safe and healthy working environment the crisis cell constantly revised internal policies, adapted safety rules, and applied commensurate measures between the Agency business needs and COVID-19 situation in the host country. In 2021, these efforts addressed our response towards 3rd and 4th waves of the pandemic, both driven by highly transmissible variants of the virus. Upon decision of the Executive Director, the crisis cell was engaged in the implementation of the different phases of the exit strategy, implying initially the increase of physical presence of staff in HQ from 25 % to 50 % during summertime and back to 30 % in autumn. Such measures impacted not only the physical presence in the office but also the teleworking arrangements, and the rules for meetings and missions.

Communication to Staff and stakeholders. Communication was also a crucial component of the Agency's crisis response, thus reliable updates were provided on the COVID-19 situation in Poland and in the EU, on the indicators of the exit strategy and concerned measures applied such as travel restrictions, internal measures, teleworking arrangements, shifts regime, temperature checks, COVID-19 testing, and escalation processes. The communications were issued through the intranet of the Agency or directly by the Executive Director.

Ensuring health and support to Staff and family members. The crisis cell coordinated the activities of COVID-19 helpline that served staff affected with COVID-19 and facilitated contacts with Polish Sanitary

Authority, providing updated information on COVID-19 restrictions, isolation and quarantine rules as well as assisting with COVID-19 vaccination, certificates, tests and medical visits.

During 2021 one of the biggest challenges was related to the coordination of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign for Frontex staff and family members. This was due to the differences in the rollout of the vaccine in various EU MS, and limited availability of the vaccine at the beginning of the year. To this end, COVID-19 helpline facilitated the vaccination process both for staff in Warsaw and staff deployed abroad. Frontex staff and family members in fact were offered vaccinations along Polish vaccination scheme, and provided with various arrangements, based on their status and the nature of their employment in the host country. In particular:

- **Vaccination for SC CAT 1 officers** – organised and coordinated with the help of the Polish Ministry of Interior and Hospital of the Ministry of Interior. Officers received the vaccine as part of the COVID-19 vaccination for uniformed services programme.
- **Vaccination for MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) card holders** – organised and coordinated with the help of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dedicated to diplomats and the representatives of international organisations and their family members who reside in Poland.
- **Vaccination for Frontex staff and their family members** – colleagues who were not eligible to use any of the above options were offered a possibility to receive the vaccine as part of the Polish government programme COVID-19 vaccination at workplaces with the help of VAXMED vaccination centre.

COVID-19 testing. To reduce the risk of Sars-CoV-2 virus transmission amongst Frontex HQ staff by identifying and isolating potential carriers, in accordance with Polish law, Frontex ensured outsourced support for testing and contact tracing. Staff physically present in Frontex HQ were subject to either rapid antigen and/or PCR tests at least on a weekly basis. Rapid antigen and/or PCR tests were also available upon request by staff going on missions as required by the country of destination. For the latter, PCR tests were also available for private purposes outside HQ for which costs staff was reimbursed in line with the special Administrative Notice setting this framework.

With the commitment of the Agency and following strict protocols, 19 000 antigen and 1 400 PCR tests were performed at HQ by the medical team in 2021, and a large number of staff and their family members were supported by COVID-19 helpline.

Key conclusions

Part 1. Achievements

- The area of situational monitoring was marked by a record number of special simulation exercises carried out by Frontex in cooperation with the EU Member States;
- New Copernicus Contribution Agreement was signed between the European Commission (DG DEFIS) and Frontex to ensure the continuity of the service provision for the years 2022-2028 with a financial envelope of EUR 67m;
- Frontex issued 49 near real-time 'ad-hoc' situation reports on outstanding events in the Central Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean, Channel, EU/Belarus border, Canary Islands and Albania;
- The Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM 2.1) was adopted by Management Board Decision No 50/2021;
- By the end of 2021, Frontex deployed 2 000 officers working with their national counterparts along the external borders. Throughout the year Frontex supported the return of 18 301 third country nationals. This represented a record figure for the Agency, and it was achieved thanks to the increase of returns through scheduled flights;
- Frontex implemented one rapid border intervention (RBI) at the external land border between Lithuania and Belarus;
- Another significant operational activity in the maritime domain was the new JO Opal Coast 2021 hosted by Belgium and France, launched in December 2021, following the ministerial meeting held in Calais (France);
- JO Flexible Operational Activities Land 2021 and JO Focal Point-Land 2021 significantly enlarged the operational area;
- Operationalisation of the EU status agreement with Serbia, which in consequence led to launching of the new joint operation in a third country, the JO Serbia-Land 2021 in June 2021;
- JO Canary Islands 2021 and JO Cyprus 2021 which were implemented for the first time as standalone joint operations under the multipurpose operational activities – sea cluster;
- In 2021, the development of Frontex law enforcement functions focused on enhancing the law enforcement modules under joint operations and enabling synergies with JADs;
- The Capability Development Network was set up to facilitate the process of establishing National CDPs;
- The Agency made available the largest share of aerial surveillance capabilities through the management of its own contracts;
- Over 2021, batches 2, 3 and 4 of the standing corps category 1 received and completed their basic training, in total 368 cadets received their certification of completion;
- First fundamental rights monitors and staff for the ETIAS Central Unit were onboarded. Prior to performing their duties, the Agency provided them with tailored specialised training programmes related to their tasks;
- Development of the one-year extended basic training programme (EBTP) for the recruits without law-enforcement background which includes a 9 weeks of on-the-job learning;
- Fleet management – 100 transportation and 86 patrol vehicles were made available for operations;
- The Agency completed and published the research study on Artificial Intelligence-based capabilities for the European Border and Coast Guard;
- Frontex renewed its working arrangements with the Ministry of the Internal Affairs of Georgia and the Ministry of Interior of Albania;
- Frontex and the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU held a high-level meeting between the Agency's Management Board and the Heads of Border Police from the Western Balkans;
- Frontex and the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC) of the League of Arab States (LAS) co-organised the first Euro-Arab Border Security Conference in Amman, Jordan;
- Frontex officially launched a pilot phase for the first deployments of Liaison Officers from Member States;

- 432 newcomers recorded. Due to internal and external turnover the net increase in staff was 320, at the beginning of 2021 with 1 234 positions filled and concluding the year with 1 554 staff on board;
- During the reporting period, 20 of the 40 Fundamental Rights Monitors (FROMs) required by Article 110(6) of the Regulation were recruited. This first batch of 20 FROMs took up their posts in the summer period while the recruitment for the remaining posts started in 2021. In parallel, the newly appointed Fundamental Rights Officer took up his duties on 1 June 2021;
- The Agency initiated the recruitment of staff for the launch of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) increasing from 8 to 52 positions filled as of end of year;
- The Interim Authorisation to Operate (IATO) for EUROSUR Communication Network was reviewed and updated and EUROSUR ECN IATO 2022 signed by Frontex Security Authority.

Part 2. Management

- 2021 was a year of ground-breaking changes and challenges for Frontex and the European Border and Coast Guard. The Agency deployed the first officers of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps, the EU's first uniformed law enforcement service;
- The Management Board addressed some of the challenges imposed by COVID-19 and reverted to hybrid meetings with partial physical presence from June 2021;
- Frontex implemented the new organisational structure adopted by the Management Board in 2020. Following the appointment of three Deputy Executive Directors, the organisational structure was further amended in November 2021 to create the Executive Affairs Unit. These changes were reflected in the updated Frontex Internal Structure and Rules of Procedure;
- In 2021, the Agency developed new elements of the fundamental rights and data protection framework set by the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, in close cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union and the European Data Protection Supervisor;
- The development of the fundamental rights framework was strengthened by the adoption of the Fundamental Rights Strategy and Action Plan, the recruitment of the new Fundamental Rights Officer and of 20 Fundamental Rights monitors;
- To address the persistent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, updated internal practices were developed to ensure business continuity (paperless workflows, online authorisations, virtual meetings) which are still in use;
- Despite the environmental conditions, Frontex continued to provide operational support to Member States. The establishment of the standing corps allowed the Agency to expand the variety of services provided to Member States;
- The external limitations to Frontex activities resulted in a decrease of the annual budget when compared to that originally adopted by EUR 15.5 million. However, the overall level of commitments grew notably from EUR 473m in 2020 to EUR 670.4m in the reporting period representing an increase of +42 % or EUR 197.2m;
- Addressing allegations of involvement in fundamental rights violations in its operations in the Aegean Sea, the Agency welcomed the conclusions of the Management Board Working Group FRaLO and the European Parliament's Frontex Scrutiny Working Group which established that no conclusive evidence supporting allegations of direct pushbacks and/or collective expulsions by Frontex could be found. The Agency also welcomed the recommendations produced by these bodies and set up processes to follow up their implementation;
- Frontex continued close cooperation with the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors to implement all audit recommendations. The Agency will continue to devote attention and efforts to this area during 2022.

Part I – Achievements of the year ⁽¹⁵⁾

1.1. Strategic Objective 1

Reduced vulnerability of the external borders based on comprehensive situational awareness

Focus Area 1.1. Produce actionable information and analysis to enable the functioning of the European Border and Coast Guard

Key Activity 1.1.1. Perform situation monitoring and surveillance in all four tiers of the EIBM and process information collected from all sources in support of the Agency's activities, with a focus on the pre-frontier area and non-EU countries.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Produce actionable information through 24/7 (near-to) real-time situation and crisis monitoring and surveillance.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- 24/7 Situation and crisis monitoring ensured near real-time reporting on outstanding events at the external border and beyond of the EU in various geographical areas (Central Mediterranean, EU/Belarus border area, Channel, Albania, the Eastern Mediterranean etc.) as well as it reported on the EU/Belarus situation to the EC, Member States on a daily basis, providing also a more comprehensive overview and weekly analysis in the second half of 2021.
- Seven national coordination centres, under the framework of EUROSUR were visited in 2021 which directly led to the increased operational cooperation with the Member States resulting in near-real time information exchange especially with Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Italy.
- The deployment of standing corps in Lithuania contributed to near-real-time reporting of incidents from the start of the escalation of the crisis at the EU/Belarus border as well as during JO OPAL Coast. Moreover, through the deployment of standing corps in Lithuania and the revised SIR SOP it was possible to ensure that any incident with potential violation of fundamental rights was reported to the FRO in near-real-time.
- Frontex closely monitored evolving situations such as COVID-19 pandemic impacting border management as well as the crisis at the Ukraine/Russia border, establishing specific crisis cells for each of those.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Partially achieved. In line with the WG FRaLO recommendations, to enhance information exchange between the various entities of Frontex, the Frontex Situation Centre was relocated in order to have the numerous situation monitoring services accessible in one single room as well as to enhance cooperation with the FOCC in terms of the increased scope of incident validation. A proposal to establish a programme board concerning the Agency's centralised infrastructure was adopted by the Executive Management and SAMD – with the involvement of other entities – prepared a concept for the centralised infrastructure.

⁽¹⁵⁾ NB: The exact formulation of expected results and indicators envision was formulated on the Single Programming Document 2021-2023 accessible on <https://prd.frontex.europa.eu/document/single-programming-document-2021-2023/> and amended through Management Board Decision 40/2021 adopting amendment N1 to the Single Programming Document 2021-2023 accessible on <https://prd.frontex.europa.eu/document/management-board-decision-40-2021-adopting-amendment-n1-to-the-single-programming-document-2021-2023>

2. Partially achieved. A complete consolidation was not possible due to the late extension of the Copernicus Contribution Agreement signed in November including important elements to be taken into consideration for this consolidation. Work on the new EFS for air border surveillance started.
3. Achieved. Relevant alerts were delivered to Member States' competent authorities for supporting their situational awareness i.e., 53 vessels of interest were identified during pre-frontier surveillance in 2021.
4. Partially achieved. In 2021, 461 detections were performed by FSA assets over the maritime and land borders. All these were shared with hosting and neighbouring MS for ensuring their situational awareness. The majority of the detections were linked to migrant smuggling, involving more than 24 000 migrants. One detection related to environmental pollution was performed. Additionally, 98 fishing vessel sighting forms were shared with EFCA.
5. Achieved. The results of the last survey on EFS services conducted in February 2021 display an overall positive feedback in all EFS services. Indeed, in almost all the parameters of evaluation, over 50 % of respondents affirm to 'strongly agree' or 'agree'.

Key Activity 1.1.2 ⁽¹⁶⁾. Maintain a robust awareness mechanism based on constant situation monitoring and risk analysis including pre-warning and forecasting, within all four tiers of the EIBM, and including cross-border crime.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Regularly provide analysis and assessments by border sections/ border crossing points on all aspects of the European IBM to inform operational and strategic decisions.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Regular attribution of the EUROSUR impact levels per land and sea border sections performed as planned. Regular analysis and assessment of the migratory phenomena with the recommendation to decrease/increase impact levels produced. In 2021, 12 'impact level change requests' were issued.
- Frontex established a Strategic Risk Analysis Network (SRAN) to facilitate the cooperation with external stakeholders to prepare Strategic Risk Analysis for European integrated border management – a flagship report contributing to the multiannual strategic policy cycle for EIBM.
- Frontex's Management Board adopted the Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model 2.1 (CIRAM) – Decision No 50/2021. The revised CIRAM addresses: all the requirements for risk analysis in response to the extension of the Agency's mandate that emerged from the Regulation and allow for the required flexibility and adaptivity to take onboard any new requirement that may arise in the future.
- The starting point for the reinforcement of the CBC component within the Risk Analysis Unit and Frontex was a proper information and data collection system followed by the implementation of the CBC indicators reporting according to the EUROSUR Implementing Regulation an action initiated in Q4 2021.
- The lack of structured CBC reporting was compensated in 2021 with tailored data collection from the Member States. This, combined with other sources allowed for the creation of the CBC threat assessment and several CBC reports uploaded in the EUROSUR Analysis Layer.
- The Agency completed its internal framework for the processing of operational personal data that was adopted by the Management Board through Decisions 68 and 69 of 2021. Moreover, an intelligence reporting module was developed in JORA to support the collection of operational personal data.
- The pilot for extending the collection of OPD (operational personal data) beyond debriefing and migration-related crimes will be initiated in 2022 following the adoption of the implementing rules for the processing of operational personal data by the Management Board in December 2021, moreover, the pilot project for the implementation of debriefing activities at air borders (including the collection of OPD) was postponed due to the pandemic situation.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Operational personal data collected and processed for the purposes of risk analysis exchanged with Europol, Eurojust and MS competent law enforcement authorities in order to prevent, detect, investigate or prosecute cross-border crime (conditions for transmission of data to be further elaborated in the MB rules and in more specific terms for transmission to MS on operational plans and to EU Agencies on new working agreements). Personal data related to persons who cross the border without authorisation collected and processed for the purposes of risk analysis and transmission of such data to MS authorities responsible for border control and migration.

- Debriefing and screening activities had been feeding operational analysis in line with the intelligence gaps and needs expressed by hosting MSs and Frontex Risk Analysis Unit. As support to debriefing officers in the field, the debriefing reference manuals were updated in 2021. Frontex developed a common screening template for all joint operations to harmonise the data collected during the screening process.
- Maritime Intelligence Community – Risk Analysis Network (MIC-RAN) community was reactivated after a period of less intense operations during the first phases of COVID-19 outbreak. Group discussions were organised with the MIC-RAN points of contact to identify customer requirements. A wider review of Frontex maritime intelligence products involving MIC-RAN was launched in 2021 with a view of consolidating the portfolio and increasing customer-centricity. The outputs of the review are expected in 2022.
- The risk screening framework for vessels and areas started being developed and will be finalised in 2022.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. EUROSUR impact levels were assessed and monitored regularly using a common methodology. The impact level change requests were prepared by Frontex based on threats, emerging risks and identified vulnerabilities. The methodology was updated in 2021 and will be fully implemented in 2022 considering the outputs of a forecasting pilot project.

Key Activity 1.1.3. Contribute to EBCG planning processes through the knowledge generated by situation monitoring, risk analysis and vulnerability assessment.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Produce knowledge generated by risk analysis and vulnerability assessment to feed into Frontex operational and strategic planning to further improve the offer of products and services to Member States and EU policymakers.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The Agency developed two editions of country fiches plus an EU-wide Assessment for Operational Initiation to support planning meetings with MS/SAC. A new operational initiation phase for the Frontex operational planning cycle was proposed making VA and RA findings more central in this process.
- In the area of vulnerability assessments the Agency, among other activities:
 - informed MS/SAC on the need to improve data quality and quantity, as outlined in ECA special report 8/2021. Individual data goals will be agreed upon and implemented with concerned MS/SAC in 2022;
 - recommended measures were better tailored to address the root cause for the identified vulnerability through promoting the usage of the Frontex Catalogue of Services for MS/SAC Action Plans;
 - provided the requested input for the BMVI financial files and other COM funding decisions;
 - contributed to the implementation of Art. 61, collecting and processing the relevant data from MS/SAC;
 - provided a new format of the biannual report to enhance the value of the report and its impact on strategic decision-making processes;
 - provided tactical focused assessments and input to the specific activity plans (SAP);
 - completed the provision of analytical contributions to the final evaluation of operational activities;
 - reported on key developments in third countries impacting EIBM;
 - conducted robust monitoring of developments in Belarus, Afghanistan and Ukraine;
 - tailored inputs provided in the framework of the Commission-led Blueprint network activity;
 - contributed to numerous regular and ad-hoc documents for Commission-coordinated exercises;
 - produced several strategic analytical products in the maritime domain, relating to maritime key developments and strategic warnings.
- A new strategic knowledge product was prepared in October as a starting point for the Operational Cycle (Assessment for Operational Initiation) to support the operational initiation phase of Frontex-coordinated Joint Operations for 2023. It provides a basis for the decision-makers to discuss the goals of the EBCG operational activities at a strategic level.

- Operational knowledge product Assessment for Operational Deployment was prepared in March to support the operational planning of Frontex-coordinated Joint Operations for the second half of 2021 and 2022.
- The European Document Fraud – Annual Risk Analysis for 2021 (EDF-ARA 2021) was elaborated and disseminated to the stakeholders along with a new Handbook on Yemeni documents.
- As a part of operational response to materialising risks at the external EU borders, Frontex prepared the risk assessment for Rapid Border Intervention Lithuania and drafted a number of tailored risk assessments for operational planning of seasonal joint operations such as JO Minerva.
- Frontex continued data exchange, joint analytical activities and interactions with Regional Risk Analysis Networks, delivering monthly, quarterly and annual analytical reports aimed at supporting operational and strategic-level decision-making, including periodical reports within the framework of WB and EaP RANs as well as in the AFIC network.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Achieved. Bi-annual reports to EU institutions (EP, Council, EC) (VAU) provided in modernised form within the legal requirements.
- Achieved. Assessment for operational initiation provided first time, in October 2021 according to the new operational planning cycle.
- Achieved. Assessment for operational deployment timely provided supplemented by a new product Assessment for Operational Initiation delivered according to a timeline requested by planning personnel.
- Achieved. Tailored focused assessments and inputs were prepared for each specific activity plan to support planning of JO, RBI, and other operational activities with Frontex involvement (i.e. JAD) and implemented in 2021. All delivered within the deadlines given by the planning personnel.

Focus Area 1.2. Create an EBCG environment and community of intelligence-led operational activities (considering the process of data collection, processing and information exchange and analysis in connection to, but not only limited to the EUROSUR framework review and networks).

Key Activity 1.2.1. Support the set-up and functioning of information exchange and risk analysis centres and networks, including in non-EU countries.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Ensure an enhanced situation awareness on developments in the pre-frontier non-EU countries through regular interaction in regional risk analysis networks and delivery of related product portfolio.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Further establishing and improving by IFC of communication channels ahead of awaited COM model provisions on the cooperation with non-EU countries under the EUROSUR framework.
- The provision of EUROSUR Fusion Services by IFC awaits necessary legal instruments (working arrangements signed with the relevant non-EU countries).
- Frontex continued data exchange, joint analytical activities and interactions with Regional Risk Analysis Networks, delivering monthly, quarterly and annual analytical reports aimed at supporting operational and strategic-level decision-making.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. The level of information exchange with internal and external stakeholders was maintained at the level of 2020.
2. Achieved. Support to Montenegro over 2021 with a number of activities. IFC organised an on-line EUROSUR/Specific Situational Picture (SSP) awareness session for Montenegro, as well as a fact-finding mission to examine the existing internal structure in light of coordination centre establishment, including a study visit to a coordination centre Romania organised by Frontex for the

Montenegrin Border Police authorities with the aim to get acquainted with the functioning of an EU national coordination centre.

Key Activity 1.2.2. Drive the development of an EBCG community 'ecosystem of information management capabilities' by taking the business lead in the development of information management applications interacting with each other, using the same databases and technologies.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Ensure high quality data and statistical analysis, to be readily available to the Agency and the wider EBCG community, as well as continuous enhancement of the tools available for the purpose of risk analysis and visualisation of analytical findings.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Information feeding into risk analysis was timely and comprehensive, submitted for both the regular and ad-hoc requests.
- EUROSUR services continued to be provided with timeliness and good quality with 543 services further enhanced to respond to stakeholder requirements. Overall number of products delivered amounted to 733.
- The scope of the risk analysis application and knowledge management and distribution platform has been re-defined, and the design of the new concept is ongoing.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

Achieved. The requests for statistical data were delivered on time in 95 % of the cases. The requests for the delivery of EFS services were delivered on time in 93 % of the cases.

Key Activity 1.2.3. Establish standards and implement common models for information sharing and analysis, including on cross-border crime in all four tiers of the EIBM.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Ensure further development of the EUROSUR interoperability with other systems and provide MS with the secure infrastructure that ensures continuous and uninterrupted information exchange capabilities.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The development of the common models for information sharing and analysis is ongoing. The EUROSUR framework will envisage a collection of data models based on the type of data to be used for reporting and analysis.
- The development of EUROSUR information exchange standards is ongoing. The development of standards will take in consideration existing standards at the EU level (e.g., UMF, CISE) and when necessary, they will be adjusted to fit the EBCG environment.
- EUROSUR fusion services delivery standards were further enhanced to ensure the high quality and timeliness.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Partially achieved. The work on operational standards to be developed was initiated, however no standards were formally created as they were submitted to the Management Board for their approval.
2. Partially achieved. Common model updated: 1. Common model created: 1.

Focus Area 1.3. Contribute to the development and implementation of an efficient European Quality Control Mechanism

Key Activity 1.3.1. Contribute to enhanced awareness on MS preparedness by assessing possible vulnerabilities of border management capabilities, while exploiting the full potential of Vulnerability Assessments and the Commission-led Schengen Evaluations.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Carry out periodical vulnerability assessments according to CVAM methodology.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The 2021 baseline assessment (BA) process was successfully carried out, with a slight delay due to issues with the Vulnerability Assessment Platform (VAP).
- As part of the BA 2021 process, an extensive data collection of MS/SAC capacities for border control was carried out, and a thorough assessment of gaps and shortcomings in these capacities was performed by Frontex.
- The year 2021 has seen a record number of SEs being carried out, under three categories: 1) strategic table-top SEs concentrating on contingency planning, 2) BCP-level SEs focusing on the capacity to detect document fraud, and 3) BCP-level SEs focusing on the capacity to detect and adequately manage victims of trafficking in human beings. These simulation exercises were carried out in smooth cooperation with the respective Member States. Moreover, table-top exercises focused not only on assessing the preparedness of a single Member State, but also on creating a regional overview.
- Two RVAs covering four countries were successfully conducted in 2021.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. All assessment processes described above (SEs, RVAs), except the BA, were carried out in line with the timeframe set by the CVAM. All assessment reports stemming from these processes (SEs, RVAs), except the BA, were delivered in line with the timeframe defined by the CVAM.

Key Activity 1.3.2. Address identified gaps and shortcomings by designing and recommending measures to ensure MS preparedness to present any future challenges, to be implemented also with the support of the Agency.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Design and recommend measures to ensure MS preparedness to present and future challenges, to be implemented also with the support of the Agency.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Following the completion of the assessment processes launched in 2021 (BA, SE and RVA) a series of recommendations for measures was issued to MS/SAC, to address vulnerabilities identified in their border control capacities. Also, in 2021 this process was further enhanced by introducing bilateral talks on the measures with all interested MS/SAC. A new operational initiation phase for Frontex operational planning cycle was proposed making VA and RA findings more central in this process.
- In line with the requirement set by Article 32 (8) and (9) of the Regulation, the Agency offered its targeted expertise to support MS/SAC in the implementation of a variety of measures issued in the framework of VA activities.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. All recommendations were issued in line with the timelines set in the CVAM or within extended timelines following requests from Member States.
2. Achieved. Regular consultations on measures and review of MS/SAC action plans were carried-out in 2021.

3. Achieved. Monitoring activities were carried out in line with the requirements set by the CVAM, and 3 quarterly reports were produced to update Frontex Executive Management on the state of play of ongoing measures. Further improvement of Frontex guidance delivered to MS/SAC on their action plans resulted in a better understanding of the complexity and rationality of the periodical reporting.

Key Activity 1.3.3. Maximise the synergies between the Commission-led Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism (SEMM), vulnerability assessments (VA) and national quality control mechanisms by developing tools and platforms to support activities such as data collection and reporting, as well as further develop the CVAM by designing standards and benchmarks.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Ensure coordination between the SEMM, vulnerability assessment and national quality control mechanisms, by developing tools and platforms to support activities such as data collection, reporting and operational assessments.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The work on the development of the CVAM quantification is ongoing. By the end of 2021 the cooperation with an external advisor was finished and the conceptual study on quantification was completed. This paved the way to further strategic discussions on how to proceed with the process of testing the framework of quantification of CVAM for the objective criteria OC2 and OC3.
- The VAP II project continued to run a delay and the conclusion of the project was not achieved by the end of 2021, as originally planned. It faces additional risks related to the retention of outsourced development staff and the framework contract in place. Over the past months, the work focused on the assessment module, with the extensive testing of VAP's data collection module by VAU staff as well as the Member States in Q4 2021. Following the testing, the update of the data collection module was deployed in December 2021 in parallel to a tailored training event on the VAP for Member States.
- The pool of Frontex observers was managed while ensuring that they effectively contribute to Schengen Evaluation on-site visits.
- Synergies on SEMM-VA cooperation were further enhanced, with an increased number of Frontex observers participating in on-site evaluation visits, information packages being exchanged via secure channels, and regular videoconferences being held between DG HOME and Frontex.
- The development of a new operational SE on travelling terrorists/foreign terrorist fighters was commenced in 2021 with the support of Europol.
- A number of events were organised in an online format for MS/SAC and European Commission experts, members of the Vulnerability Assessment Network (VAN). The work on a study on measures to address current and future health emergencies at the EU external borders was completed in December 2021, including also recommendations for EU-level action.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. 18 Frontex observers participated in on-site evaluation visits in the areas of external borders and return. VAU has supported these observers by organising a total of 36 preparatory and debriefing meetings and distributed 9 SINA laptops to the observers that were not equipped with it yet (a novelty since 2021). Monthly videoconferences between Frontex and DG HOME were organised to align VA and SEMM activities. Seven tailored information packages were shared by VAU with DG HOME, to prepare the on-site team ahead of the evaluation visits.
2. Achieved. Four VAN meetings were organised in 2021. Moreover, over the course of 2021, a High-level Roundtable on Vulnerability Assessment (VA) took place, as well as a series of technical workshops and awareness sessions for VAN members.
3. Not achieved. The development of a new operational SE on travelling terrorists/foreign terrorist fighters was commenced in 2021 with the support of Europol.

Focus Area 1.4. Develop and implement the system for providing operational support and reinforcing Member States border control activities through establishing and operating the ETIAS Central Unit

Key Activity 1.4.1. Establish ETIAS Central Unit to be ready to function by defining the operational concept for the Central Unit, delivering the capabilities and means (HR, technical, services), performing integration with ETIAS system and National Units and end to end testing of the whole system

Specific Objectives in AWP 2021

- Execute project activities aligned with the overall common ETIAS implementation planning (aligned with the EC's, eu-LISA's, Member States' and Europol's planning);
- Develop the necessary human capabilities;
- Work towards ensuring the setup of the ETIAS Fundamental Right Guidance Board and of the ETIAS Screening Board in 2021.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The ETIAS Central Unit Division was formally established and took over the tasks and responsibilities from the ETIAS and Interoperability Task Force.
- The ETIAS Central Unit project activities were aligned with the overall planning of the ETIAS stakeholders (the Commission, eu-LISA, Europol, Member States). To this end, the main business processes were developed and with a few others remaining to be designed, in line with the overall maturity of the project. The preparation of the internal procedures for the implementation of the business processes was initiated only for the development of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the support to the carriers.
- The ETIAS Central Unit Division initiated three recruitment procedures in 2021 for the application handlers and carrier and traveller support operators, team leaders, a planning officer, a project manager in ETIAS, and a shift manager. It also completed a recruitment process for a senior assistant.
- The ETIAS Central Unit Division actively cooperated with the Fundamental Rights Officer for the establishment of the ETIAS Fundamental Rights Guidance Board. Internal discussions with other Frontex entities and with the Executive Management were initiated for the allocation of roles and responsibilities for the establishment of the ETIAS Screening Board.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved: A proposal for the organisational structure of the ETIAS Central Unit was submitted to the Executive Management, in accordance with the received instructions and timeline. The ED Decision No R-ED-2021-80 of 29/05/2021 implementing the internal structure of the ETIAS Central Unit Division was based on the submitted proposal.
2. Partially achieved: The drafting of all the business processes initiated as planned. Only the drafting of the main business processes was completed by the end of the year. A few other processes are still to be developed, due to open issues related to the adoption of the legal framework or its interpretation and further implementation. None of the business processes were formally adopted, as this step will take place simultaneously for all the processes. Similarly, the development of the internal procedures initiated only for the support to the carriers without being complete at the end of the reporting period.
3. Partially achieved: During the reporting period, four recruitment processes were initiated/finalised. The establishment plan did not allocate any further positions to the ETIAS Central Unit Division, thus no further recruitment procedures could have been published as initially was expected. To this end, the initial target of 80 posts filled by the end of 2021 was not achieved. The outcome of the recruitments was as follows:

Table 1. Planned and actual recruitments in 2021.

Procedure	Planned recruitments	Actual recruitments
Application Handlers and Travelers Support Operators	44	38
Team Leaders	2	2
Planning Officer	1	1
Project Manager	1	1
Shift Manager	1	0
Senior Assistant	1	1
Staff recruited before 01.01.2021	8	8
Total staff at 31.12.2021	58	51

4. Achieved: regular reports to the Management Board submitted and the first annual report published in September 2021.

Key Activity 1.4.2. Operate ETIAS Central Unit in a 24/7 mode in accordance with the ETIAS Regulation (processing the applications, supporting law enforcement requests, ensuring data subject rights, providing travellers and carriers assistance services, defining and maintaining risk profiles and screening rules, managing public awareness with the European Commission, leading operational cooperation between the different ETIAS actors, management and governance reporting).

Specific Objectives in AWP 2021

In 2021, prepare the ETIAS Central Unit to provide support to the carriers in 2022.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The development of the internal procedures for the support to the carriers could not be completed by the end of the reporting period. This is partly due to the delay in the technical specifications on the ticketing tool that will be delivered by eu-LISA, as these were not finalised by the end of 2021.
- In December 2021, as a consequence of the accumulated delays in the development of the EES central system and its implementation in the MS, the JAI Council decided to postpone the entry into operation of EES from May 2022 until September 2022 and the entry into operation of ETIAS from December 2022 until May 2023.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned FP

1. Not achieved. The respective Commission Implementing Regulations were adopted on 26 July 2021. The belated adoption prevented the timely initiation of the necessary discussions on the service-level agreements with the travel industry. This activity was shifted to the next reporting period.

1.2. Strategic Objective 2

Safe, secure and well-functioning EU external borders

Focus Area 2.1. Provide effect-oriented and flexible operational response ⁽¹⁷⁾

Key Activity 2.1.1. Develop and implement a model for flexible, robust and multipurpose permanent operational and contingency response, by deploying standing corps equipped to support the EU external borders and migration management along the four tiers access model upon vulnerability assessment and risk analysis.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Develop the annual operational response planning as a part of integrated planning by creating new concepts for operational plans covering all domains, including joint operations (JOs) in non-EU countries.
- Plan, implement and evaluate the deployment of the standing corps to permanent multipurpose joint operations at EU external borders and in key non-EU countries.
- Establish integrated implementation of all operational coast guard and law enforcement activities requiring executive powers of the standing corps within the framework of joint operations.
- Engage with the Member States at all levels in order to create conditions for increased hosting capacities for the future standing corps deployments.
- Access of team members to SIS II (A2SISII Project) is established based on the results of the A2SISII-project.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- In 2021, the Agency implemented 19 joint operations in total, by deploying standing corps teams based on and in line with the approved plan of operational responses. Additionally the plan of operational response 2022 was elaborated and an indicative deployment plan for the following years was prepared.
- To increase the hosting capacities of the MS, the Agency continued its efforts to increase its support to MSs by promoting the enhanced use of the Agency's Catalogue of Services and issuing dedicated recommendations ('country fiches') based on a tailored report on threats and vulnerabilities for each MS/SAC. Based on this approach, bilateral meetings with all MS/SAC were held in April to provide more dedicated support to each MS/SAC. In 2021, as a result of the bilateral meetings and operational needs identified during the implementation, 53 new operational locations and 8 local coordination centres were established in 20 MS/SAC. Additionally, a new JO in Serbia Land was launched establishing additional 11 operational locations and 1 local coordination centre.
- On the basis of the status agreement between the EU and Serbia which entered into force on 1 May 2021, Frontex and the Serbian authorities concluded the operationalisation of the status agreement and prepared the joint operation with executive powers for implementation at the Serbian – Bulgarian land border. The joint operation was launched in June 2021 when technical equipment and human resources were deployed for border check and border surveillance activities coordinated from the newly established Local coordination centre.
- Due to the dynamic increase of the migration flow, in 2021, the JO FOA Land 2021 extended the operational area covering 5 additional host MS (Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania). The significant enlargement was requested by the respective MS, based on risk assessment, the Agency swiftly redeployed human resources/technical equipment and an additional call for contribution from the MS was necessary to meet the operational needs. As a result, three new focal points were activated during JO-FP land 2021.
- On 24 March 2021, a fully-fledged operational activity at the Albania's maritime borders under the JO Albania Sea 2021 was launched, with the aim to provide technical and operational assistance to Albania by coordinating operational activities at their maritime border and boundaries, with the focus

⁽¹⁷⁾ As set forth in Article 7(4) of the European Border Coast Regulation, the Agency shall not support any measures or be involved in any activities related to controls at internal borders.

on the neighbouring MS and the MS bordering the operational area, to tackle cross-border crime from the Western Balkans region towards the EU, as well as to control illegal immigration flows and to enhance European cooperation on coast guard functions and law enforcement activities.

- New JO Opal Coast 2021 hosted by Belgium and France was launched on 1 December 2021 with the aim to provide support for the aerial surveillance in the coastal area of Belgium and France.
- The framework contract for developing web and mobile application of A2SIS was signed. The external project related services (business analyst, solution architect, configuration expert and project support) were contracted. The framework contract for delivery of fingerprint scanners was signed and the first order of 15 fingerprint scanners was issued.
- The European cooperation on CGFs within Frontex JOs was achieved via the CGFO network. During the operational year 2021, acting also as point of contact for the EU Agencies (EFCA and EMSA), CGFOs have been deployed in five maritime JOs (JO Themis, JO Poseidon, JO Indalo, JO Montenegro and JO Albania) enhancing the cooperation and sharing information with EFCA and EMSA and contributing to sharing and exchanging data in maritime domain awareness.
- The exchange of information with EFCA and EMSA has been carried out via standard procedures, namely fishing vessel sighting forms (FVSF) and potential marine pollution sighting form (PMPSF). To this end, 289 FVSFs and 6 PMPSFs have been sent to EFCA and EMSA:
 - 18 FVSF and 3 PMPSF from JO Indalo;
 - 59 FVSF and 1 PMPSF from JO Themis;
 - 83 FVSF and 2 PMPSF from JO Poseidon;
 - 127 FVSF from JO Montenegro;
 - 2 FVSF from JO Albania.

In addition, in 2021 EFCA delivered nine tailored briefings on fisheries (one for CGFO network, two in JO Indalo, three in JO Poseidon, one for JO Albania 2021, one for JOs Themis and one regional briefing – Adriatic Sea (including JO Themis, JO Albania and JO Montenegro). EMSA provided two training courses to CGFOs as regards marine pollution identifications and standard reporting procedures.

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no capacity building activities (SAR workshop, boarding drills, etc.) were organised within JOs.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved and exceeded: in 2021, 19 joint operations were implemented, as follows:

Table 2. Joint operations implemented in 2021.

Nr	Domain	Operation
1	Air, land and maritime	JO Coordination Points Air, Land and Sea 2021
1	Air	JO Focal Points Air 2021
6	Land	JO Focal Points Land 2021
		JO Flexible Operational Activities Land 2021
		JO Montenegro Land 2021
11	Maritime	JO Poseidon 2021
		JO Cyprus 2021
		JO Themis 2021
		JO Indalo 2021
		JO Canary Island 2021
		JO Minerva 2021
		JO Albania Land 2021
		JO Serbia Land 2021
		RBI Lithuania 2021
		JO Opal Coast 2021
		JO Montenegro Sea 2021
		JO Albania Sea 2021
		JO Constanta 2021
		JO Neptune 2021

2. Achieved and exceeded: All five JADs coordinated by Frontex in 2021 were based on joint operations (Danube 6, Arktos 3, Finestra, Mobile 4, Stopover), with several additional elements which are characteristic for EMPACT. MMO Black Sea 2021 and MMO Baltic Tracking 2021 were implemented. For more information concerning MMO please see Key Activity 2.3.2.
3. In 2021, 120 thousand person-days of SC category 1 and 114.7 thousand person-days of category 2 were deployed in all JOs, which would become the future backbone of the Frontex operational

activities at the external borders due to the long-lasting deployments and gained experience in the field.

4. Achieved: operational needs and hosting capacities were defined and shared with MS and TC. The responses were collected and evaluated thus setting the bases for the initiation of ABN 2022 process. Planning of the 2022 operational activities started in February 2021 based on risk and vulnerability assessments.
5. Partially achieved: due to a delay in the procurement process, the contract for development of the A2SIS application was only signed in May 2021. The schedule date for delivering of the web application is due in June 2022, therefore the pilot implementation of operational use will be carried out in the second half of 2022.

Key Activity 2.1.2. Promote the EU shared responsibility in coordination of the aforementioned operational activities by increasing the Frontex pivotal role and by using the antenna offices ⁽¹⁸⁾ as platforms for the Frontex response actions.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Further develop the integrated operational coordination structure for operational response activities.
- Establish antenna offices on the basis of operational needs in support to the implementation of operational activities and their logistical needs.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- During 2021, the Frontex Operational Coordination Centre (FOCC) was fully functioning as the Central Multidivisional Coordination Platform for the coordination of operational activities and return operations.
- As of April 2021, the FOCC 24/7 capability was put in place with the deployment of SC duty officers' team that reached 16 Standing Corps' officers during the reporting year covering day, night and weekend shifts.
- In line with its defined purpose the Frontex Operational Room of the FOCC:
 - hosted the coordination centres of 16 operational response activities (including 1 Rapid Border Intervention) and 1 centre for coordination of return activities;
 - supported integrated operational coordination (by handling dedicated coordination networks at the central level of the Frontex headquarters);
 - reinforced the review of operational response activities by scrutinising approximately 17 000 operational reports/year and;
 - shared knowledge on the performance of operational response activities via the FOCC visualisation tool (digital map with all SC and TE deployments) weekly updates and ad-hoc briefings and reports.
- Regular operational coordination meetings (OPCOM) were carried out to provide senior operational management with the information from the operational field on the use of resources, main challenges and concerns requiring intervention. Bi-weekly OPCOM were attended by the senior management and the relevant actors of the coordination structures, supplemented by Operational board (OPBOARD) and operational table (OPTA) meetings were organised regularly serving the cross-divisional information exchange and coordination within the headquarters.
- Operational chain of coordination has been established to facilitate and serve the operational communication within the coordination structures of the operational activities, regular weekly meetings of the operational team and FTSOs deployed in the operational area were conducted addressing, among others, the need for updating SC officers on the evolving operating procedures and developments in the operational area.

⁽¹⁸⁾ The role of the coordinating officer will follow the tasking detailed in Article 44(1) (3) of the Regulation. Some of those tasks will be supported by the antenna offices as detailed in Article 60(3) in particular points (e) 'support the coordinating officer referred to in Article 44 in his or her cooperation with the participating Member States on all issues related to their contribution to the operational activities organised by the Agency and, where necessary, liaise with the Agency's headquarters' and (f) 'support the coordinating officer and fundamental rights monitors assigned to monitor an operational activity in facilitating, where necessary, the coordination and communication between the Agency's teams and the relevant authorities of the host Member State or host non-EU country as well any relevant tasks'.

- In the course of 2021, the operational team implemented numerous operational visits at activated focal points and conducted meetings and complementary operational briefings with SC officers deployed and local coordinators. The aim of the operational visits was to clarify the role and tasks of Frontex staff to the local authorities improving the necessary cooperation and mutual understanding with local staff.
- Antenna offices: Although the Agency gained valuable experience in setting up and operating regional structures and local offices, such as in Piraeus, the framework and requirements given by Article 60 of the Regulation related to antenna offices are specific and new. Therefore, a concept for the establishment of the first antenna offices proposes to pilot it in the host Member States where rolling operational activities are taking place. That would allow to test a wider scope of an antenna office functions and have a tangible effect in supporting operational activities. The start of the pilot project is envisaged for 2022 for a period of at least one year with an evaluation to be finalised in 2023.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved: the FOCC was established and fully functioning. As of April 2021, the FOCC was reinforced by the team of 16 SC duty officers performing 24/7 service. Hosting coordination centres were organised for 16 operational response activities and 1 for return-related activities.
2. Not achieved: the concept for antenna offices was drafted in 2021, however, it was not possible to present it to the Management Board in 2021 due to the prioritisation of other high-importance deliverables (such as the initial deployment of the standing corps and all other correlated matters).

Key Activity 2.1.3. Tighten up the operational support to coast guard and law enforcement activities against the cross-border crime, including document, identity and vehicle checks as an integral part of the joint operations.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Ensure that Frontex forgery desk and the regional document fraud task team is staffed and provide effective support to checks on travel, identity, maritime documents and vehicles in the European border and migration management operational activities, supporting Member States in the fight against related frauds.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- In 2021, 17 document experts were assigned to the Centre of Excellence for Combatting Document Fraud (CED), the staff was assigned to the establishment of the Forgery Desk and for the document task force operating from the headquarters.
- The concept, service portfolio and related processes of the Frontex regional document fraud task teams have not been concluded awaiting the final approach of the regional coordination structure of Frontex operational activities, to which the regional document fraud teams will be linked. CED actively contributed to the work of the cross-divisional working group assigned to establish the coordination structure for Frontex operations.
- In 2021, seven Reference Manual workshops took place producing 393 QCCs.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Document experts were assigned to the document fraud task force to operate from the headquarters. Their team leader provides additional support. As for the regional document fraud team:
 - a. Not achieved: no new positions were assigned in 2021 to this key activity out of those requested;
 - b. Achieved and exceeded: 75 % of the officers supported operational activities on a regular basis.
2. Achieved: all the equipment required for the establishment of the forgery desk was purchased, installed, approved and currently functioning.
3. Achieved and exceeded: total number of available QCCs at end of 2021 were 2069 (18 % over previous result).

Focus Area 2.2. Position Frontex as an important player in the area of combatting cross-border crime

Key Activity 2.2.1. Position the Agency as one-stop-shop for EU MS and partner TC to support the fight against cross-border crime including terrorism and all forms of document and vehicle frauds along the four tiers access model.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Enhance Frontex role in the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT priorities by supporting, facilitating and leading operational activities within the selected priorities.
- Develop partnerships with key international institutions and non-EU countries which is likely to lead to a sustainable response to cross-border crime threats.
- Consolidate the high-level round table on document and identity control and reinforce the operational role expert group on document control (EXP-DOC Group). This expertise, channelled towards operations via the Frontex document fraud team, will enable effective checks on travel, identity, maritime documents and vehicles in the European border and migration management operational activities, supporting Member States in the fight against identity and document fraud.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

The below-implemented activities contributed to the fight against cross-border crime in accordance with the specific objectives of 2021, increasing the awareness, readiness and operational results of the border guard, customs and law enforcement agencies deployed along the border.

Joint Action Days (JADs)

Frontex coordinated 5 Joint Action Days under EMPACT and co-led 2 others. In addition, increased support was offered to the EU Member States by engaging third countries in operational activities such as JAD Arktos 3, Mobile 4, Danube 6 and Finestra supported by the Centre of Excellence for Document Fraud.

JAD Arktos 3 (June 2021) focused on migrant smuggling, smuggling of excise goods (especially tobacco products) and related document fraud. It took place at the north-eastern external land borders of the EU and was held within the frameworks of respective EMPACT OAPs 2021. It was led by Frontex and co-led by Poland and the Lithuanian Customs Authorities. The JAD involved 7 MS, Europol, INTERPOL, OLAF and Eurojust. It resulted in the seizure of more than 6.7 million cigarettes, 2.5 tonnes of tobacco, 11 000 litres of alcohol, 8 stolen vehicles, 226 forged documents, 594 kilograms of drugs, 11 weapons and firearms, 14 firearms parts and 122 pieces of ammunition. A total of 547 irregular migrants and 15 facilitators were detected.

JAD Danube 6 (September 2021) was held within the framework of migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings, and document fraud OAPs 2021. Frontex coordinated the JAD which was co-led by Austria and six MS as well as five third countries, Europol and INTERPOL participated, with the focus on the Western Balkan area, the south-eastern European external border and selected border crossing points at the EU Eastern external border. JAD Danube 6 resulted in 144 suspected people smugglers arrested, 6 656 irregular migrants detected, 76 fraudulent documents identified, and 13 stolen cars seized.

JAD Finestra (September – October 2021) focused on migrant smuggling, smuggling of excise goods (especially tobacco products) and related document fraud. The JAD took place at the Eastern and south-eastern land border of the EU and was held within the frameworks of respective EMPACT OAPs 2021. It was led by Frontex and co-led by Romania and Lithuania, involving several other EU MS, third countries as well as Europol, Eurojust, EUBAM UA/MD, OLAF, INTERPOL and WCO. It resulted in the seizure of 36 million cigarettes, 2360 kg of tobacco, 160 000 litres of alcohol, 6 stolen vehicles, 44 fraudulent documents and 6000 litres of mineral oil. A total of 174 irregular migrants has been detected and 186 persons were refused entry.

JAD Mobile 4 (October 2021) took place with a total of 22 participating countries supported by INTERPOL, Europol and CELBET with the aim to combat the trafficking of stolen vehicles, their parts, stolen boats as well as preventing migrant smuggling and associated document fraud. The operation was led by Frontex and co-led by Germany, Greece, Poland and Europol under EMPACT OAP Organised Property Crime. The operation brought together 16 EU MS and 6 third countries and resulted in the seizure of 518 stolen vehicles; 400 stolen car parts; 140 fraudulent documents; 31 people smugglers arrested; 1 000 irregular migrants; and 4 stolen boats seized. During the action day over 10 000 checks in different databases were carried out.

JAD Stopover (November – December 2021) focused upon smuggling of drugs, migrant smuggling and related document fraud. The JAD took place at EU MS airports and was led by Frontex and co-led by Spain and the Netherlands. Participants were Portugal, Italy, Belgium, France, Europol and INTERPOL. It resulted in the seizure of 51 kg of cocaine from passengers on scheduled flights as reported by Portugal. 38 cases of document fraud reported, involving 76 fraudulent documents, 60 refusals of entry, one facilitator of illegal immigration arrested, 13 persons arrested in connection with drug importation, three cases of visa fraud.

Moreover, Frontex actively supported other operational activities in conjunction with its mandate, contributing towards achieving the planned results in AWP 2021 as regards improved capability of border authorities, police and customs to counteract cross-border and organised crime, including terrorism:

JAD Child Trafficking (June – July 2021) was co-led by Frontex and coordinated by Europol, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Spain. JAD Child Trafficking was rolled-out in 18 countries. A wide range of law enforcement authorities including police, immigration and border control agencies, transport police, social assistance and child protection services and labour inspectorates participated in the joint action. It led to 175 arrests, 78 additional suspects identified, and 181 new investigations initiated. Overall, 187 potential victims of human trafficking were identified, 92 of whom were confirmed to be minors.

JAD South-East Europe (JAD SEE) (September 2021) was led by Spain and co-led by Frontex. The JAD aimed at tackling illegal immigration and the trafficking of firearms and drugs, under the respective EMPACT Operational Action Plans (OAPs). The operation brought together 17 EU Member States and 10 non-EU Member States as well as Europol, Eurojust, INTERPOL and other international organisations. It resulted in 33 418 people checked, 724 locations searched, 22 605 vehicles inspected. Seizures including 154 weapons (65 pistols, 86 rifles and assault rifles, 3 gas alarms), 57 hand grenades and explosives, 2125 pieces of ammunition, 719 kg of cannabis and 920 cannabis plants. Although there has not been any specific indicator with regards to increasing operational results on firearms trafficking counteraction, the 2021 edition of JAD SEE resulted in a significant increase of weapons seized (200 %, 154 weapons seized compared to 51 weapons seized in 2020).

MMO Black Sea 2021 enhanced the support in the area of law enforcement to the host Member States, Romania and Bulgaria. The cooperation was materialised in significant results in preventing, detecting and combating serious crime with a cross-border dimension. In order to continue the cooperation in the Black Sea area, Romania and Frontex launched the JO Constanta 2021, with the specific operational aim to provide increased technical operational assistance to Romania in the area of responsibility of the Romanian coast guard, in order to control illegal immigration flows, tackle cross-border crime and to enhance European cooperation on coast guard functions and law enforcement activities.

In the frame of MMO Black Sea 2021, Frontex organised four awareness sessions:

- Two full day sessions were delivered online respectively to Bulgarian and to Romanian border guards in April 2021;
- In June 2021, two Frontex experts deployed in Constanta – Romania and conducted awareness sessions and practical exercises on electronic documents and passenger assessment for 84 Romanian border police officers while in July similar sessions were delivered to 30 officers from the Bulgarian border guards.

Handbook on Firearms for Border Guards and Customs. In the framework of EMPACT – Firearms, Frontex supported by EU and international partners finalised the Handbook to support national border guard and customs authorities in their fight versus arms-related crime. The aim of the handbook is to support border guards/police and customs officers improving their capacity for detection of firearms, its parts and ammunition in respect to travellers, means of transportation and belongings. Through this EMPACT initiative, the Agency contributed towards improving capabilities of MS to counteract cross-border and organised crime, including terrorism.

Joint Operation Neptune 2021. Aside JADs and EMPACT activities, the support towards combatting cross-border crime and also terrorism with a cross-border dimension was provided in the framework of JO Neptune 2021. It concentrated on Mediterranean seaports and the movements of suspected terrorists using established ferry routes between the EU and North African countries during the peak summer season and was implemented in the framework of multipurpose operational activities-sea in August–September, in partnership with Italy and France. Frontex standing corps officers were deployed at seaports in Italy and France to assist with border checks, screening and profiling of suspected terrorists, preventing unauthorised border crossings and detecting cross-border crime. The standing corps officers also supported local authorities with the identification of document fraud. Operational briefings on how to spot suspected terrorists on the move and on the latest trends in the document fraud complemented those efforts. Frontex operation contributed towards INTERPOL led counter-terrorism initiative ‘Neptune 3’, supported by the WCO and law enforcement authorities in five countries – Algeria, France, Italy, Spain and Tunisia.

Participation at EU Council networks, EC initiatives and relevant international and regional projects. Frontex continued to actively participate at initiatives and relevant international and regional projects with the purpose to enhance the fight against cross-border and organised crime, including terrorism i.a.:

- Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security Support group (COSI SG),
- Law Enforcement Working Party (LEWP) and Law Enforcement Working Party on Customs (LEWP-Customs),
- Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA),
- European Firearms Experts steering group (EFE).

Cooperation with the Expert Group on Document Control. In the course of 2021, many activities of the Expert Group on Document Control were cancelled or shifted online due to COVID-19. Despite these challenges, the cooperation with the expert group was maintained and the group contributed to 11 activities, including one online workshop focusing on the achievements of D4Fly Project, a research and innovation project for detecting document fraud and identity on the fly funded under the HORIZON 2020 programme, as well as with one online workshop on maritime documents databases.

Cooperation with the Frontex High-level Round Table on Document and Identity Control. Two meetings of this round table were shifted online due to COVID-19, and one meeting was organised in a hybrid mode. The cooperation was maintained, and the group provided valuable strategic advice to the activities of the Agency. In May, upon the request from the Commission, the state of play in fingerprints checks in EU travel documents was reviewed with the participation of all EU MS/SAC. The round table also agreed on the elaboration of an EU capability framework in document checks, including facial comparison and fingerprint checks.

Frontex Forgery Desk and the Regional Document Fraud teams. The Forgery Desk was successfully set up in the course of 2020 and 2021, and despite the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic it became ready for operational support by the end of 2021. Concerning the envisaged regional document fraud task teams, preparation has not been concluded yet, awaiting the final approach decided on the regional coordination structure of Frontex operational activities.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Partially achieved. Frontex received only one request in 2021 from INTERPOL on Joint Operation Neptune, which was addressed.
2. Achieved. 2020 Baseline data for these indicators: 10 387 irregular migrants apprehended, 411 fraudulent documents identified, 384 stolen vehicles, 1 254 stolen parts, 1.8 tonnes of cannabis, 10 kg of heroin, 37 million cigarettes, 1.8 tonnes of tobacco and 74 migrant smugglers arrested. 2021 results – the five JADs coordinated by Frontex generated the following operational results: 223 arrested people smugglers, 8 400 irregular migrants apprehended, more than EUR 460 000 cash seized, 549 stolen vehicles detected, 400 stolen car parts, more than 170 000 litres of alcohol, 25 weapons, 452 pieces of ammunition, 46.7 million cigarettes, 9 tonnes raw tobacco, 4 stolen boats, 6 000 litres of mineral oil, 8 000 litres of illegal fuel seized, ca. 790 kg of drugs.
3. Achieved. Frontex coordinated 5 Joint Action Days (JADs) under EMPACT and co-led 2 others.
4. Achieved and exceeded. The JADs conveyed high level of participation with the engagement of 36 entities, 21 EU countries, 8 third countries, 5 EU bodies and 2 international organisations.
5. Achieved. In 2021, Frontex increased its contribution to the EMPACT Operational Actions (OAs) priorities and was broadly engaged in the drafting of the new Policy Cycle 2022-2025, the Agency was involved in 100 Operational Actions in the frame of EMPACT and took a leading role in 13 operational actions in 2021.
6. Achieved. In the course of 2021, EXP-DOC members contributed to 11 activities (7 Reference Manual workshops and 4 EXP-DOC meetings) organised by CED.
7. Achieved and exceeded. In the course of 2021, 3 meetings of the HLRT were organised.
8. Not achieved. Concerning the envisaged regional document fraud task teams, preparation was not concluded yet waiting for the final approach of the regional coordination structure of Frontex operational activities.

Key Activity 2.2.2. Enhance the technical and operational assistance to Member States in relation to prevention, detection, combating cross-border crime, including the pre-investigative and investigative measures conducted by MS, and cooperating with other union Agencies when relevant.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Establish ready-to-react multipurpose operational tools at all external borders, including maritime borders, in order to support, facilitate or lead preventive, detection and investigative measures.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

ISA-CBC 2.0 Pilot Project. In 2019, Pilot Project Investigation Support Activities for Cross-Border Crime was created to support concrete actions from national drugs investigation units and customs authorities by using Frontex capacities, supporting operations in the maritime domain and reinforcing specific ports/airports targeted by drug trafficking routes crossing EU borders. It supported EU MS and MAOC-N and Europol in tackling the cocaine and hashish routes. The new implementation plan for ISA-CBC 2.0, in accordance with the Regulation and the EU Drugs Strategy is operational from April 2021, including new geographical areas and other types of cross-border crime (trafficking in human beings, excise fraud, OPC, migrant smuggling) is boosting the cooperation with Latin America, especially Colombia. The activation of ISA-CBC 2.0 to support large-scale operations led by national authorities was active in three of the four relevant actions in 2021, resulting with 4,6 tonnes of cocaine seized by Belgium authorities. The experience of ISA-CBC PP 2.0 was used under EMPACT drugs framework.

The pilot project also managed to provide support to the following large-scale operations against drugs trafficking:

OP TAYRONA III (EMPACT CCH, OA 4.2): aimed at coordinating and developing transnational investigations against organised criminal groups (OCGs) involved in the wholesale cocaine trafficking from Colombia to the EU. It focused on containers/cargo vessels, while Frontex provided technical assistance with suspect vessels crossing the Atlantic Ocean having a co-leader role.

OP KARACHI (EMPACT Drugs CCH – OA 4.4): focused on heroin trafficked along the Southern Route from the crossroads of central and southern Asia, Indian Ocean to East and South Africa with Frontex participation.

OP AZUL (EMPACT CCH, OA 2.8): implemented with a reduced task force deployed in Azores due to COVID-19 persistence. It lasted for 19 days with a view to targeting high-risk Recreational crafts/crew members, it was organised to detect and disrupt drug trafficking organisations that use these means to smuggle cocaine to Europe. The Portuguese authorities had an overall responsibility and coordination of the operation, in cooperation with MAOC(N) and Frontex as co-leaders, Europol and other participating national authorities/agencies.

OP WHITE SEA: focused on cocaine drop-off cases in the North Sea. Coordinated by Belgium customs with police and the navy. It was supported with a wide range of services and resources, such as maritime analysis, EUROSUR Fusion Services, deployment and training of technical equipment as well as concrete financial support with co-financed maritime assets, logistics and technical meetings. As a result, Belgium reported the seizure of 4.6 tons of cocaine in the frame of this operation.

MOST-CBC Pilot Project. Along 2021, Frontex implemented Mobile Operational Support Teams project for counteracting cross-border crime. MOST-CBC aimed at exploring innovative technical, tactical and operational measures in the proximity of the external land borders and at the border crossing points to provide enhanced support to the host MS in the detection, prevention and in combatting motor vehicle crime, as well as in targeting associated document fraud. The concept of MOST-CBC, as an activity complementary to the existing JOs in the land domain, increased the efficiency of law enforcement activities at the EU external borders and brought additional operational results by its tailored approach towards these types of crimes, specifically resulting in:

- ensured mobility by circulation of the teams between the different BCPs but primarily focusing on the proximity of the external borders;
- proactive and flexible response to counter-measures applied by criminal organisations;
- multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach to ensure the comprehensive checking of the driver, passengers, vehicle, cargo and associated documents;
- provision of forensic expertise and tools rarely available at the borders as well as risk profiling and technical profiling of suspected vehicles;
- facilitated access to databases relevant to stolen vehicles;
- enhanced cooperation between border guards, police, customs, forensic experts, document experts;
- real-life testing of devices supporting the combating of vehicle-related crime under the research and innovation umbrella.

MOST-CBC was also designed to contribute to the detection of other types of cross-border crime however, focusing mostly on motor vehicles-related crime and smuggling. In 2021, the Mobile Operational Support Teams was implemented in Poland (July), Romania (September-November) and Hungary (November).

During the operational activities officers assigned to MOST-CBC performed checks of 380 passenger vehicles, 2 pleasure watercraft boats, 2 boat engines, 1 motor camper, 1 motor bike. As a result of those activities there was a seizure of: 7 stolen vehicles, 2 stolen trailers and 1 stolen heavy machinery which resulted in 5 arrests and 8 criminal investigations initiated. The value of seized goods exceeded EUR 150 000.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Partially achieved. Under the ISA CBC Frontex supported operations with 10 vessels (targets) from 6 different investigation cases in the reporting period (2021). Additionally, ISA-CBC 2.0 supported 3 large-scale operations led by national authorities, in which dozens of targets were controlled.
2. Achieved. In 2021, 13 national authorities from 8 MSs have officially joined the ISA-CBC pilot project 2.0 that will run till the end of 2023. The implementation of the MOST-CBC pilot project was initially foreseen in Poland, Romania and Hungary.

3. Achieved. 3 for ISA-CBC and 1 for MOST CBC pilot projects:
 - Under EMPACT Priority Organised Property Crime (OPC) Operational Action (OA) 2.6 was supported by the MOST CBC Pilot project in 2021.
 - 4 operations under EMPACT Drugs Priority Cocaine, Cannabis, Heroine (CCH) and Synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances (NSP) were supported by ISA-CBC pilot project 2.0 in 2021.
4. Partially achieved. 26 SIENA messages were exchanged during the JADs – based on the actual operational requirements – compared to 36 messages exchanged in 2020.

Key Activity 2.2.3. Enhance operational cooperation with customs in prevention, detection and counteraction of cross-border crime by organising, supporting and coordination of joint operational activities.

Specific Objectives in AWP 2021

- Where applicable by the legal framework to engage customs in Frontex operational capacities and find operational synergies.
- Increase Frontex operational capacities and capabilities by engaging Customs into the planning, implementing and analysing Frontex operational activities.
- Supporting the harmonisation of the EU Policy Cycle/EMPACT OAs and the CCWP action plans.
- Extend the MMO platform to customs activities.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

In 2021, the Agency maintained and further tightened the collaboration with customs authorities, which is key to a successful and enhanced protection of the external borders, contributing to the prevention and detection, as well as investigation of cross-border crime, in relation to the respective mandates.

In recent years Frontex established a solid strategic and operational collaboration with customs community. In 2021, Frontex enhanced its position as a reliable partner, in particular thanks to the engagement with national authorities and its increasing support to the Council's Law Enforcement Working Party on Customs (former CCWP) and its action plan, as well as under the Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border Expert Team (CELBET) project, and DG TAXUD. Moreover, in 2021 Frontex further contributed to initiatives which had a Customs enforcement component, such as the Police and Customs Cooperation Centres (PCCCs), the European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) to Ukraine and Moldova, the South-Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC).

This was in line with the Agency's aim to involve more customs authorities within its operational activities, as well as to deploy customs officers to Frontex operational activities where the harmonisation of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) framework and the LEWP-Customs Action Plan continued to provide additional dimension for operational collaboration.

Frontex also enhanced the cooperation with Europol and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) in relation to customs with cross-border crime dimensions and strived for expanding the operational cooperation with the World Customs Organisation and its Regional Intelligence Offices. MMO Black Sea 2021 provided a platform for the implementation of such support through the cooperation with law enforcement of the host Member States, Romania and Bulgaria engaging Border Police, Customs, and other law enforcement agencies.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. In 2021, customs participated in 3 JADS (Arktos – Finestra – Mobile), two pilot projects (ISA and MOST CBD) and were involved in 1 MMO (Black Sea) – with detailed achievements reported under key activities 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above.
2. Achieved. In 2021, Frontex supported 3 operations coordinated by other entities with the participation of customs (operation: KARACI, AZUL, WHITE SEA).

3. Partially achieved. Given the fact that amongst the recruited standing corps category 1, a pool of them already had a customs background, it is the Agency's intention to increase the deployment of these officers in all Member States with customs authorities – respecting the particular mandates – when feasible and under certain conditions.
4. Achieved. In 2021, Frontex was involved in 7 EMPACT Priorities. The Agency engaged in actions of the CCWP 10th AP (10.1.1, 10.1.3 and 10.3) (now LEWP-C) while Frontex participation to customs-related strategic and operational meetings e.g. LEWP-C, CELBET and others increased during the period.

Key Activity 2.2.4. Support checks on any relevant documents and transportation means by providing centralised information systems (FADO and FIELDS), a 24/7 remote assistance and by deploying document fraud task forces in field operations along the four tiers access model.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Develop a service portfolio supporting more effective checks on travel, identity, maritime documents and vehicles in the European border and migration management operational activities and supporting Member States in the fight against related frauds.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- In the course of the year, the FADO takeover project was initiated, its project governance was established, and the project charter was approved. Business analysis was produced, and a Business Requirements Document (BRD) was prepared for the submission to the FADO subgroup (implemented in the frame of the Article 6 Comitology Committee chaired by DG Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission) for the approval in the first months of 2022. The project was prioritised among other Frontex projects. Synergies with other internal and external systems were considered. Due to difficulties in allocating ICT expert resources to the project, the development of the BRD was delayed from the original plan. The project progress was monitored and communicated to stakeholders on a regular basis and upon request.
- The Forgery Desk (FD) infrastructure is fully functional. Documentation for use and maintenance of FD systems is complete. Remote support and meeting facilitation capabilities were tested, and the service is ready to be made available.
- In 2021, 163 Frontex Document Alerts (FDAs) were reported: 109 on document fraud, 21 on modus operandi, 33 on transportation means. All the above noted FDAs were addressed to the operational support team of CED for validation. Out of the 163 reported FDAs, 109 were validated and further disseminated, 40 were rejected due to the lack of quality or relevance according to the respective Frontex Standard Operating Procedure. 14 FDAs are still under review. With the participation of 5 document experts from the CED Operational Support Team, a helpdesk was available on weekdays to support FDA reporting as part of operational activities coordinated by Frontex. In addition, 4 standing corps members were recruited in CED for preparing the future 24/7 helpdesk. Their onboarding was completed by the end of the year.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Partially achieved (50 % implemented). The FADO project was initiated. Business analysis was produced, but no external specialist was hired due to the market situation caused by COVID-19. The positions of the technical specialists were covered by internal Frontex DIG resources while efforts to hire external specialists continued.
2. Partially achieved. No business requirements were developed during 2021, however, three use cases were considered in the establishment of the Forgery Desk.

Focus Area 2.3. In the frame of the tripartite working arrangement, reinforcing the cooperation between Frontex, EMSA and EFCA for the development of European cooperation on Coast Guard Functions

Key Activity 2.3.1. Strengthen coast guard function of the Agency through multi-agency cooperation (joint capacity building and sharing of assets, support for the implementation of the coast guard functions).

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Enhance processes related to the cooperation with EFCA and EMSA for a coordinated approach in the implementation of European cooperation on coast guard functions (CGF).

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The practical handbook on European cooperation on coast guard functions was finalised with the adoption of the Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/1222 of 20 July 2021 establishing a 'Practical Handbook' on European cooperation on coast guard functions. Following this important step, under the lead of EFCA in the framework of the Technical Subcommittee 2 (TSC2) – capacity building part, the Agencies started a process to develop an online portal with the support of MSs in order to make the practical handbook accessible.
- Technical sub-committee 3 (TSC3) meetings were held in virtual format due to the COVID-19 health crisis, during the reporting period four TSC3 meetings were organised respectively in January, April, May and November 2021.
- In July 2021 in the frame of the TWA Steering Committee chaired by Frontex ED, the Agencies achieved a major step in the inter-agency cooperation with the adoption of generic modalities (guidelines) for multipurpose maritime operations (MMO) organised in the context of European cooperation on coast guard functions including the definition of the MMO concept. This generic modality has been developed by the three Agencies in the frame of Technical Sub Committee 3 (TSC3).
- The three Agencies (EFCA/EMSA/Frontex) continued cooperation and coordinated approach towards participation in coast guard fora, mainly through meetings and events organised virtually due to the sanitary situation and restrictions linked to it.
- In 2021, the Agencies continued cooperation within the European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF). During the French Presidency of the forum, EFCA coordinated a workshop on 'Training, capacity building and operational cooperation' which took place via videoconference in February 2021. Moreover, Frontex was actively involved in the forum activities as the Agency, in close coordination with the French Presidency (*Secrétariat général de la mer*), co-organised a legal seminar on 'European cooperation to combat illicit activities at sea through the example of the fight against drug trafficking: opportunities and challenges of the legal framework and its practical implementation' which took place online in May 2021. In November 2021, in close cooperation with the *Secrétariat général de la mer*, Frontex produced a booklet of the seminar to serve as a reference for the participants and the wider European coast guard community. It includes the main recommendations for follow up, also inserted in the final statement of the French presidency of the ECGFF. In July 2021, the Presidency was handed over to Croatia. In this frame, inter-agency cooperation continued in the form of online workshops. In November 2021, the 1st ECGFF workshop on 'Modern Technologies in the Fisheries Control System' took place, co-organised by Croatian Presidency and EFCA. Frontex was actively involved by providing a targeted presentation.
- The agencies were actively supporting Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS) initiatives, whose chair is Japan since 2019. Frontex, EFCA and EMSA are part of the core group members in charge of developing the activities in support of the joint consultative forum, and they took part in the 1st general meeting of core member group online in September 2021. The agencies were also actively involved in the organisation of the activities held under the remit of the pilot program on coast guard global human resource development which were held in March and October 2021. Finally, Frontex, EFCA and EMSA took part in the CGGS Working Level Meeting 2 in November 2021. The agencies also supported the development of the CGGS test website.
- In 2021, the Agencies continued to cooperate in the frame of the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum (NACGF) chaired by Germany with the role of observers where all three agencies have agreed to re-

inforce their involvement in relevant expert working groups of the NACGF. Frontex took part in the Maritime Security, Illegal migration, Drug trafficking, and Search and Rescue expert working groups on 27 September – 1 October in Neustadt. On 25-28 October, the Agencies took part in the NACGF Summit 2021 in Lubeck (Germany), the main NACGF decision-making meeting and a forum to handle initiatives proposed by working groups.

- Regarding the Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation (BSRBCC), five events were organised under the German Presidency in the second half of 2021, with Frontex as strategic partner. On 7-9 September, Frontex participated in the Baltic Border Committee in Bad Bramstedt (Germany). Baltic Border Committee is the operative body of BSRBCC cooperation, and the event featured discussions and briefings about planned BSRBCC activities. On 13-17 September, Frontex participated in the Seminar on 'Detection of stolen vehicles' which took place in Oeversee (DE). In November, Frontex took part in the cruise ship meeting as well as in the Document Expert Meeting in the same month. Frontex participation included providing expertise in form of presentations or expert level training.
- Frontex, EFCA and EMSA successfully implemented the annual strategic plan 2021 within the remits of the inter-agency cooperation. The three agencies efficiently combined their joint efforts to achieve the objective to further promote European cooperation with national authorities on coast guard functions at EU level. The annual report of the inter-agency cooperation under the TWA framework is available under Annex 7.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved in terms of the number of MSs having involved national authorities performing coast guard functions in the working group for drafting the practical handbook on European cooperation on coast guard functions.
2. Achieved. Four TSC3 meetings were organised in 2021.
3. Achieved and exceeded. In terms of the number of workshops (in the frame of coast guard fora such as European Coast Guard Function Forum (ECGFF), Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation (BSRBCC), Mediterranean Coast Guard Function Forum (MCGFF), North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum (NACGF), the target was outperformed (9). This significant increase is due to the fact that BSRBCC GE presidency action plan was exhaustive with Frontex active support in organising workshops and in addition Frontex decided to enhance its involvement in NACGF relevant expert working groups, now attending 4 relevant ones;
4. Achieved. Concerning participation in the European Maritime Day on a yearly basis; implementation of an inter-agency (EMSA/EFCA/Frontex) stand at EMD the target was met (1).

Key Activity 2.3.2. Implement multipurpose maritime operations (MMO) in cooperation with EFCA and EMSA in order to support the coast guard function including SAR as component of IBM to improve coordination and mutual knowledge between stakeholders and identify synergies with CSDP missions and operations in reference to the European Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Reinforce the inter-agency cooperation (EFCA, EMSA and Frontex) in order to support MS national authorities in European cooperation on coast guard functions.
- Share and promote the best practices with the EU and non-EU Member States as well as within coast guard fora.
- Extend the MMO platform to customs activities.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

MMO Black Sea 2021, the 190-days operation was successfully implemented in cooperation with EFCA, EMSA and 6 Bulgarian and Romanian authorities dealing with CGFs, and EU SatCen. One of the major steps achieved was a dedicated terms of reference for enhanced operational cooperation between

Frontex, EFCA and EMSA in relation to the support to the Bulgarian and Romanian authorities, agreed by the TWA steering committee in order to provide specific guidelines for this operation and detail support provided by each Agency. In addition, this MMO allowed to significantly develop the cooperation between Frontex and ROU Customs authorities. 33 maritime and 1 aerial assets were co-financed by Frontex. Concerning human resources, 6 European coast guard functions officers and 5 cross-border crime detection officers took part in the operation. EU SatCen and EMSA Copernicus related services were used within MMO and delivered under the umbrella of EUROSUR Fusion Services with these results for each CGF. The main outcomes were as follows:

- **Border control (cooperation with Romania coast guard and Bulgarian border police):** 263 targets (small boats, fishing vessels, yachts, cargo vessels) were controlled.
- **Fishery control (cooperation with EFCA community):** 66 joint patrols and 67 joint inspections were carried out; 191 Fishing Vessels Sighting Forms were forwarded to EFCA.
- **Maritime safety – cases related to SAR activities** (cooperation with EMSA's community): 9 SAR incidents involving 30 persons with 5 casualties.
- **Environmental protection – Fighting Environmental crime (Cooperation with EMSA community):** 17 cases of illegal waste in 161 containers (around 3500 tonnes) were detected in Port Constanta South-Agigea shipped from different EU MSs (Belgium, Germany, Norway, Portugal) and non-EU countries (Japan, UK) to Romania; 8 cases of potential maritime pollution were spotted and dedicated Potential Marine Pollution Sighting Forms were sent to EMSA.
- **Customs Control (joint border police/customs activities):** 6 cases of cigarette smuggling with more than 263 000 packs were undeclared; 3 cases of goods declared as intellectual property rights infringement – estimative value EUR 1 300 000.
- **Multipurpose Maritime Operation Baltic Tracking 2021** was implemented for 22 days from 9 to 30 August 2021 in the Baltic Sea region, under the German Presidency of BRSBCC 2021. Eight EU MSs took part, namely Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, supported by Frontex with EUROSUR Fusion Services (EFS) catalogue.

Boarding handbook. The 4th Boarding Group meeting focused on the finalisation of the update of the handbook in Frontex – coordinated joint maritime operations – best practices and guidelines was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to promote best practices included in the 'Handbook in Frontex – coordinated joint maritime operations – best practices and guidelines', two boarding drills were implemented within MMO Black Sea 2021, one in Bulgaria and one in Romania.

SAR workshops in different sea regions around Europe. Two 3-days SAR workshops, including a SAR seminar, tactical emergency casualty care awareness session and multipurpose maritime exercise were organised in Constanta/Romania and Burgas/Bulgaria. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SAR workshops in Greece and Malta were cancelled and postponed for 2022.

Expertise related to Coast Guard Functions in different law enforcement, customs and military projects. MMO Black Sea 2021 provided the possibility to enhance the support offered by Frontex in the area of law enforcement to the host Member States, Romania and Bulgaria. New concepts were introduced such as VEGA Children at sea borders; the deployment of the cross-border crime detection officer profile, which facilitated an increased exchange of data and experience in the cross-border crime area; sub-operations were launched on stolen boats/engines and maritime safety. New developments were implemented during this operation, such as increasing the cooperation with Romanian customs authorities and activation of the maritime BCPs in both host MS. Due to the COVID-19 situation, no activities were implemented in cooperation with CSDP missions. Such activities were also pending the deployment of an associated expert in the headquarters of the CDSP operation IRINI; the deployment will start in January 2022.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. There were two ad-hoc MMO implemented.
2. Partly achieved. In terms of the number of SAR drill implemented only two SAR workshops were possible due to COVID-19 restrictions.

3. Achieved. In terms of the number of activities performed with the involvement of the customs, the target (1) activity was met.
4. Not achieved. In terms of the number of activities performed in close cooperation with CSDP missions, the target (0) was not met. See above comment about cooperation with CSDP.

Focus Area 2.4. Support migration management by ensuring effective returns

Key Activity 2.4.1. Extend the assistance to MS in all stages of the return process.

Specific Objectives in AWP 2021

Provide operational and technical assistance in the whole return process, from the pre-return stage, support to (assisted) voluntary and forced returns, to support in the area of post-arrival/post-return, including pooling and sharing of information and practices. Provide technical resources to MS to conduct efficient returns in accordance with Frontex standardised procedures.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Continuation of technical and operational assistance to MS in the frame of current chartered and scheduled operations implemented.
- Provision of the same technical resources to MS as in 2020 in the area of pre-return and return operations.
- Continuation of technical assistance to MS in relation to voluntary returns and departures.
- Implementation of activities aimed at supporting assisted voluntary returns in line with the timelines for the transition of ERRIN activities achieved.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved and exceeded: 337 operations by charter flights vs 300 return operations envisioned; 8 107 persons returned by scheduled flights vs 8000 envisioned.
2. Partially achieved: Assisted voluntary returns: despite the successful returns in 2020, only one request was received from MS for such returns resulting in 99 TCNs were returned by CF vs 750 envisioned; 4 586 TCNs vs 1 800 TCNs envisioned.
3. Achieved: Joint reintegration pilot project implemented in Q2/2021. 48 cases in RIAT covering 68 persons.
4. Achieved: MS network plan has been implemented: DCP/PRAN/PRR meetings as well as HLRT took place according to planning.

Key Activity 2.4.2. Strengthen MS return capacities through use of the standing corps, capacity building, further developing of return IT-tools and reducing administrative burden.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Provide human resources to MS to conduct efficient returns in accordance with Frontex standardised procedures, focusing on all stages of the return process.
- Support the use of relevant IT systems, the compatibility of different EU IT systems and national RECAMAS (return case management system) and the digitalisation of the return process.
- Training in the use of the above-mentioned IT systems, especially IRMA/FAR and RECAMAS.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Deployment of Forced Return Escort and Support Officers (FRESO) in 2021 included: 11 FRESO at Rome-Fiumicino Airport, 12 FRESO at Frankfurt Airport, 7 FRESO at Amsterdam Airport, 5 FRESO at Vienna Airport and 19 FRESO at Frontex HQ.
- Publication of 'Health and safety guidelines in return operations during pandemics or outbreaks' to enhance the safety and effectiveness of all return-related activities performed during COVID-19

waves, in line with international best practices. Development of good practices document for situations where children are among the returnees (to be published in Q1 2022). Standard operating procedures were developed and formalised for the deployments of return specialists and FRESO as part of the FOA-R (Flexible Operational Activities – Return).

- FAR: all FAR developments envisaged were implemented in 2021 and the new transit tool will be officially launched in Q1 2022.
- With reference to the national return case management systems (RECAMAS, the deployment of return specialists introduced return counselling as a new activity, promoting voluntary return among TCNs. This – in combination with the support in relation to consular cooperation in identifying and obtaining travel documents, and assistance with FAR implementation including practical use of FAR for scheduled flights and charter flights supporting return operations – increased the number of successful returns from the host Member States.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. 150 forced-return monitors were deployed from the pool.
2. Partially achieved. Deployment of 35 FRESO to 4 MS airports and 19 FRESO to FRONTEX HQ; no FRESO deployed to Greece to support readmissions as all readmission activities have been suspended by Turkey vs deployment to 4 MS airports as hosting MS and 30 FRESO per month deployed to Greece to support readmissions envisioned.
3. Achieved and exceeded. During 2021, 44 RS were deployed to the host Member States: Austria, Poland, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, France, Greece, Lithuania, Latvia and Netherlands and 2 RS to the Frontex HQ. Increased numbers of interviews, voluntary returns, identification requests provided during deployment period.
4. Achieved. During 2021, 3 RECAMAS gap analysis were completed and 1 was partially completed (13 in total) thus reaching target at 45 %.
5. Partially achieved. Challenges with the FWC set-up and capacity lead to a delay in development. In its turn, this led to a delay in the development of access management module, which serves as the basis for all other modules, and through that made an impact on project timeline. New target: end of 2023 (including all operational modules).

Key Activity 2.4.3. Enhance returns through closer cooperation with non-EU countries in the field of return.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Contribute to the implementation of the EU return and readmission policy.
- Enhance awareness of non-EU countries and to facilitate cooperation between them and the EU Member States in return-related matters.
- Build return and readmission capacities of non-EU countries.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Nine country workings group meetings and nine ad-hoc workshops were organised and provided the practitioners the platform to discuss and share practices and challenges and to identify possible solutions to improve cooperation on returns.
- Two workshops were organised with an aim to build the knowledge capacities of TC on the EU practices on returns and readmission.
- Seven short-term and three long-term identification missions were supported to facilitate the identification and documentation of returnees. Support with using videoconferencing for identification was also provided for one TC.
- Support on deployment of EURLO continued unhampered. Nine European Return Liaison Officers (EURLO) were deployed by the Agency covering 15 key third countries of return.
- Planning for capacity building activities for TC was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions. Only two workshops could take place in 2021 for building the knowledge capacities of the concerned TC on EU practices on return and readmission.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. 10 EURLO deployments were supported in 2021, however, one EURLO deployment was suspended due to a security situation.
2. Achieved and exceeded. 34 out of 30 initially planned meetings/missions/visits were organised (nine country working groups, nine ad-hoc workshops for MS practitioners, one familiarisation visit, two capacity building workshops for third countries, ten identification missions, three meetings on videoconferencing for identification).

1.3. Strategic Objective 3**Sustained European Border and Coast Guard capabilities****Focus Area 3.1. Implement Capability Development Planning, including contingency planning, instrument as a vehicle for integrated planning of EBCG capabilities**

Key Activity 3.1.1. Establish and implement Integrated Planning, with a particular focus on scenario-based Capability Development Planning, including contingency planning, methodology and process for Frontex, ensuring sound requirements management and serving as a blueprint for Member States methodology and ensuring necessary compatibility within the concept of integrated planning.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Establish the concept of Integrated Planning
- Establish and implement process, methodology and scenarios for capability development.
- Establish process and methodology for capability synthesis and capability roadmap.
- Develop the concept of resilient capabilities and integrate it into the process and methodology for capability planning.
- Provide guidance and benchmark for MS/SAC capability development planning.
- Develop necessary tools in support of capability development.
- Manage capability related stakeholders and associated synergies with other institutions, agencies, organisations and policy areas.
- Manage external experts' database.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The Methodology and Procedure for Establishing National Capability Development Plans was adopted through Management Board Decision 2/2021. Following this, the Member States and the Agency developed a template for the national and agency capability development plans, aligning expectations as to the content and revised the timeline for the key milestones (i.e., national and agency capability development plans, overview and capability roadmap) that had been set out in the roadmap for implementing the Regulation. Furthermore, the methodology and procedure for contingency planning was adopted through the Management Board Decision 63/2021. On the side of operational planning, the new operational cycle was developed, taking into account the annual process for capability planning and establishing the pools.
- While the delivery of the Agency's umbrella for its Multiannual Plans on capabilities, i.e., the Agency's Capability Development Plan, has been postponed to mid-2022, the Agency worked with the Member States on drafting the Multiannual Strategy for Developing the Agency's own Technical Capabilities. The draft was presented to the Management Board in November 2021. The plan is to revise the strategy based on the feedback received in order to formally submit it to the Commission for a formal opinion in early 2022, then to be able to present it to the Management Board for adoption. As to the priorities for the standing corps, the revision of the profiles for the operational year 2023, which was conducted together with Member States during the autumn of 2021, resulted in a set of initial priorities that will be further developed as part of the indicative multiannual planning to be included

as part of the Management Board Decision on profiles to be adopted by the end of March in 2022 for the operational year 2023.

- The concept of sustainability and resilience was drafted and presented to Member States during 2021. The principles were integrated in the draft Multiannual Strategy for Developing the Agency's Own Technical Capabilities.
- The Opera Evolution system has been subject to corrective and preventive maintenance through services provided by an external contractor during 2021.
- Needs for further developments of tools have been identified and are reflected in the draft Multiannual Strategy for the Development of the Agency's own Technical Capabilities, identified as key enablers

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. The target of 85 % is assessed to have been achieved. In relation to the planned results only the capability development priorities have not been set yet as this deliverable has been postponed to mid-2022.

Key Activity 3.1.2. Align capability sub-strategies with the Capability Development Planning in order to provide trained, equipped and deployable standing corps.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Establish a process to translate the multiannual capability development plan into sub-strategies for e.g. policies, concepts, architectures, recruitment, training, research acquisition, logistics, safety and health.
- Enable the transformation of the capability pools to meet future needs.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- A draft Multiannual Strategy for the Development of the Agency's own Technical Capabilities was developed. Furthermore, priorities for the development of Standing Corps profiles were outlined.
- The relevant Management Board decisions on standing corps and equipment were adopted in line with the Regulation by the end of March 2021.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. The target of 85 % is assessed to have been achieved.

Key Activity 3.1.3. Manage capability pools including of equipment meeting commonly adopted technical standards to ensure achievement of the effect of operational activities.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Implement the process for pooling capabilities as well as mobilising and deploying them to meet the operational needs in a timely manner taking into account capabilities coming from the Agency, Member States and Schengen Associated Countries.
- Utilise Opera Evolution.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- During 2021, the Annual Process for Capability Planning and Establishing the Pools was supporting the ongoing operational activities in 2021 while preparing for the operational activities in 2022 and 2023.
- Opera Evolution was used to support the deployments in 2021.
- The capability pools were maintained and reports on them were presented at the Management Board meetings and through quarterly reports for 2021. The Annual Implementation Report for 2020 was adopted through the Management Board Decision 41/2021.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. 100 % of deadlines have been met by the Agency.
2. Achieved and exceeded. As of 31 December 2021:
 - Category 1: 489/700
 - Category 2: 375/400
 - Category 3: 3460/3600
 - Category 4: 1500/1500
3. Achieved. Management of operational resources
 - (a) 100 % of operational activities managed in Opera Evolution compared to executed activities.
 - (b) 100 % of HR deployments managed in Opera Evolution compared to actual deployments.
 - (c) 100 % of TE deployment managed in Opera Evolution compared to actual deployments.
4. Partially achieved. Ratio of deployed HR and TE to the operational needs:
 - (a) Total of 457 083 (deployed HR in person-days) out of 529 651 (operational HR needs). 86 % coverage.
 - (b) Total of 163 777 (deployed TE in asset-days) out of 334 661 (operational TE needs). 49 % coverage.
5. Partially achieved. Due to the ongoing nature of the Annual Bilateral Negotiations process, the majority of pledged HR and TE resources were deployed during 2021. However, there is no explicit data, comparing the number of actual deployments in comparison to the pledged resources. During 2021, a total of 5 324 person-days of HR and 5 169 asset-days of TE were cancelled by MS/SAC and Frontex. In terms of comparing this data versus total deployments, the cancellations are around 1 % (for HR) and 3 % (for TE) compared to total deployments.

Focus Area 3.2. Provide trained and equipped standing corps to enable response to current and emerging challenges**Key Activity 3.2.1. Recruit, train and equip standing corps category 1.****Specific objectives in AWP 2021**

- Recruit standing corps.
- Manage standing corps.
- Provide on-boarding, basic and specialised training.
- Equip the standing corps in service uniforms and personal equipment.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Equipment: all standing corps officers were equipped with all defined items of the service uniform and personal equipment prior to their deployment.
- A framework contract for the supply of Agency's weapons and ammunition was signed in October 2021. The first order was placed with expected delivery of service of weapons/accessories and ammunition in May 2022 and August 2022 respectively. A negotiated procedure to outsource storage, transportation, and related weapons services was drafted and will be launched in Q1 2022.
- The available non-lethal weapons and accessories such as batons, lachrymatory agents, carrying belts and bulletproof vests were distributed to the officers deployed. The preparation of the tender for FWC to ensure a continuous supply of these items started and will be launched in 2022.
- Iterations 2,3 and 4 of the basic training programme for the standing corps category 1 were successfully delivered. Iteration 5 commenced in 2021 and is to be finalised in February 2022. Quality assurance and control were rigidly followed to improve the quality of studies with every iteration in line with the established mechanisms.
- The development of the management and leadership training course to address the training needs of the SC category 1 middle-management staff was initiated.
- Profile-related specialised training courses and specialised training products for border management and return, including specific training on the protection of vulnerable persons, including children were developed, and delivered to standing corps category 1 staff after completion of their basic training.

- Frontex developed and implemented a tailored training for the ETIAS Central Unit staff. It was launched in October and is scheduled to be completed in January 2022.
- The Agency put into place quality assurance processes to ensure the highest quality of the training delivery. Harmonisation was guaranteed using the CCC and SQF while developing and delivering the training. In addition, trainers were enrolled in train the trainers' courses to enhance their performance.
- State-of-the-art technologies have been used to support the training design and management of the learners and trainers' records; training maps were updated for each learner accordingly.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. In 2021, the additional 372 standing corps category 1 staff were recruited thus making a total number of 770 category 1 staff engaged by the Agency by the end of the year although some onboardings were completed in January 2022.
2. Partially achieved. 770 category 1 staff engaged by the Agency by the end of the year although some onboardings were completed in January 2022, while 495 standing corps category 1 were registered in Opera Evolution and available for deployment upon completion of related training(s) as of end of the year. (Target achieved: 71 %)
3. Achieved. Percentage of new recruits trained under the basic training programme: 100 %.
4. Achieved and exceeded. Number of individual training maps prepared for category 1: 100 % – 228/228.
5. Achieved and exceeded. Number of specialised profile training activities implemented vs planned: 100 %. 22 specialised courses delivered within 58 iterations and five self-study online training sessions were provided for the SC category 1 officers. 1 174 standing corps category 1 officers received specialised training according to their profile as it follows in the table below.

Table 3. Courses for SC category 1.

Course	Attendees
A01. Course for Border Guard Officer (BGO)	225
A02. Course for Information Officer	38
A03. Course for Debriefing Officer	65
A04. Course for Advanced Level Document Officer	70
Training on Detection of Counterfeited Documents (Intermediate level)	12
A05. Course for Cross-Border Crime Detection Officer (CBCDO)	41
A06. Course for Motor Vehicle Crime Detection Officer (MVCDO)	39
A08. Course for Frontex Tactical Support Officer	47
A09. Course for Forced Return Escort and Support Officer (FRESO)	29
A11. Course for Coast Guard Function Officer	7
A14. Course for Fundamental Rights Monitors (FROM)	20
A15. Course on European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) Training CU	40
A16. Annual ongoing training on the use of force	137
Managerial and Leadership Training for the Frontex Reporting Officers	24
A25. Course on Advance Information (practitioner level) – for the MSs only online training provided, f2f postponed	14
A27_2. Course on the Entry-Exit-System self-study	40
A28. Course on European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)	40
A35. Roadshow on Falsified documents	15
A37. Operational Safety and Health e-learning module	73
Inter-agency cooperation FRONTEX – EFCA – EMSA	3
Schengen Borders Code online training	195
Total of SC trained	1 174

6. Achieved. Trainees' satisfaction rate with the training. The baseline of the trainees' satisfaction rate for the 4 batches of the basic training programme are the following: 1st batch (96.7 %), 2nd batch (92.8 %), 3rd batch (93.8 %), 4th batch (94.2 %) while Trainees' satisfaction rate with specialised training was 4.6/5.
7. Achieved 100 %. All recruited standing corps officers were equipped prior to their deployment with all defined items of service uniform and personal equipment.
 - Several acquisition projects resulted in a steady but flexible supply chain of various items, such as parts of service uniform/personal equipment (e.g., large scale framework contracts for the provision of the service uniforms and equipment; targeted contracts for the provision of specialised items; agreements with MS in place for ensuring certain items required in a specific MS context were made available to deployed standing corps).
 - Acquisition management chain consolidated by establishment of governing rules, policies, processes and procedures (e.g., related to the quality inspections, checks and acceptance; record management). Logistical management chain covering the service uniform and equipment lifecycle scaled to the size of the standing corps established in-house (e.g. stock, warehouse and distribution management processes implemented; data handling and management according to GDPR requirements).

Key Activity 3.2.2. Provide pre-deployment induction and specialised training for standing corps category 2 and 3.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Provide pre-deployment induction and specialised training in accordance with the operational needs and training quality standards and optimised through advanced educational technology.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- 11 specialised courses delivered within 37 iterations provided to standing corps categories 2 and 3 officers. Profile-related specialisation training courses for border management and return were delivered. The specialised modules on fundamental rights were embedded in every specialised training. Such modules raise awareness and provide harmonised guidelines on respecting fundamental rights while performing border control or return-related tasks. These include protection of children at the borders and other vulnerable persons, protection of victims of human smuggling, trafficking in human beings and of other forms of cross-border crime.
- The Agency remained committed to ensuring harmonised standards for training design and delivery, monitoring and quality assurance. The CCC framework was used to ensure a harmonised structure of the training delivered. This was also done by delivering training on course design in line with Bologna and Copenhagen principles using the Sectoral Qualification Framework, courses on training delivery methodology and introduction to education technology.
- The monitoring and reporting of the training were supported through enhanced educational technology, the AULA platform was optimised in this regard.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. In total 34 training activities were implemented over 2021.
2. Achieved. 11 specialised courses were delivered within 37 iterations which were provided for the standing corps category 2 and 3 officers in 2021. In total, 1710 standing corps officers categories 2 and 3 were equipped with profile-related specialised training as presented in the below table. In line with recommendations presented by the Consultative Forum, tailored fundamental rights online modules and contact sessions have been embedded as an integral part of all relevant specialised training dedicated to the standing corps. Fundamental rights aspects have been duly reflected and considered in the learning outcomes and in a variety of learning materials and training tools. The content developed is to be further delivered with the support of the dedicated team of Frontex certified FR trainers.

Table 4. Courses for SC category 2 and 3.

Activity	Category 2	Category 3
A01. Course for Border Guard Officer	129	
A02. Course for Information Officer	28	
A03. Course for Debriefing Officer	42	126
A05. Course for Cross-Border Crime Detection Officer	19	
Course for detection of firearms and explosives (canine teams)	15	
A08. Course for Frontex Tactical Support Officer	2	
A09. Course for Forced Return Escort and Support Officer (27	
A11. Course for Coast Guard Function Officer	5	10
A18. Pre-deployment Induction	1303	
A35. Roadshow on Falsified documents	1	1
Inter-agency cooperation FRONTEX – EFCA – EMSA	2	
Total of SC trained	1 573	137

Key Activity 3.2.3. Ensure safe and healthy working conditions for deployment personnel in operational areas through establishment and implementation of duty of care mechanism.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Implement the concept and capability requirements to be compliant with the legal obligations for the duty of care.
- Implement the necessary procedures to manage Occupational Safety and Health in the operational areas.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- A Working Group on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) was established and held two meetings in 2021 with all internal entities involved. The aim was to facilitate implementation, monitoring, updating, and improving the duty of care framework envisaged to cover the headquarters, operational areas, and antenna offices. As a result, the working group identified needs, actions to be taken and responsibilities of each entity with regard to the measures supporting the physical and mental health of deployed staff. Some of the important actions taken and results achieved are based on lessons learned through 2021, deployment and redeployment scheme for 2022 took into consideration work modalities of the staff deployed such as frequency of rotations, duration of deployments as well as personal matters to the extent possible to improve satisfaction level.
- A new function of 'Chief Adjutant' was established with the main task to support the development and implementation of the European Border and coast guard standing corps by the provision of advice on topics related to the day-to-day management of the standing corps such as policies and procedures, welfare, and wellbeing, conduct and discipline, quality and development as well as communication channels, tools and methods. The Chief Adjutant's role is to liaise between the Headquarters, Deployment Management Division and the standing corps officers.
- OSH Team was established within Deployment Management Division with a primary function of assuring a healthy and safe environment and working modalities for standing corps, thus fulfilling the responsibility of the duty of care.
- Instructions for the team members related to OHS including COVID-19 vaccination requirements in the areas of deployment, were drafted and are part of each operational plan.
- In June, the staff from Deployment Management Division carried out inspections of hotspots in Greece with the aim to map the situation and to propose improvements related to safety and health requirements for the workplace of deployment and overall endeavour supported with other actions such as drafting the 'Health and safety guidelines in return operations during pandemics or outbreaks', specific OSH-related training for standing corps has been added to the basic training programme and a first FTSO – Occupational Health profile deployment.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved: duty of care framework is established; its implementation is facilitated by the Working Group on Occupational Safety and Health which coordinates the cross-divisional efforts. Its implementation supports the overall objective of minimising – as close to zero as possible – occupational hazards.

Key Activity 3.2.4. Develop standing corps deployment models ensuring flexibility and effective achievement of operational goals.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Establish the modalities for deployment taking into account e.g., rotation periods, composition of teams, relocation practicalities etc.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The deployment management of standing corps was driven by continuous improvement based on lessons learned from the experiences gained throughout 2021. Deployment modalities proved to be of crucial importance as often changes of staff may hamper operational efficiency.

- A new regulatory framework was established to manage deployments and associated procedures for standing corps categories 1 and 2 – MB and ED decisions pertaining to the rules on the secondment of standing corps categories 1 and 2, authorisation to carry and use weapons for standing corps category 1, delegating the power to decide on deployments for standing corps categories 1 and 2, facilitating COVID-19 vaccinations for standing corps categories 1 and 2, deployment assessment report for category 1, annual assessment report for category 2, etc.
- Administrative management of standing corps was conceptualised – 28 reporting officers by delegation were selected to be trained and assigned for standing corps administrative management; practical implementation to start in 2022.
- The deployments were structured in teams, thus allowing team members to enhance cohesion and to generate the pursued '*esprit de corps*'. The teams were composed with officers from standing corps categories 1, 2 and 3, and allocated to a given operational location close to the host MS coordinating staff.
- Guidelines were drafted for the establishment of the appropriate deployment period in correlation with the deployment location and basic infrastructure access (international airports, medical infrastructure and living conditions). All locations where standing corps categories 1 and 2 were deployed, have been assessed to grant equal treatment for all throughout the contracted period (for category 1) or the secondment (for category 2). The professional background and experience are taken into consideration for all standing corps prior to their deployment.
- Travel and accommodation arrangements including mission approvals carried out for all standing corps categories 1 and 2; tender for provision of travel services launched and FWC concluded.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Established effective deployment pattern for standing corps categories 1 and 2. Operational needs were covered: at the end of December 2021, 489 standing corps category 1 and 348 category 2 officers were deployed to different operational activities to over 190 locations in the Member States (MS) and third countries.

Key Activity 3.2.5. Support development of Member States/Schengen Associated Countries and non-EU countries capabilities.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Ensure a harmonised and common approach to EU border and coast guard training in the MS by developing and delivering a variety of educational and training programmes.
- Strengthen the capacities of the MS and non-EU country by providing direct assistance and supporting cooperation among border and coast guards training institutions.
- Further develop and deliver specialised training courses and products related to integrated border management tasks in line with the training quality standards and optimised through advanced educational technology.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- In 2021, 21 specialised courses delivered within 44 iterations and 4 self-study online trainings were provided for the MSs/SACs/TCs participants. In total 6 622 officers were equipped with specialised training as it follows in the below table:

Table 5. Courses provided for MSs/SACs/TCs participants.

Activity	MSs/SACs	TCs
A04. Course for Advanced Level Document Officer	30	
A13. Course for Pool of Forced Return Monitors (FReM)	16	
A19. Course for Border Surveillance Officer – Air Crew Preparation for Joint Operations	12	
A20. Course for Border Surveillance Officer – Maritime Operations	11	
A21. Course for Escort Leaders in Forced Return Operations	33	
A24. Course for Schengen Evaluators'	34	
A25. Course on Advance Information (practitioner level) – for the MSs only online training provided, f2f postponed	18	
A27. Course on the Entry-Exit-System	253	
A27.2. Course on the Entry-Exit-System self-study	3 460	
A28. Course on European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)	903	
A29.1. Intensive Course on CIRAM (Risk Analysis)	77	
A29.2. European Course for CIRAM Risk Analysts – first stage online (next 4 stages to be conducted in contact mode in 2022)	100	
A33. Course for Specialists on Identity and Security Documents	21	
A35. Roadshow on Falsified documents	89	156
IPA Training 'National roll-outs of the screening/debriefing training', Escort officers, Escort leaders and Forced return monitors		131
Inter-agency cooperation FRONTEX – EFCA – EMSA	38	
Automated Border Control (ABC) Training – self-study in AULA	89	
Schengen Borders Code online training	1135	
Regional Training on Fundamental Rights for Border Guards (Part of the project: 'Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey, Phase II').		19
Total of MS/SAC/ TC officers trained.	6 319	303

- Frontex offered tailored training as well as supplementary training to those MSs and SACs who requested additional support other than the originally proposed and following the outcome of vulnerability assessment exercises carried out by Frontex.
- The Agency continued to deliver training centred around integrated border management such as the course on entry-exit system or the course for Schengen evaluators.
- The assessment of the implementation of the Common Core Curriculum for Basic Training in the EU (CCC Basic) was finalised and the CCC–IAP report published. The review and update of the CCC Basic was launched in 2021. A needs analysis questionnaire (NAQ) was elaborated and addressed to the border and coast guard training institutions in the Member States, Schengen Associated Countries and several third countries that have implemented the CCC Basic 2017 version. The collected data was further analysed, and the outcomes serve as a basis for the new update of the CCC Basic. As many as 105 national experts were nominated to take part in the update process including 72 experts from MS and 23 from non-EU countries.
- Specialised training courses and products related to integrated border management tasks were delivered and follow-up was given to the training requests of MSs related to the outcomes of the vulnerability assessments.

In 2021, Frontex delivered the following courses in relation to the Integrated Border Management tasks:

1. Course for Schengen Evaluators
2. Course on European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)
3. Automated Border Control (ABC) Training
4. Schengen Borders Code online training
5. Course on the Entry-Exit-System

- In 2021, the Agency sent several calls of interest to host training activities, including two iterations of the Basic Training Programme and different specialised training courses such as the Course for Motor Vehicle Crime Detection Officer.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Trainees' satisfaction rate with specialised training was 4.5.
2. Achieved. The CCC assessment report was published.
3. Not achieved. Due to the pandemic situation throughout 2021, no exchange and common training activities between border and coast guard training institutions were conducted.
4. Not achieved. For the reason stated above, the activities in support of the partnership academies network had to be suspended.

Focus Area 3.3. Continue to develop and implement strategy for acquisition of own technical equipment and establish decentralised logistics system.

Key Activity 3.3.1. Continue to deliver and develop Frontex own technical equipment meeting commonly adopted technical standards and services providing operational activities with necessary capabilities to achieve desired operational effect.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Manage the capability requirements; engaging in the procurement of systems, heavy and light equipment and services, managing effectively commercial relationships and contracts.
- Identify the general determinants of efficient and effective acquisition and through-life support to major assets and analysing their applicability to specific systems and usage scenarios.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Provided support to the analysis of continuous coherence between the operational needs and the business constraints (legal, financial, etc.).
- Executed the procurement acquisition procedures in line with the draft multiannual acquisition strategy and the draft implementation plan.
- Acquisition projects for the provision of the personal protective equipment, service uniforms and personal equipment resulted in a steady but flexible supply chain that covered the basic operational needs for 2021 and shall continue covering them for years 2022–2025.
- Provision chain for personal protective equipment successfully established via inter-institutional framework contract lead by Frontex with the participation of 48 EU bodies and institutions.
- Contractual readiness to re-start the readmission operations by sea as soon as the sanitary context allows was maintained throughout 2021.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. 4 exceptions out of 739 procedures = 0.5 %.
2. Achieved. According to the first consolidated version of the Annual Procurement Plan 2021, 14 tenders were successfully implemented out of 28 envisioned.
3. Achieved. 100 % of contractual milestones remained under timeline control.

Key Activity 3.3.2. Establish quality assurance procedures and processes for acquisition management, considering systems engineering and safety management, and ensuring transparency and accountability.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Standardise the management of projects and contract implementation.
- Adopt control tools to enhance transparency and accountability.
- Continuously improve quality.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Converted the RASCI tool into the initiative's portfolio.
- There was no progress in implementation of improved processes of project/contract management
- The initiatives portfolio has been successfully established and is constantly updated and being implemented in the execution, monitoring, and reporting of activities.

Key Activity 3.3.3. Manage technical equipment meeting commonly adopted technical standards deployed in the operational areas through established capacities for maintenance, redeployment, provision of associated services, as well as disposal management.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Technically manage systems, equipment, and other materiel through-out the lifecycle, taking into account associated contractual obligations, upgrades, refurbishments, and service life extensions.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Delivered fully-managed chartered aerial surveillance aircraft and passenger aircraft for return activities.
- Made available 86 patrols vehicles and the 100 transportation vehicles carried out missions in 10 JO supporting patrolling and covering approximately 1.1 million (an average of 1 300 km/month).
- Shipment and deployment of fully operational equipment of 150 vehicles in July and August to 9 countries, including the urgently needed equipment for the RBI in Lithuania and Latvia.
- Collection of damaged and disposable equipment deployed in operational areas via Frontex technical support officer for logistic support (FTSO-SL).

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. All technical equipment deployed under the operational activities was adequately managed. The fleet increased fivefold from 36 to 186 vehicles deployed, supported with fuel cards and necessary maintenance. Standing corps equipped with service uniforms and personal equipment prior to deployments.

Key Activity 3.3.4. Establish modular and scalable decentralised logistics capacity to deliver technical equipment and services to the operational areas.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Develop tools for modelling and forecasting for improved operational availability.
- Further development of supply chains.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Establishment of Logistics Unit within Deployment Management Division to manage a fleet of the Agency's vehicles, contract management for acquisition of personal and profile related equipment, the establishment of contractual capacity for weapons, weapons management and uniforms management.
- Reinforcement of field logistics support through establishment and coordination of a network of 28 FTSO – SL from standing corps category 1, 2 and 3 leading to the management of over 3 200 units of light technical equipment.

- Internal instructions/guidelines were provided to the standing corps for different logistical matters such as the use of petty cash, etc.
- Timely support was provided to the new operational areas such as JO FOA Land Finland 2021, RBI Lithuania, and JO Land Serbia 2021.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

Achieved. Processes consolidated – deployment of personal and profile-related equipment vs deployment of standing corps.

Focus Area 3.4. Research, technology development and innovation to effectively support capability development of the EBCG

Key Activity 3.4.1. Deliver in close cooperation with the Member States and the Commission technical standards for the equipment to be included in the capability pools and to be deployed in the activities of the Agency.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Develop technical and operational standards for technical equipment and performance assessment methodologies.
- Provide technical support to the Member States and non-EU countries in implementing new technology and in developing new capabilities (among other biometrics, advance information and traveller intelligence) for border management; and provide support to the EBCG Agency and to the European Commission for the implementation of EU policies in this area, including EES and ETIAS.
- Deliver capacity assessment and capacity development in support of the Member States and partner non-EU countries.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

Results achieved.

- In 2021, the first iteration technical standards were released under a MB Decision, covering: Technical Standards for Maritime Equipment (TS-2021-001); Technical Standards for Aerial Equipment (TS-2021-002); Technical Standards for Land Border Surveillance Equipment (TS-2021-003); Technical Standards for Document Inspection Equipment (TS-2021-004). In addition, Frontex released on its website the Technical Guide for Border Checks on Entry Exit System (EES) related equipment. Furthermore, following the request of Lithuania, Frontex launched support to the development of a pilot for Common Minimum Surveillance Standards for land borders.
- The methodology for the development of technical standards was delayed due to the need to give priority to the resubmission of the Technical Standards to the Management Board in September. A draft methodology was prepared and presented to the Member States for their comments in June 2021. Based on the feedback received, this methodology is now planned to be finalised in 2022.
- Frontex provided timely and extensive support to the development of the EES Handbook, as per the timeline set by the EU Commission. Frontex re-launched the operational research service to support the Member States in the re-design of processes at Border control points (BCPs) in view of the implementation of the Entry Exit System. In 2021, support was provided to three border crossing points in two Member States.
- Frontex research officers provided input to the delivery of training activities on EES and advance information as per the timeline of training sessions.
- International Conference on Biometrics for Borders was held in virtual format in November 2021, focusing on biometrics in the context of the European Union's external border management and including topics related to border security and specific border control technologies. It was attended by over 200 participants from MS, industry, and research institutes.
- Frontex contributed to the implementation of IPA II project related to the EU information System in Montenegro and North Macedonia. Frontex committed to continue providing technical support through IPA III to the other Western Balkan countries.

Results delayed.

- Due to the length of internal procurement procedures, the development of performance assessment methodology and the related tool will take place from February to October 2022.
- The finalisation of the advance information study was delayed to 2022, due to, inter alia, the effects of COVID-19 and other emerging priorities. The study will be published and disseminated to MS in Q1 2022, including the satisfaction survey.
- The development of the guidelines on advance information on land and sea borders is postponed until the new API (Advance Passenger Information) legislation is in place. When the study on advance information at land and sea borders was launched it was foreseen that it will be immediately followed by the development of guidelines on advance information on land and sea borders. In 2021 it turned out that the work on the new API legislation is delayed and currently only a draft proposal is foreseen for 2022. The guidelines need to take into account the provisions of the new API legislation which is to be updated with regard to the developments of the interoperability architecture including ETIAS.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. In 2021 four technical standards were submitted twice for adoption to the MB. At the second submission, they were adopted under MB Decision 21/2021 in September 2021.
2. Not achieved. In 2021, Frontex developed the methodology for Technical Standards. It will be presented to the Management Board in 2022. As regards the methodologies and tools for performance assessment of document inspection systems, due to internal delays, the results will be available in October 2022.
3. Not achieved. Due to the length of internal processes (procurement), the handbook on operational research models will be delivered in Q2 2022.
4. Not achieved. The finalisation of the advance information study was delayed to 2022, due to, inter alia, the effects of COVID-19 pandemic and other priorities. The study will be published and disseminated to MS in Q1 2022, including the satisfaction survey.
5. Not achieved. The development of the guidelines is postponed until the new API (Advance Passenger Information) legislation is in place. The work on the new API legislation is delayed, currently, it is foreseen that a draft proposal will be available in 2022.
6. Achieved and exceeded. Following the satisfaction survey run after the International Conference on Biometrics for Borders 2021 with a focus on interoperability (30 November 2021) 87 % of respondents rated the conference experience as very good, excellent, or exceptional (response rate 17.5 %).

Key Activity 3.4.2. Develop and manage a comprehensive research and innovation platform to enable research and facilitate the dissemination of research information.**Specific objectives in AWP 2021**

- Establish an EIBM-TIP which includes the development of a Border Management Innovation Centre (BoMIC) – a platform to test, demonstrate, simulate and showcase innovative technologies, tools and prototypes pertaining to the border security domain, and by entering into agreements with other similar innovation labs and sites.
- Conduct and implement structured frameworks for dialogue with the communities critical for border security research: EBCG, academia and the research components of the industry.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

In relation to BoMIC, preparations and inputs were aligned to the overall documentation of the Frontex new headquarters. Following the request of the European Commission and the Management Board, at the end of 2021 preparation of the Business Case for the establishment of BoMIC was launched.

Interactions with MS to establish a functional community to discuss research needs and priorities were continued in several fora: Research for Innovation Network, during EU projects w workshop was set to discuss and update on the EU research projects relevant for the EBCG and a dedicated network meeting

took place on 10 November. A questionnaire on future research needs was proposed as a follow up to the November network meeting.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Inputs in relation to BoMIC were provided as requested.
2. Achieved. The online meeting of the Research for Innovation Network took place on 10-11 November 2021, with the participation of 13 MS, and was devoted to the presentation of Frontex research activities, the EU funded research projects relevant for EBCG as well as a discussion on future research needs.

Key Activity 3.4.3. Steer EU-wide border management research through the development of the senior user role of Frontex in the implementation of the EU framework programmes for research and innovation.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- In line with the Terms of Reference signed in February 2020 between DG Home and Frontex, which stipulates the role of the Agency in the parts of the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation which relate to Border Security implement the senior user role of Frontex in EU-funded border security research in close collaboration with academia, EU agencies, international organisations and industry partners to stimulate and support border security innovation.
- Conduct and manage technology and general research for the border security domain.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- In Q1-Q2 2021, Frontex contributed to the research topics and calls in the field of border security supporting the EU Commission in defining the portfolio of topics for the next programming period.
- In line with the timeline indicated by the EU Commission, evaluation of the proposals under the EU framework programme on research was shifted to January 2022.
- Frontex operational and research experts participated and provided the contribution to 29 events/activities related to EU Framework programme on Horizon 2020 (meetings, kick-offs, workshops and presentations in relation to specific projects such as ARESIBO, Civilnext, PERSONA, D4FLY, EFFECTOR, CAMELOT, ENTRUSTED, FOLDOUT, BORDERSENS, PROMENADE as well as events related to the Horizon 2020 Programme in general).
- Pursuant to the request of the Commission, Frontex participated and contributed to the technical review of the ARESIBO project.
- Frontex collaboration with existing border security research capabilities within the EU took place in the format of online meetings and written communications:
 - Following the identification of possible joint work areas, formalised through the exchange of letters between the EDs, a regular exchange with DG JRC was implemented;
 - The exchange was continued with EDA, EU SATCEN, ESA and EU ANSA;
 - Frontex made regular contributions and actively participated in the definition, setting up and design of the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security, leading on two out of five Hub's 'quick win' projects.
- Following the preparations of 2020, the contract for the research study on the Technology Foresight for the Future of Travel was implemented in 2021.
- As of 2021, Frontex used the framework contract for research services which simplified the acquisition of outsourced research services. As a result, four specific contracts were issued:
 - for the research study on the Green Deal and the EBCG;
 - the development of pilot common minimum standards on land border surveillance;
 - the consultancy service on border crossing point resource optimisation;
 - the preparation of BoMIC business case.
- As regards research studies, in 2021 Frontex delivered the following:
 - Dissemination and publication of the research study on [Artificial Intelligence-based capabilities for the European Border and Coast Guard](#);
 - Delivery of the research study on **Technology Foresight on Biometrics for the Future of Travel**;
 - Realisation of a research study on **the Green Deal and the EBCG**;

- Update of the **Frontex Research Glossary** to streamline and update the research terminology used.
- In 2021, the Agency remained involved in sharing information on EU-funded projects via a dedicated website section, and through a workshop on EU-funded projects within the Research for Innovation Network. In addition, following the launch of the innovation cells on border checks and surveillance, the ongoing EU-funded projects in these areas were presented to the innovation cells for awareness and further discussion on technology innovation needs and priorities for the EBCG.
- In 2021, Frontex provided regular updates on technology innovation projects, research studies and their outcomes, as well as on standardisation activities to the Capability Development Network for further absorption.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Proposals for border security topics were delivered to the EC in Q1.
2. Achieved. In May an online workshop on the EU-funded projects with the participation of 17 experts from MS/SAC and numerous Frontex staff took place focusing on newly launched projects (BorderUAS, EFFECTOR, ISOLA, iMARS, ITFLOWS and METICOS) and updates on more advanced projects (ARESIBO, COMPASS2020, ANDROMEDA, BorderSens and D4FLY) were presented to the EBCG community.
3. Achieved. Quarterly and ad-hoc meetings with JRC were held to update on the progress and discuss individual cooperation topics. Frontex consistently participated in the bi-weekly meetings of the EU Innovation Hub.
4. Achieved. In 2021, the specific contract for the research study on the Green Deal and the EBCG was launched and implemented under the research framework contract, while the dissemination of its results will continue in 2022. In addition, outsourced research services were also made available for other ongoing research activities, as well as for other Frontex specific needs e.g., related to the new premises.

Key Activity 3.4.4. Pilot border management related technological solutions and research findings fostering further development of EBCG capabilities.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Implement technology innovation insertion pilot projects focusing on innovative solutions at the level of operational prototype or above. The pilot projects concern surveillance equipment and processes (platforms, sensors, integration, communication); border checks (biometrics, checks equipment, integration, communications); and analysis-decision support tools and capability tools necessary in border checks.
- Manage industry relations as key stakeholders in the area of innovation insertion (in-market or near-to-market products and services), following procedures under transparency and open competition principles, specifically in support of standing corps including innovation to be used in training newly recruited officers.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The concept of the innovation cells has evolved to focus each cell on a capability rather than a specific technology need/pilot project, as it was initially envisaged. In 2021, two innovation cells were set up: one on border checks and the other one on surveillance. Preparation for the third one is ongoing.
- The innovation cells on surveillance participated in the discussion on the ongoing project Maritime Surveillance Aerostat II, Aerostat II Field visit, I-days in December as well as contributed to the definition of future pilot projects. The innovation cell on border checks participated in the discussions on the project Entry Exit System land borders pilot project, site visits to EES pilot projects in Bulgaria and Spain. The discussions resulted in ideas and proposals for future technology innovation projects.
- The procedure on contacts with industry was developed and applied in practice in the organisation of industry days and advice to internal entities on the handling of contacts with industry, to test its comprehensiveness and fitness for purpose. Industry days were organised respecting the provisions of the procedure on contacts with industry, including publication of calls on Frontex website.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Innovation cells concept implemented and carrying out their tasks.
2. Achieved. The following technology pilot projects which were approved and prepared in 2020 were implemented in 2021: Entry Exit System Land Borders pilot project at la Linea (Spain), Entry Exit System Land Borders pilot project at Kapitan Andreevo/Kalotina (Bulgaria), and Maritime Surveillance Aerostat II pilot project in Greece.
3. Achieved. Four industry days were organised (exclusively in virtual format) in January, February, November and December with the focus on Airborne Maritime Surveillance Solutions, Return and Reintegration Assistance, virtual industry showcase on biometrics interoperability within the framework of International Conference on Biometrics for Borders 2021 and General Industry Days respectively. Furthermore, in December 2021 thematic industry days focused on solutions for law enforcement, portable and mobile equipment used in field mission operations, vertical take-off, and landing – VTOL RPAs and deployable, autonomous solutions for border surveillance technology.

1.4. Horizontal Objective 1**Implement and support European Integrated Border Management to ensure safe and well managed EU external borders****Focus Area 4.1. Establish and develop mechanisms for operational cooperation to implement the concept of the European Integrated Border Management****Key Activity 4.1.1. Support the establishment of the Multiannual Strategic Policy Cycle.****Specific objectives in AWP 2021**

- Provide the general annual risk analyses.
- Preparatory works for the next Strategic Risk Analysis to be delivered in 2022 ⁽¹⁹⁾.
- Provide lessons learned from the implementation of the Technical and Operational European Integrated Border Management Strategy.
- Provide technical support to the establishment of the multiannual policy cycle.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Frontex established a Strategic Risk Analysis Network (SRAN) to facilitate the cooperation with external stakeholders with the aim of preparing Strategic Risk Analysis for European integrated border management – a flagship report contributing to the multiannual strategic policy cycle for European Integrated Border Management. First drafts of the Strategic Risk Analysis 2022 were prepared in a collaborative way involving the network in live workshops and online consultations.
- The Agency provided its views on the scope of the upcoming Multiannual Strategic Policy for European Integrated Border Management to the Commission and the Member States during an expert meeting organised by the Commission in February 2021. The meeting was followed up by a letter from the Executive Director to the Director-General for Home Affairs. The Agency's views took into account the lessons learnt from current the Technical and Operational Strategy.

⁽¹⁹⁾ As set out in Article 29(2) of the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, the Agency shall prepare general annual risk analyses, which shall be submitted to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the Commission applying the security rules adopted in accordance with Article 92, and tailored risk analyses for operational activities. Strategic Risk Analysis should be delivered every two years. NB: On 30 June 2020, the Agency submitted the Strategic Risk Analysis 2020.

Key Activity 4.1.2. Translate strategic steer provided by the Commission into Technical and Operational European Integrated Border Management strategy achieving the coordination with the concept of integrated planning.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Revise the Technical and Operational European Integrated Border Management Strategy together with the Commission, Member States and Schengen Associated Countries (and any other relevant stakeholders) once the Multiannual Strategic Policy for Integrated Border Management will be available in line with Article 8 of the Regulation.
- Execute the Technical and Operational European Integrated Border Management Strategy European level.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

The Commission Communication on the Multiannual Strategic Policy for European Integrated Border Management was not adopted in 2021. Therefore, the revision of the Technical and Operational Strategy could not commence.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. N/A – Given that the tabling of the Multiannual Strategic Policy for European Integrated Border Management was postponed to 2022, the subsequent revision of the Technical and Operational European Integrated Border Management Strategy could not commence.
2. N/A – Given that the Technical and Operational European Integrated Border Management Strategy was not able to be revised, no action plan could be set up for implementation.

Key Activity 4.1.3. Facilitate and foster the implementation of TO EIBM across the EBCG.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Support implementation of integrated border management at the national level.
- Promote the concept and best practices of European Integrated Border Management in non-EU countries.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

While the revision of the Technical and Operational Strategy and establishment of an Action Plan could not commence due to the Commission not having adopted the Communication on the Multiannual Strategic Policy, the fostering of the current Technical and Operational Strategy should be viewed from the perspective of continuing to gradually implement the 2019 Regulation based on the associated roadmap established in an agreement between the Commission and the Agency.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. and 2. The targets are assessed as achieved.

1.5. Horizontal Objective 2

Reinforce the external dimension aimed at multiplying Frontex operational impact through cooperation with the European Commission and EEAS, as well as through partnership with Member States, EU entities, non-EU countries and international organisations.

Focus Area 5.1. Strengthen resilience of priority non-EU countries and promote European IBM standards.

Key Activity 5.1.1. Enhance partnerships with priority non-EU countries within the framework of the external action policy of the Union, in order to promote operational cooperation with EBCG, including through structured cooperation frameworks and deployment of Frontex liaison officers to non-EU countries.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Strengthen engagement with priority third countries in various areas of operational cooperation.
- Develop and update structured cooperation frameworks with competent authorities of third countries.
- Further develop the network of Frontex liaison officers in third countries, including FLOs with return profile, and maintain the existing network, working in complementarity with the European network of immigration liaison officers.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

In 2021, Frontex continued to strengthen its engagement in the external dimension. The Agency invested into dialogue and trust-building measures, developed operational, capacity-building activities with priority third countries, and where possible, engaged partners strengthen structured cooperation frameworks.

Western Balkans and Turkey. The Western Balkans remained of utmost priority in the external dimension. 2021 was the third year in a row when Frontex launched a new **fully-fledged joint operation** in the region, this time in **Serbia**, following previously launched operations with executive powers in Albania (2019) and Montenegro (2020).

To support operational activities, Frontex also worked to strengthen institutional ties and frameworks for structured cooperation. In early 2021, the Agency concluded a revised working arrangement with the Ministry of Interior of Albania, concluding two Memoranda of Understanding as well (with the Ministry of Interior and with Ombudsman) on the complaints' mechanism scheduled for signature in 2022.

The Agency also strengthened strategic dialogue with the Western Balkan authorities via a series of events, culminating in the high-level meeting between the Frontex Management Board and the Western Balkan partners (see highlights section). Frontex also contributed to policy level exchanges on cooperation with the Western Balkans, including the Ministerial forum on justice and home affairs (December), the Ministerial meeting of the Salzburg Forum (June), Senior Officials Meeting on Western Balkans (May) and PCC SEE ⁽²⁰⁾ Committee of Ministers (June and November).

2021 marked the conclusion of the **EU-funded IPA II project** on 'Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management, Phase II'. In the framework of the project Frontex implemented 20 training sessions and other capacity building activities on screening, debriefing and interviewing, EUROSUR and national coordination centres, detection of falsified documents, non-voluntary return as well as on

⁽²⁰⁾ Police Cooperation Convention for South-East Europe.

fundamental rights for border guards. These activities gathered almost 300 participants from national authorities of the six Western Balkans partners and Turkey.

Drawing on the results of the project, Frontex also worked to prepare the next phase of capacity building in the Western Balkans under the new Instrument of Pre-Accession (IPA III). The Agency conceptualised two technical assistance projects in the Western Balkans for the funding of the European Commission. Subject to grant agreements under IPA III, the project will take place in the period 2022-2026 and will cover the following areas: 1) follow-up to the above-mentioned project on protection-sensitive migration management; and 2) a comprehensive project on border security, including support to the implementation of Status Agreements, in addition to strengthening the overall IBM architecture in the region and tailored activities supporting the development of national coordination centres in the six Western Balkan beneficiaries.

Due to geopolitical situation and COVID-19 related restrictions, the Agency was not in a position to implement the Cooperation Plan 2020-2022 with Turkey, which was to a large extent put on hold. Nevertheless, through its liaison officer deployed in Ankara, Frontex kept the channels open for technical dialogue with the Turkish authorities in relation to situational awareness.

Africa and the Middle East. Throughout 2021, the Agency continued its efforts to build dialogue and cooperation in Africa and the Middle East. In the framework of the Commission-funded EU4BorderSecurity project, Frontex continued its engagement with the authorities in the Southern Neighbourhood through a set of familiarisation and capacity-building activities, namely:

- In June, Frontex organised a virtual workshop on quality control for European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) for the benefit of the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC). This initiative came following the interest in the topic expressed by the Member States and specialised bodies of the AIMC. Frontex shared its knowledge and expertise on the quality control component of European IBM and presented tools developed as part of the vulnerability assessment and Schengen evaluation mechanism activities, with an aim to support national quality control capacities in AIMC Member States.
- In July, a training course on evidence-based occupational safety and health was organised for the benefit of Jordanian border control personnel. The training also included a donation of personal protective equipment covering the needs of a border crossing point for 6 months.
- In September, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and Frontex, organised an online regional workshop 'Entry/exit screening – science and practice'. The purpose of the regional workshop was to raise awareness on the role of evidence-based best practices on entry/exit screening at borders, its implementation and impact to mitigate the effect of outbreaks of infectious diseases. The event targeted mid- to senior-level representatives of relevant ministries and agencies responsible for public health and border control in the Southern Neighbourhood.
- In October, Frontex, IOM and the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC) organised a regional workshop 'Health and safety at the border: Arab, European, and international perspectives'. The activity brought together over 70 experts and practitioners to exchange experiences and discuss challenges on ensuring cross-border mobility while safeguarding human rights, global public health, and the integrity of borders. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the event was held in a hybrid format, with half of the participants taking part in Warsaw and the rest connected remotely.
- In October, Frontex together with the Spanish National Police organised a study visit for Jordanian border authorities to the services and facilities of the Spanish National Police in Madrid. The visit included familiarisation with the General Commissariat for Immigration and Borders within the Spanish National Police, including the Document Fraud Investigation Section and the National Centre for the Coordination of Border Crossing Points. A field visit was also organised to the National Police headquarters at the Madrid airport in order to learn at first-hand about the Spanish National Police's mandate in border management, its working methods and the core principles of European IBM.
- In October, in the frame of the joint roadmap endorsed by the Frontex-Morocco *Comité Mixte*, the Agency organised a training on media, crisis, and public communications for ten officials from the Moroccan Ministry of Interior. The training included bespoke one-on-one coaching sessions for two senior officials.

The Agency also pursued cooperation with priority third countries in the rest of Africa, particularly West Africa. In this regard, a scoping mission, facilitated by the EU Delegation to Mauritania, was organised to Nouakchott in November 2021. During the mission Frontex delegation held meetings with the Director-General for Territorial Administration, the Director-General for National Security, the Head of the Mauritanian Navy, as well as with representatives of EU Member States and IOM present in Mauritania. Bilateral contacts also continued with Senegal and Niger through the Frontex Liaison Officers deployed to both countries.

Eastern Partnership. In 2021, developments at the borders the EU shares with Belarus and around Ukraine shifted priorities and, as a result, considerable attention both at the EU level and globally change zeroed in on the Eastern Partnership region. In line with the broader EU's external action policy, cooperation with Belarus remained on hold; whereas with the rest of the Eastern Partnership countries, it continued through bilateral initiatives.

In addition, in Ukraine, Frontex kept up support to the national authorities in the implementation of the national IBM Strategy and Action Plan as well as of EU technical assistance through the Steering Group for the EU4IBM project. The Agency also contributed to the programming of future technical assistance in the area of IBM, funded by the European Commission. In December 2021, a TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) Workshop on new mechanisms and development of Joint Programs of International Cooperation in the field of Migration was held with relevant EU and Ukrainian stakeholders. A new Cooperation Plan for 2022-2024 between Frontex and the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine was also elaborated and prepared for signature in 2022.

In parallel, the Agency continued to strengthen bilateral relations with Georgia and Moldova. The revised working arrangement with the Ministry of Interior of Georgia was signed at the beginning of 2021. Frontex also worked with the Delegation of the EU in Tbilisi on the application of relevant legislation and supported the project 'Prometheus', which is led by France. A new cooperation plan with Moldova for the period of 2022-2024 was negotiated and concluded, and the Agency also hosted a study visit by relevant Moldovan counterparts, in cooperation with IOM. At both, country and regional levels, Frontex worked closely with the Commission services on the future programming of deliverables and activities in the Eastern Partnership region beyond 2020.

Silk Routes countries. Similar to the Eastern Partnership region, the further destabilisation of Afghanistan catapulted response to the developments in and around the country to the centre of global attention. To aid preparedness at both the Agency and EU levels, Frontex intensified situational monitoring and awareness related to Afghanistan and the potential migration movement towards the EU. In line with the Statement of the JHA Council of 31 August 2021, Frontex also committed to providing systematic support to the 10th phase of the Border Management Programme in Central Asia to contribute further to strengthening the capacities of the relevant national services.

Efforts to resume and intensify dialogue with Pakistan also continued to be invested and bore fruit. In August, Frontex hosted a high-level delegation of representatives of the Ministry of Interior, Immigration and Passports and the National Database and Registration Authority of Pakistan, as well as the Ambassador of Pakistan to Poland, on a three-day familiarisation visit to the Agency. In addition to Frontex, the EU was represented also by European Commission and the EU Delegation to Pakistan virtually, and by the European Migration Liaison Officer to Pakistan in person. The visit served to provide Pakistani counterparts with a comprehensive overview of the mandate of Frontex and to identify areas of common interest where further cooperation could be explored, including the potential deployment of a Frontex Liaison Officer to Pakistan. The Agency is working to build on the results of the visit.

Strategic partners. The Agency continued to strengthen collaboration with strategic partners through the exchange of expertise and good practices in areas such as risk analysis, vulnerability assessment, returns and training. In cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, a Workshop on Quality Control for IBM with the participation of several third countries from the Asia-Pacific region, including strategic partners such as Australia, was held in November 2021. The following month, Frontex organised a workshop with Australia on returns and, in the context of developments at the Eastern borders, hosted a visit by the United States of America State Department for an exchange of operational

updates. Following the departure of the United Kingdom from the EU and the end of the transition period, the Agency also carried out an initial internal assessment of operational interests for potential future cooperation. With Canada, negotiations on a new cooperation plan continued.

Latin America. The Agency continued exploring dialogue and exchange with law enforcement counterparts in Latin America, particularly in view of strengthening cooperation on cross-border crime, such as drug smuggling. To that end, Frontex continued engagement with relevant authorities through Commission funded projects in the region, namely EUROFRONT and SEACOP.

Model Status Agreement. Frontex supported the European Commission in finalising the Model Status Agreement, as envisaged in the revised Regulation through technical expertise. Adopted in December 2021, the model will allow the EU to update the existing Status Agreements and negotiate new ones, which upon their entry into force will widen the geographical scope of joint operations with executive powers outside of the EU, among others including activities at the borders between two third countries, ensuring that a clear mandate and priorities for negotiation of further working arrangements were endorsed by the Frontex Management Board in 2021.

Besides the working arrangements with Albania and Georgia which were largely negotiated under the previous legal framework, the Agency was waiting for the Commission to adopt a model working arrangement and hence did not initiate any new negotiations.

Frontex Liaison Officers in third countries. The Agency further consolidated and developed the network of Frontex liaison officers in third countries, working in close cooperation with the European network of immigration liaison officers.

In 2021, the network of Frontex liaison officers (FLOs) in third countries consisted of five deployments covering nine countries, namely the Western Balkans region, Turkey, Senegal and Niger. The FLOs continued following and supporting the implementation of a wide number of activities in their respective countries, enhancing cooperation with authorities in charge of border management and return, in close coordination with EU Delegations, CSDP missions as well as other European immigration liaison officers.

In parallel, Frontex continued to plan and prepare future deployments, covering other priority countries and regions, namely:

- In January, a new FLO to Western Balkans, based in Tirana, took up duties with a mandate covering Albania, Kosovo ⁽²¹⁾ and North Macedonia.
- In March, the FLO to the Eastern Partnership region joined the Agency and started her pre-deployment phase in Frontex headquarters, in view of her posting in Kyiv, Ukraine.
- The Agency also continued setting priorities for future deployments in 2022 that were endorsed by Frontex Management Board Decision 45/2021 of 21 September 2021.

To ensure a coherent approach and enhance better coordination among all European immigration liaison officers, the Agency actively contributed to the ILO Steering Board chaired by the Commission, whereas the five FLOs regularly contributed to regional ILO meetings and other activities.

The Agency also further developed the FLO back-office function responsible for monitoring, guiding, supporting FLOs, and facilitating interaction with internal and external stakeholders. The back-office held regular meetings with FLOs and ensured they are up to date with developments in the headquarters via biannual FLO gatherings as well as regular training and information sessions.

Among key achievements in 2021, the Liaison Officers Networks Unit finalised negotiations for the Service Level Agreement with EEAS, which was signed in December and will serve as an overarching legal framework for FLOs deployed in third countries.

⁽²¹⁾ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status. It is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Due to the pandemic, the majority of cooperation activities had to be postponed or transferred to the online environment. Lacking face-to-face contact, the Agency was not able to consistently collect feedback on stakeholder relevance/usefulness. However, on those activities we were able to measure stakeholder relevance point results show that over 70 % of participants considered the events satisfactory or above.
2. Achieved and exceeded. The Agency organised several major in-person events, visits and meetings, ensuring high-level participation. Other cooperation activities took place in the virtual environment with the level of participation among various interlocutors reaching over 90 %.
3. Achieved. The Agency engaged with the majority of the priority regions set in the Frontex International Cooperation Strategy 2021-23, among them the Western Balkans, Turkey, North Africa and the Middle East, West Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Partnership countries, Silk Routes countries and strategic partners. Only limited engagement was possible in the Horn of Africa due to the volatile situation in the region, whereas new cooperation avenues were sought with Central Asian countries, in response to the volatility in Afghanistan.
4. Achieved. The working arrangements with Georgia and Albania were renewed, cooperation plans were prepared with Moldova and Ukraine. Further negotiations were put on hold awaiting the model working arrangement by the Commission. Two Memoranda of Understanding on the complaint mechanism with Albania were agreed upon and prepared for signature in 2022.
5. Partially achieved, namely:
 - FLO deployed to the Western Balkans, with the seat in Albania.
 - The pre-deployment phase for the FLO to the Eastern Partnership region was finalised, with the deployment envisaged in early 2022.
 - Service Level Agreement concluded with the EEAS for the co-locations of FLOs in EU Delegations. The SLA will replace the Administrative Arrangements currently in place and will form the legal basis for future deployments, among them to the EaP region.
6. Partially achieved. Attendance of ILO Steering Board meetings by the HQ representatives was ensured at the level of 100 % while FLOs in third countries attended almost all the regional and local ILO meetings that they were invited to, reaching a level of participation of approximately 80 %.

Key Activity 5.1.2. Strengthen capacities of priority non-EU countries to effectively deal with migration and cross-border crime through technical assistance and capacity building activities, in close coordination with the European Commission and the EEAS.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Promote the European IBM through Frontex-funded capacity building and technical assistance activities in non-EU countries.
- Develop and implement EU Commission-funded technical assistance projects.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

Project 'Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey'. By the end of 2021, the Agency finalised the implementation of this European Commission-funded project Phase II led by Frontex and implemented in cooperation with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

The project had a significant impact on the development of protection-sensitive migration management systems in the Western Balkans. Among the key achievements are so-called 'masterplans' for Montenegro and North Macedonia, done as a follow-up to the project Phase I study 'Assessment of the IT and communication infrastructure to support the identification and registration process of mixed migration flows in the IPA II Western Balkan Beneficiaries'. The 'masterplans', once operationalised, will allow the two beneficiaries to ensure that the respective national systems for identification and registration of mixed migration flows have interconnectivity and interoperability with EURODAC at the time of their accession to the Union. The activity was implemented in close consultation with different Directo-

rates-General of the European Commission and eu-LISA and followed a political agreement between the Commission and the two partner countries in 2019.

Throughout the 2.5 years of Phase II, the Agency implemented 20 training sessions and similar activities covering the following priority topics: fundamental rights for border guards; screening, debriefing and interviewing; EUROSUR and national coordination centres; detection of falsified documents, non-voluntary return by air for law enforcement officers and return monitors. These activities attracted almost 300 participants from national authorities of the six Western Balkans partners and Turkey.

In June 2021, Frontex and the European Commission co-organised a workshop on the legal, policy and technical aspects of setting up national coordination centres in the region, aiming to exchange experience in view of aligning Western Balkans partners with the EUROSUR legal and operational framework.

Furthermore, cooperation between Frontex, implementing partners (EUAA, IOM, UNHCR) and Western Balkan Beneficiaries was strengthened, setting the ground for a smooth transition into the next phase of the project (2022-2025).

EU4BorderSecurity project. This project completed its third year of implementation, building on the work done so far, particularly in the area of health security in border management following the extension of the project to cover this domain in 2020. Although COVID-19 implications continued to restrict the project's outreach, it nevertheless managed to implement seven main initiatives, thus increasing the awareness about Frontex, cooperation opportunities, and IBM operational concepts and practices among Southern Neighbourhood authorities.

With regards to Morocco, the restrictive COVID-19 measures introduced as the borders remained closed for most of the year impacted the positive momentum accumulated in 2019 and 2020. Nonetheless, Frontex was able to maintain open channels of communication with the Moroccan counterparts throughout the year, including via regular exchange at the executive level, an expert mission to Rabat, and media training for the benefit of senior officials of the Moroccan Ministry of Interior.

The partnership with the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC) continued to be strengthened with three successful events – the Euro-Arab Border Security Conference and two workshops (see key activity 5.1.1.). This partnership further consolidated Frontex's stature in the Southern Neighbourhood and offered new opportunities for cooperation with the wider membership of the AIMC.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved and exceeded.

- The EU4Bordersecurity project entered its third year of implementation, with seven main project activities successfully implemented in 2021, matching the targets set. Overall, across these events, the average attendance level was 73 % of entities invited with the average satisfaction level reaching 95 % of those submitting their evaluation questionnaire at the conclusion of the event.
- The training courses under the IPA II project also received very positive reviews from participants, with over 90 % of them agreeing that knowledge, skills and competencies acquired during this course are useful for their professional activity.

2. Achieved.

- The IPA II project 'Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey, Phase II' was successfully extended until the end of 2021 in order to account for the disruption of activities due to COVID-19. By end of 2021, all Frontex project activities were successfully implemented in line with the target value of 100 %.
- The EU4Bordersecurity project entered its third year of implementation, and all project activities are foreseen for 2021 were successfully implemented.

Focus Area 5.2. Develop the architecture for an effective inter-agency cooperation on IBM at EU level, ensuring most efficient use of resources and complementary implementation of mandates.

Key Activity 5.2.1. Establish and maintain appropriate frameworks for cooperation within the EU and with international organisations, in order to make full use of the EBCG mandate.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Enhance cooperation and mutual coordination with EU institutions, offices, bodies and agencies.
- Maximise synergies with relevant international organisations and provide operational and technical expertise of the European Border and Coast Guard Community in select international fora.
- Support further development of the EBCG capabilities, situational awareness and operational response through strategic and ever closer relations with competent national authorities, supported by Frontex Liaison Officers in EU MS/SAC, liaison officers deployed by the Member States to the Agency, as well as exchange of LOs with other EU entities.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

Frontex continued to enhance the cooperation and mutual coordination with EU institutions, offices, bodies and agencies as well as to maximise synergies with relevant international organisations and provide operational and technical expertise of the European border and coast guard community in selected international fora.

Cooperation with EU partners. In 2021, the Agency, through its Institutional Partnership Unit, offered evidence-based contributions to relevant EU policy processes and ensured effective inter-agency cooperation in key areas relevant for Frontex' mandate.

The Agency also continued to contribute to various evaluations, legislative assessments and studies, sharing its technical and operational expertise. Among others, in 2021 Frontex contributed to several studies for the European Commission, namely a study on assessing the legislative and operational framework for fighting organised crime in the EU, a study on facilitating cross-border law enforcement cooperation and the evaluation on CEPOL.

Inter-agency cooperation in multilateral fora, through the Frontex Presidency of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies' Network in 2021. In 2021, Frontex led an extensive inter-agency collaboration as part of its Presidency of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Network focusing on Green Deal and Digitalisation. The Presidency activities resulted in 26 events, 4 strategic reports, 2 studies, coordination of the network's various tools and products as well as producing the final report on the network's activities in 2021.

It is the first time the network focused on the environment and sustainability. In this respect, the network organised three seminars focusing on climate change and its impact on JHA, environmental crimes, corporate carbon neutrality and training about Green Deal policies for JHA Agencies' staff (please see highlights for more information).

Like the European Green Deal, digitalisation reflects another political priority of the European Commission – Europe fit for the digital age. In 2020, at their annual meeting, the Heads of JHA Agencies agreed on the list of 'digitalisation' topics that deserve further attention. To follow up on those outcomes, the Network continued work in this direction by organising a seminar on artificial intelligence (AI) and exchanging knowledge on the digitalisation of the EU border management in a Frontex – ERA (Academy of European Law) annual conference. The digitalisation was also discussed by communication, public access to documents, digital services, and data protection experts within the respective JHAAN working groups as well as during ad-hoc meetings such as the one that focused on Public Access to Documents and the Management of Sensitive Operational Information in JHA Agencies.

To mark its 10th anniversary, the Network produced an assessment report that highlights the network's key achievements and provides a list of recommendations. The report has been endorsed by the Heads of JHA Agencies at the annual meeting on 22 November 2021.

Structured cooperation through working agreements, cooperation plans, SLAs and other instruments⁽²²⁾ as set forth in article 68(2) of the Regulation. Frontex continued developing and negotiating numerous working arrangements with EU institutional partners, essential for the implementation of the Agency's mandate.

- In January, Frontex signed a working arrangement with EUNAVFOR MED operation IRINI. On its basis, Frontex will be supporting Operation IRINI with information gathered as part of the Agency's risk analysis activities, such as tracking vessels of interests on the high seas, as well as data from its aerial surveillance in the Central Mediterranean. The agreement also foresees the exchange of experts.
- In March, Frontex renewed the tripartite working arrangement with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), marking a significant step towards strengthening the European cooperation on coast guard functions. The working arrangement covers cooperation on risk analysis and information exchange on threats in the maritime domain, as well as information sharing in compliance with fundamental rights, data protection requirements, and access rights. The document also provides the basis for collaboration on surveillance and communication services, capacity building activities, as well as sharing of capacities.
- In September, Frontex formalised the operational aspects of cooperation with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), by signing a cooperation plan for 2021 and 2022.
- Frontex also initiated negotiations with several institutional partners and continued ongoing dialogue with others. For example, the Agency started negotiations with eu-LISA, European Union Agency for Asylum and Europol to renew already existing cooperation frameworks, so they better reflect recent changes in respective Regulations.
- Frontex also re-started negotiations with Eurojust on a revised working arrangement, which in the future should enable the exchange of personal data and has contributed to the joint investigation teams' practical guide and possible support for the practitioners. The Agency can assist joint investigation teams' members with strategic and tactical products and services in a supporting capacity within the scope agreed with such teams. These activities can contribute to the prevention, detection and combating of cross-border crimes falling under Frontex' mandate (such as migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and terrorism), provided that such assistance does not entail the processing of personal data.

Contacts with EU entities outside of the JHA were also regularly maintained and further developed, opening new areas for cooperation.

- Frontex successfully finalised negotiations of the working arrangements with the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), which have already received prior approval from the European Commission and will be concluded in early 2022.
- Cooperation with the Commission's Joint Research Centre has been enhanced and further structured through an exchange of letters, including several joint activities among them cooperation on performance assessment methodology for document inspection systems; border control measures in the context of COVID-19; technology watch in the field of border security and many more.
- Frontex has also advanced working arrangement negotiations with the EU's Satellite Centre (SatCen) – an essential partner for the delivery of EUROSUR Fusion Services – and initiated negotiations with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) to establish cooperation in the wake of the pandemic.
- Working-level contacts were also established with the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), European Public Prosecutors Office (EPPO), and the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), which in the future may lead to concrete initiatives of cooperation.

⁽²²⁾ In accordance with Article 68(2) of the Regulation, cooperation with the EEAS, Union bodies, offices, agencies – including CSDP missions and operations – and with international organisations, shall take place in the framework of working arrangements concluded with prior approval of the Commission.

- To support its activities in the external dimension, Frontex also launched negotiations with three CSDP missions: EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUBAM Libya and EUAM Ukraine to promote European IBM standards and cooperation in the area of situational awareness and risk analysis.
- The Agency continued close dialogue with partners in the area of customs, further enhancing cooperation with the European Commission (DG TAXUD) as well as the Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border Expert Team (CELBET). Frontex also contributed to the Wise Persons Group (WPG) on Customs in view of contributing to the future EU Customs Governance.

Cooperation and coordination with international organisations. In 2021, Frontex advanced negotiations on working arrangements with international organisations, namely the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). The Agency also established working-level contacts with the International Committee for Red Cross (ICRC) and maintained constant dialogue with UNHCR and IOM, particularly in light of the events in Afghanistan and Belarus. Frontex welcomed a new head of the UNHCR Liaison Office to Frontex as well as the IOM Liaison Officer to Frontex.

Constant dialogue with INTERPOL was maintained, ensuring active participation in the working groups established within the Dialogue on an effective multilateral policing architecture against global threats as well as in the framework of the JHA Senior Official meetings EU-INTERPOL (SOMEI), the INTERPOL General Assembly and a range of expert-level meetings and events.

Liaison Officers networks in the EU. In 2021 the Agency continued to support further development of the EBCG capabilities, situational awareness, and operational response through strategic and ever closer relations with competent national authorities, supported by Frontex liaison officers.

Eleven Frontex Liaison Officers deployed across the Member States and Schengen Associated Countries continued to strengthen contacts and cooperation with national authorities. They contributed to promoting Frontex catalogue of services, supported high-level visits and meetings, and facilitated operational contacts.

As in the past, the FLOs continued contributing to the vulnerability assessment activities, supporting the analysts with the observations, and facilitating contacts with the authorities. The FLOs were also increasing supporting preparation of operational activities, facilitating contacts with the headquarters, and playing an important role in crisis-related events, for example in the context of the Rapid Border Intervention in Lithuania.

While the pandemic continued to limit the possibilities for the FLOs to travel and visit all the Member States, they maintained contacts making use of alternative means of communication.

The Agency finalised the preparations for the exchange of liaison officers with Europol. The recruitment and deployment have not yet been finalised due to the pending allocation of staff.

In addition to supporting ongoing deployments and developing policies and workflows to support the FLOs, the back-office also focused on setting up the modalities and workflows for the liaisons officers deployed by the Member States. As a result, the Agency's Management Board was able to adopt the rules and conditions for the liaison officer deployment, implementing Article 13(2) of the Regulation.

Consequently, in July, Frontex officially launched a pilot phase for the first deployments of Liaison Officers from the Member States. The pilot will conclude by early summer in 2022, with a total of nine Liaison Officer's representing seven Member States and Schengen Associated Countries: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and Switzerland (see highlights). The result of this pilot, to be concluded in 2022, will in the future inform a more comprehensive policy for other types of liaison officers deployed to the Agency.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Evaluation forms from JHAAN events 2021 suggest that the general overall level of satisfaction with JHAAN events was very high and amounted to 8.4 points out of 10, indicating high relevance of these activities; Due to the pandemic, most cooperation activities were transferred to the online environment. Lacking face-to-face contact, the Agency was not able to consistently collect feedback on stakeholder relevance/usefulness, as was the case in the previous year.
2. Achieved. JHAAN events were attended by the majority of JHA Agencies, and all the external guests invited, with an overall attendance level of around 90 %.
3. Achieved. In its engagement with institutional partners at EU, the Member States and international levels the Agency maintained a balanced approach, adjusting the level of intensity to the operational relevance and priority of partners. The activities covered at least 70 % of all priority partners.
4. Achieved and exceeded. Concluded 2 working arrangements – with EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, as well as tripartite working arrangement with EMSA and EFCA:
 - Concluded 2 cooperation plans – with CEPOL (2021-2022) and with eu-LISA (2021-2023);
 - Structuring cooperation with JRC through the exchange of letters.
 The above represents over 60 % of negotiations concluded, compared to those initiated in 2020.
5. Achieved. All 11 FLOs contributed to the annual VA cycle in 2021.
6. Not achieved. The envisaged deployment of the FLO to Europol could not take place due to the pending allocation of staff.
7. Achieved. All requests for liaison officer deployments have been positively accepted, resulting in 6 additional deployments in 2021, and another 2 starting in 2022.

Key Activity 5.2.2. Further develop cooperation with other EU entities in the external dimension, thereby facilitating coherent implementation of IBM standards and synergies with Frontex operational activities.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Assume the role of the EU's centre of expertise for promoting European IBM standards in the external dimension.
- Facilitate coherence and coordinated approach in non-EU country cooperation within the framework of the European Border and Coast Guard.
- Contribute to ensuring coherence in the Agency's engagement with EU and external partners.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

Synergies with EU and Member States partners in the external dimension. Frontex international cooperation is set in the overall framework of the EU's external action and therefore implemented in close coordination with EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, as well as the EU Member States. In that spirit, the Agency continued to coordinate its work in third countries with respective EU Delegations, and where available, CSDP missions, thereby exploring synergies in the implementation of the CSDP compacts.

Following the decision of the Management Board, the Agency prioritised cooperation with EUBAM Libya, EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUAM Ukraine, aiming to develop working arrangements with these missions.

Frontex also worked together with the Member States on several joint initiatives involving third country cooperation. For example, following a request from the German Federal Police, Frontex supported the organisation of the Border Agencies' Directors conference, bringing together EU Member States and Western Balkan partners. On request of Austria, the Agency also supported the establishment of the Joint Coordination Platform (JCP) – a Member States' initiative to support operational cooperation on border management and return with Western Balkans. This resulted in four kick-off workshops, a study visit of Joint Coordination Platform (JCP) to Frontex, consultations on return-related cooperation and an exchange of letters to formalise the future relations. Upon request from JCP, Frontex invited officers from Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate as observers in Frontex-coordinated joint return operations.

Promoting IBM standards. The EBCG Regulation mandates the Agency to promote a coherent set of European IBM standards in third countries, a task that requires close coordination with the Commission, the EEAS, and the Member States. While waiting for the launch of the multiannual policy cycle on the European IBM, the Agency has initiated several steps to support this process.

The concept of IBM has been at the centre of all capacity-building projects carried out by Frontex, most notably the EU4BorderSecurity in the Southern Neighbourhood, where the Agency is promoting dialogue on IBM through a set of activities, such as awareness-raising workshops and development of an IBM glossary.

In order to promote a coherent approach to the European IBM, the Agency continued supporting the European Commission in programming and implementing IBM related interventions in third countries. In this context, Frontex provided advice and expertise to several Commission-funded technical assistance projects in the Southern Neighbourhood (EUROMED police, CT-MENA (counter-terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa (CT MENA)), the Western Balkans (SeaGate), the Silk Routes countries (IBM project), the Eastern Partnership region (IBM support in Ukraine) as well as in Latin America (EUROFRONT, SEACOP). The Agency contributed to the steering and advisory committees of the projects and provided ad-hoc support to EU delegations on projects in third countries. Examples of such cooperation include regular contributions assessing projects in the external dimension, such as input to evaluations of grant applications for the Eastern Partnership related projects under the Migration Partnership Facility (MPF), or ad-hoc initiatives, such as a peer-review mission on IBM to Montenegro in support of the EU Delegation.

Facilitating dialogue and exchange within the European Border and Coast Guard. With an aim to coordinate its efforts in the external dimension within the EBCG family, Frontex further elaborated and consolidated the work of the informal expert group on capacity building in third countries. The Agency organised four rounds of regional consultations with the Member States and Schengen Associated Countries, bringing together practitioners in charge of IBM related capacity building projects in third countries to exchange best practices and coordinate efforts in the areas of mutual interest. Dedicated round table discussions were held with a specific focus on capacity building activities in Africa and the Middle East, the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership countries as well as the Silk Routes and Central Asia.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Contributions to at least eight projects in the external dimension.
2. Achieved. Four regional round tables and a working on capacity building project methodologies.
3. Achieved. Internal tools developed to track the implementation of the International Cooperation Strategy 2021-23; the International and European Cooperation Round Table was put on hold, awaiting the revised Frontex Internal Rules of Procedure.

1.6. Horizontal Objective 3

Develop upgraded management system aimed at ensuring accountability, regularity and legality of all Frontex activities

Focus Area 6.1. Provide management framework for sound administration of resources.

Key Activity 6.1.1. Design and implement a comprehensive system for programming, monitoring and evaluating the Agency's activities and underlying expenditures through establishing a set of processes that are integrated and adaptable to evolving risk universe.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Adapt Frontex programming and assurance setup and processes to be fit for the mandate under the Regulation.
- Adapt the Agency management framework (including processes definition and management) gradually to challenges stemming from the Regulation and compatible with quality certification standards.
- Programming and monitoring of resources, their effectiveness and efficiency enhanced.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- An external evaluation on the key performance indicators was conducted during 2021, the assessment and recommendations received served as a basis for an action plan to update those in order to meet the interests of our stakeholders.
- A project initiation template was elaborated and submitted for managerial assessment. Its objective is to carry-out a multiannual set of activities where the first is proposed to enhance quality management at corporate level by mapping the Agency business processes at 1st, 2nd and 3rd level. It is foreseen the proposal will be validated and the contract signed during 2022 in order to start the implementation within Q4 of 2022.
- During 2021 the financial knowledge database improved, however, not to the desired extent given the lack of staff in financial unit. The same applies for training, which is always provided for new financial agents however further training was not delivered to the desired level.
- In terms of processes and policies there were several improvements, such as in grants, budget planning and control and this is an ongoing activity.
- The delegation framework has been reviewed taking into account the Agency's new structure and new roles, however, it was not yet signed by the end of 2021. It will be approved at the beginning of 2022.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Although it was not possible to deliver as many training sessions as desired the improvements in the knowledge database and effort in enhancing communication with all entities allowed for the improvement of knowledge of the financial agents. Also, the continuous support provided by the FIN unit significantly helped the entities in Frontex.
2. Partially achieved. The work programme to update KPIs at corporate level is ongoing and a revised set of operational indicators shall be presented to the management by Q2 2022.

Key Activity 6.1.2. Develop human resources management system aimed at building strong human capital through a set of modern HR policies allowing the Agency to deliver its mission.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Develop and maintain an integrated managers-led system of HR policies, tools and processes designed to empower and contribute to achieving Frontex mission and stakeholders' expectations.
- Increase Frontex attractiveness as an employer and engage and retain the best, diverse and geographically balanced talents whose competencies are further developed through diverse learning and career opportunities and effective performance assessment.
- Deliver qualitative and service-oriented HR support to maximise an effective performance-oriented culture in partnership between HR professionals and managers.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

While the number of HR staff dealing with learning and development remained unchanged in 2021, HR staff continued providing support and organising training, performance appraisals, probation and contract renewals for the growing number of Frontex staff. In addition, HR successfully implemented the change of the organisational structure as regards the staff re-allocation and change of the reporting lines as well as the new process of the learning needs analysis.

Despite the fact that the Agency successfully engaged more than 400 newcomers in 2021, Frontex acknowledges the unusually high rate of declinations of job offers issued and a significant number of departures of staff on board which indicate that the overall attractiveness of the Frontex job package is below optimal. The reason that affects Frontex's attractiveness as an employer is the unchanged low correction coefficient, despite the fact that Poland is one of the most dynamic economies of the EU, with an over average inflation rate.

The management of HR within the Agency introduced several digitalisation measures including, access to SYSPER HR reporting module, the roll-out of automated working-time registration system with badges and activation of flexi-time functionality in SYSPER. However, after careful analysis and consideration, the Agency decided not to roll-out the Oracle e-recruitment system due to its non-compliance with Frontex requirements for data protection standards.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Implementation of the new organisational structure adopted in June driving the internal organisation of HR services and the introduction of digital facilities and automatic reporting.
2. Partially achieved. The implementing rules in the training area were adopted in 2021 to adequately address the different categories, needs and legal training requirements of the staff. Further to this SYSPER TIM and HR Reporting module were implemented, however, despite the work carried out with regard to the digitalisation of the renewal contract procedure and remote online testing, these works are not yet concluded.
3. Achieved. 100 % of current managers participated in the standard managerial training in the past while all newly appointed middle managers were invited for the recommended managerial training. 66 % of new heads of units completed the sessions while new directors of divisions (appointed in November 2021) will be invited for the next edition of programme in 2022, according to the EUSA training schedule.
4. Achieved. 145 out of 166 vacant posts were filled throughout the year (87 %).
5. Not achieved. This particular target was not reached in 2021 (average real length 150 days against the target value of 105 days) due to the fact that the procedures were in their majority of a complex nature with an average of 17 interviews per each procedure and almost 9 candidates placed on average in each reserve list.
6. Partially achieved. The ratio of the staff trained at least once vs. total staff reached in 2021 68 % achieved vs original target 70 %. This value is calculated for non-standing staff since standing corps is intensively engaged in mandatory basic, specialised and profile-related training.

7. Achieved. Financial entitlements were timely paid and according to the established rights by Paymaster Office following SLA with the EC – target achieved at a 95 %.
8. Achieved. Working conditions and leaves managed according to the applicable rules including the establishment of rights and entitlements while personnel files of staff members were completed ensuring respect to applicable personal data protection requirements.
9. Not achieved. The management of HR activities was performed despite not being sufficiently staffed. At the end of 2021, HR workforce was 46 staff which represents 3 % of 1 554 staff of the Agency (Original target 4-4.5 %). During the year the Unit was supported by 16 interim staff.
10. Partially achieved. 70 % of the HR staff participated in at least one training course or other learning activity (Original target 75 %). Part of those activities focused on specialised knowledge, while others provided the access to training libraries and variety of contents for self-paced learning better fitted to a busy work schedule.
11. Not achieved. The new estimated date of launching the Open Tender for Medical Services for Frontex is end of February/ beginning of March 2022.
12. Not achieved. The introduction of a semi-automated IT tool to monitor HR KPIs was deferred to 2022 in view of other emerging priorities.

Focus Area 6.2. Provide scalable, efficient and secure infrastructure for the Agency's developing requirements, including partial decentralisation of functions.

Key Activity 6.2.1. Develop and maintain permanent physical infrastructure providing for the Agency's growing functions.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Provide timely the physical infrastructure to ensure efficient and effective data collection and exchange (SO1), sufficient space for steering and meetings (SO2), support decentralised and additional premises to develop a well-functioning border and coast guard (SO3).
- Deliver innovative facility services with clear KPIs, Service Level Agreement and service desk.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- As part of the expansion of the premises in order to meet the Agency's space needs until expected relocation to the new permanent premises will occur, the fit-out works on three new floors (1st, 10th and 11th) in Wronia 31 building were completed. Additional office space, meeting areas and parking spaces were made available, with a total of 1 259 workplaces in total available in the Agency at the end of 2021.
- Offices and storage capacity in the headquarters were assigned to accommodate staff growth and deliveries of equipment necessary for the build-up of the standing corps. Continued support was provided to staff onboard, newcomers and contractors throughout the year.
- Relocations within the Agency's premises were organised for an optimal use of space and facilities and to accommodate the needs of the Agency's growing staff. An increasing number of meeting rooms was made available for the Frontex Operational Coordination Centre (FOCC) which entailed relocation of Frontex Situation Centre Maritime Aerial Surveillance (FSC/MAS). Fit-out and furnishing works were completed in the Centre for Excellence of Documents (CED) Forgery desk room. The flexible parking arrangement was continued and fine-tuned to ensure availability and maximise the utilisation.
- The Agency continued to make constant adjustments to respond to COVID-19 and ensure a safe working environment with a range of health and safety measures deployed to enhance sanitary protocols. These included provision of personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, individual sanitisers etc.), introduction of all-building disinfection scheme, continuous provision of hand sanitisers, body temperature measurement equipment, specific canteen safety measures, plexiglass protections in close contact areas, sanitary regime in the testing rooms, in the meeting rooms, online interpretation platforms for hybrid and fully online meetings, reimbursement of costs of taxi for transfers to the office, flu vaccination and PCR tests. In addition, dedicated areas at the Agency's premises were made available to guarantee regular COVID-19 testing for all staff and visitors present at the headquarters.

- The continuous improvement towards a customer-oriented service delivery approach resulted in a few improvements in daily work. The procedure to provide technical maintenance assistance at the headquarters was standardised with a view to ensuring fast and tailored support i.e.:
 - Flexible parking arrangements allowed staff to come to work by car, reducing close contact, and distribution of parking cards has been optimised.
 - Submission of reimbursement claims was transferred to digital format. A total of 529 claims related to public transport and health and safety was processed.
 - The development of an online visitors' register took place in order to facilitate the process of registration of guests visiting the Agency's premises. The tool enables to easily add and manage visitors' data, monitor the visitors' badges and quickly check-in and check-out incoming guests.
 - The electronic room booking system optimised the organisation of meetings in the context of growing cooperation and exchange with external stakeholders.
 - The audiovisual infrastructure of the MB Conference Room was modernised in order to guarantee business continuity and smooth organisation of high-level meetings in line with the highest technological standards and needs triggered by the pandemic.
 - The necessary repair and maintenance programs of both buildings' facilities were ensured.
 - At year's end the Agency was providing administrative support to 15 FLOs and EURTF Catania.
- A draft of the early information note on the planned permanent premises was submitted to DG HOME and DG BUDG in Q4 2020 before sending it to the Budgetary Authority. The early information note was discussed both with DG HOME and DG BUDG and a Decision from the Frontex Management Board was obtained at the end of September 2021. The early information note was introduced to the Budgetary Authority and discussed in the Budget Committee of the European Parliament on 27 October 2021. Further to this and in the context of the centralised infrastructure project for the current Frontex premises, the first step of the procedure has been implemented successfully, as planned for 2021. It resulted in the delivery of the final report containing information about minimum technical specifications of the equipment to be fitted in such infrastructure and the estimated value.
- The tender to deliver the ETIAS CU/AOF was cancelled based on the technical advisors' input as no candidate could fulfil the requirements of the Agency. The scope of the requirements was reviewed together with a new timeline taking post-COVID-19 situation and ETIAS project timeline into consideration. The procurement procedure for ETIAS CU premises with alternative office facilities had to be cancelled. Preparations for a new procedure have started.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- 1.a. Achieved. Progress was made with regard to the permanent premises project, timeline adjusted to 2026 while the lease of the current premises has been extended for another two years.
- 1.b. Not achieved. A strategy was developed for a fast and flexible approach for tendering additional space but its implementation delayed due to the late entry into force of the new organisational structure.
3. 2. Achieved. Facilities on the premises were increasingly made available and effectively managed to enable the Agency to respond to growing needs resulting from the implementation of the new mandate and the build-up phase of the standing corps.
4. 3. Achieved. The number of payments within this key activity reached EUR 12 million, where 96.46 % of the payments were processed on time. Satisfaction rate with the services provided was rated as very high, with only 2.9 % of dissatisfaction with services such as reimbursements related to public transport.

Key Activity 6.2.2. Develop sound and integrated ICT systems' structure supporting the European Border and Coast Guard functions.

Specific objectives in AWP 20210

- Integrate ICT infrastructure based on two operating models: to support the operational activities and the horizontal ones.
- The new ECN (ECN 2.0) will be designed to support operational activities in the perimeter defined in the regulation including the standing corps. Awaiting the availability of resources, the current ECN 1.0 will be upgraded according to the ECN 2.0 design.
- The unclassified network will be transformed in following the modern digitalisation concept is using cloud technologies and services

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Architecture of the EUROSUR Network was modernised and the existing technical gap was bridged. DIG realised two projects: *RetroFit*, focused on modernisation of the hardware and acquisition of the vendor support for computing and network components and *Greenfield* which is focused on the modernisation of the software layer. For all the components of the network the Agency defined its lifecycle according to the rules for each component. Modernisation was communicated to the MSs and the current infrastructure will stay operational until its decommissioning in the future.
- In order to ensure technical capabilities of delivering internet connectivity in operational areas, Frontex established a new framework contract for the provision of mobile telephone services until mid-2026. Further to this, mobile data transfer outside EU is also available to address operational needs of the staff.
- Development and deployment of standing corps in 2021: Implementation of Microsoft Intune and Windows Autopilot solutions allowed DIG to prepare and deploy, fully managed and secure end users' workstations and mobile phones. Further to this, standing corps categories 1 and 2 were equipped with Frontex IT facilities to support their operational deployments.

24/7 support in 2021:

- Frontex internal 1st line support staff ensured basic stand-by services out of working hours support. In view of the growing number of staff to be supported a new framework was established in 2021 covering also support outside working hours. Moreover, stand-by standing corps officers with some basic ICT background were deployed to DIG, undergoing hands-on and specific technical training to be able to provide off-site support for operational areas.
- Standing corps category 3 and category 4 were able to use a common pool of the operational equipment, among which up to 451 mobile phones with access to Internet and hotspot capacity.
- Internal coordination to assess the level of IT services to be rendered to ETIAS was completed. However, in view of the results, the alternatives are being analysed to minimise the impact on the IT services due to the lack of sufficient manpower to provide 24/7 support to ETIAS upon entry into operations. The Agency expects that with the internal allocation of additional posts during 2022 this shortcoming could be addressed.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Partially achieved. All OPLAN 2020-2025 activities and projects planned for 2021 progressed as expected with the exception of FADO and A2SIS projects which were delayed.
2. Achieved. DIG run two contracts:
 - *RetroFit* of Restricted Network focus on rebuilding hardware according to the lifecycle completed.
 - *Greenfield* for modernisation of software ongoing with expected finalisation May-June 2022.
3. Achieved. In November 2021 an internal project in DIG Unit with an external consulting company was completed. During the project an initial benchmark report on DIG Unit maturity against the ITIL4 framework was prepared. Based on the benchmark results and identified gaps new target business processes (including new KPIs) and selected ITIL4 practices for DIG Unit were proposed and documented.

Key Activity 6.2.3. Ensure a secure working environment for Agency's staff, including ICT security challenges.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Establish cybersecurity as one of the pillars of a global security approach. Nevertheless, with the limitation of human and financial resources the implementation of cybersecurity action plan 2020–2025 will be delayed accordingly.
- Implement physical security of Frontex premises, both for current premises in and away from the host Member State, including ETIAS and armoury so as to ensure the security of staff, visitors, assets and information based on qualitative security risk analysis following recognised and established security risk analysis models.
- Implement personnel security for staff, including for the staff categories under the Regulation, by timely initiating vetting procedures and efficient follow-up of the outcome.
- Ensure correct handling of European Union Classified Information (EUCI), including Classified Communication and Information Systems. Establishment of the related required roles in line with the Frontex Internal Security Framework
- Ensure customised training for all categories of staff.
- Establish basic central service for Health and Safety of Frontex HQ staff and in particular compliance with required medical follow-up of staff.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- Frontex Cybersecurity Action Plan 2020 – 2025 was validated by the Executive Director and objectives were defined and organised in multiple workstreams/individual actions (77) were addressed and monitored continuously to ensure alignment with current cybersecurity posture and threat landscapes. At the end of 2021, 20 % of objectives were completed, 60 % ongoing/partially met and 20 % planned for next reporting cycles.
- Frontex internal security framework, draft Frontex Security Rules were submitted for the review to the European Commission – DG HOME where an interservice consultation was initiated. European Commission approval is expected in Q2 2022. After the receipt of DG HOME position, the final approval by Frontex Management Board by means of a written procedure will be sought.
- Physical security risk assessments, travel advice and coherent, integrated security approach providing appropriate levels of protection for persons, assets, and information commensurate with identified risks was timely provided.
- Vetting procedures for all staff, including all standing corps batches were delivered via relevant European Commission services to the relevant national security authorities.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. The following KPIs are being currently monitored:
 - Number of incoming incidents and requests;
 - SLA/SLS compliance;
 - Incidents' share;
 - User satisfaction which comprises assessing technician competencies, communication skills, response and resolution times and general customer experience.
2. Achieved. Draft Frontex Security Rules were submitted for the review to European Commission.
3. Achieved. Physical security assessments were delivered for ETIAS, Brussels Liaison Office and new permanent premises within set deadline, including an extensive counter-terrorism and counter-intelligence risk assessment for every separate entity. Several ad-hoc physical security assessments were executed, such as ensuring working and living spaces for newly deployed Frontex Liaison Officers.
4. Achieved. For standing corps category 1, 100 % of members have been distributed a personnel security clearance request for completion. National Security Authorities issued 524 valid personnel security clearances. In 2021, 72,6 % of staff (TA and CA) possessed valid security clearance while 27,4 % had no valid clearance.

5. Partially achieved. Relevant policies and notices fully were completed and reviewed by stakeholders, awaiting final approval of draft Frontex Security Rules by Management Board expected to take place Q2 2022. Policies on industrial security, sensitive-non classified information are pending. Together with notices on access to headquarters, operation procedures for Frontex guards Security training programs were delivered on request within set deadlines. Basic courses were transferred to e-learning (Restreint UE/EU Restricted course, standing corps induction security training, European Union Classified Information training (EUCI) for operational staff). Online modules on handling EUCI, Registry Control Officer. For all training sessions provided, feedback forms were returned, indicating a satisfaction rate of more than 80 %.
6. Partially achieved. The final version of the Cybersecurity Incident Response Plan (CSIRP) was prepared and submitted for formal validation, serving as a single point of reference for effective handling of events that pose a security threat to security of Frontex ICT systems and information processed therein. This document defines key terms, roles, responsibilities, rules, and processes to address the task, compliant with existing regulations and adhering to the industry best practices and standards.
7. Achieved. Interim Authorisation to Operate (IATO) 2022 for EUROSUR Communication Network was reviewed, updated and signed by Frontex Security Authority within set deadline.

Focus Area 6.3. Ensure accountability, regularity and legality of all Frontex activities through a comprehensive inspection and control system to guarantee the effectiveness of internal business processes.

Key Activity 6.3.1. Develop and implement strategic planning mechanism in line with the applicable legal framework.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

- Introduction of activity-based costing model in support of decision-making process (activity based management).
- Enhance planning, monitoring and reporting activities at corporate level.
- Ensure regular monitoring activities at corporate level.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

The internal methodology for planning, monitoring and reporting was assessed in 2021 and closely looked at with each iteration/stage in the development of corporate planning and reporting documents. Thus, during these stages improvements were being introduced focusing both on the processes as well as on comprehensiveness, clarity and completeness of information, transparency and readability of such documents. Furthermore, these processes and documents were developed further thanks to stakeholder's consultations (comments by the EC, EP, Council as well as relevant EU agencies).

Additionally, several improvements into these processes were introduced, especially when concerning efficiency, based on consultations with the involved staff. As a step forward towards higher efficiency and improved quality of Frontex programming and reporting, the Agency also commenced in 2021 regular (at least 3 iterations a year) awareness-raising sessions provided to staff. Three sessions took place in 2021. The sessions were also a platform for a discussion on the approach and methodology. The regular awareness raising sessions were enabled by the Decision of the Executive Director No R-ED-2021-130 adopting the Manual for the Preparation of the Single Programming Document and Consolidated Annual Activity Report. The manual constitutes an integral part of the awareness raising activities and proves to be a useful tool for knowledge sharing in this area. Finally, the lessons learnt from the past experiences in the area of corporate programming and reporting were also integrated into a revised methodology.

In 2021, Frontex continued to actively participate in the Performance Development Network (PDN) gaining from this exchange of good practices among the agencies as well as sharing its own experience. In this line, the Agency finalised together with external experts the evaluation of Frontex performance management framework, during which the key performance indicators were examined in order to provide

for its developments, especially by paving the way for the elaboration of key operational indicators. The action plan to update corporate KPIs is ongoing, and the new set of indicators will be presented to the Management Board in Q2 2022.

In the area of regular performance reporting, the quarterly reports on key performance indicators were duly prepared and submitted to the stakeholders. The annual key performance indicators report 2021 was prepared and it will be included as an annex to this Consolidated Annual Activity Report, covering presentation of performance for year 2021.

In order to progress towards and activity-based-costing (ABC) capability the enablement of posting criteria in ABAC system will be necessary. To this end internal coordination work was completed in 2021 and the Agency foresees to have this feature enabled in ABAC in the first half of 2022 paving the way to an automatic cost reporting in ongoing projects.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Annual benchmarking exercise for improved methodology performed in Q3.
2. Achieved. Four quarterly reports were prepared, submitted to the relevant stakeholders in 2021. Timeliness was maintained, the quality of information and the improvements towards the processes were being made.
3. Achieved. The evaluation of performance management framework was finalised, providing recommendations and a related action plan. The proposal stemming from the evaluation was submitted to the Executive Management for their consideration and decision and the work to define the updated set of KPIs is ongoing.
4. Achieved. Three sessions were delivered in 2021.

Key Activity 6.3.2. Develop and implement a comprehensive system for internal control, inspection and audit functions.

- Contribute to the overall assurance framework from the perspective of *ex ante* controls.
- Ensure Internal Control Framework is in place and functions as intended.
- Continuously improve through timely completed actions following audit observations and recommendations.
- Enhance quality management.
- Corporate anti-fraud strategy is in place and updated regularly.
- Create the inspection of the standing corps which will ensure that training, use of force, delivery of authorisations to carry weapons and their storage are fully aligned with Frontex's legal framework and have the capacity at any time to conduct investigations following incidents related to the use of force in the field.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The work in the area of *ex ante* and *ex post* controls continued as planned, the systematic *ex ante* was performed in line with the decentralised circuit with central counterweight detailed in sections 2.4 and 2.9 while in the area of the *ex post* controls the focus was placed in completing the work plan 2020/2021 (*ex post* controls of grants kicked off in Q2 of the year and completed in Q2 of the following year) and elaborating the risk-based work programme for 2021/2022.
- In the area of internal control, the Agency made efforts to solidify these business processes including:
 - An improved annual ICS assessment was conducted, the report was prepared, and the main conclusions were included into this annual report within section 3.1)
 - Risk management was maintained through systematic monitoring of the corporate risk log, providing the updates on the mitigation actions implementation to the relevant stakeholder on quarterly basis.
 - Monitoring the implementation of audit recommendations, providing updates in the briefing notes and reports to the Management Board and updating the Agency record on the IAS issue tracking system.

- Anti-fraud activities continued with the implementation of anti-fraud strategy and were concluded with a report presented to the Management Board as well as with the adoption of the new strategy for the period 2022-2024.
- The inventory of quality management related documentation and ongoing initiatives was performed. A proposal for the establishment of a quality management system was submitted for the decision of executive management.
- Regarding the audit liaison function, ICO prepared, coordinated, and provided follow-up of seven audit engagements, one follow-up audit, two reviews and one IAS risk assessment exercise of the Agency which served as a basis to create the IAS Strategic Internal Audit Plan of audits for the years 2021-2023. The works performed included: preparation of audit field visits on-the spot and/or remote/online audit engagements, collection of documents prior and after the engagement, making the documents available to the auditors, scheduling interviews, follow-up and clarifications of any outstanding issues, coordinating collection of comments, replies and inputs into draft and final audit reports, clearing letters, preliminary observations, questionnaires and surveys, coordination of adversarial procedures, translation of Agency's official relies into all official EU languages. The cooperation performed through these measures contributed to enabling the auditors to make their assessment on the functioning of the Agency's operations and on the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, contributing to the improvement of the Agency's internal control framework.
- During the reporting period, the policies contained in the supervisory mechanism on the use of force and subsidiary internal SOP were implemented.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. *Ex post* controls in line with a plan 2020/2021 were completed by mid-2021 (*ex post* controls of grants kicked off in Q2 of the year and completed in Q2 of the following year). Portugal, France, Italy and Norway and their different institutions were the beneficiaries. As planned, target by Q2 2021: 100 %. From the 2nd half of 2020 until CAAR 2021 reporting, following the *ex post* controls plan 2020/2021, controls covered EUR 8.3 m which constitutes 5.42 % of total grants awarded in 2020.
2. Partially achieved. As planned, the *ex post* controls 2021/2022 are ongoing with kick off in Q2-2021 and to be completed in Q2-2022 of the following year. Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Czechia, Spain and their different institutions are the beneficiaries. As planned, target by Q2 2022: 100 %. Result by Q4 2021: 30 %. Target will be fully achieved by Q2 of 2022 in line with the controls cycle.
3. Not achieved. At the beginning of the 2021, 17 recommendations from the previous audits were left open. After the follow up in March 2021, 1 recommendation was closed, 4 ready for review and 12 pending, hence at the end of the year the implementation rate for 2021 is 29.5 %.
4. Not achieved. 27 % of observations were implemented. This indicator is calculated based on the report to the discharge authority (DA) on the measures taken in light of the DA observations provided in the discharge process. The report is being prepared for the year N-2. Hence, in 2021 the Agency reports on the implementation of the observations related to the discharge 2019.
5. Achieved. No critical recommendations identified in IAS reports.
6. Achieved. A proposal for the concept of a quality management system in Frontex was submitted to the management of the Agency.
7. Partially achieved. 81 % out of 85 % of the actions related to the anti-fraud strategy were timely implemented.

Key Activity 6.3.3. Develop and implement the system for monitoring and evaluating the EBCG's operational deliverables to support sound operational decision-making processes.

Specific Objectives in AWP 2021

- Evaluation framework and its annual work program are in place focused in particular to assess the Agency's operational activities.
- Contribute to the overall monitoring and evaluation exercises from a resource perspective, eventually supported by a semi- automated monitoring tool for operational activities.
- Ensure *ex post* control policy and annual work program is in place.
- Ensure central services (counselling, anti-harassment and whistleblowing) policies are in place and are annually reviewed.
- Ensure Inspection (complaints; European Ombudsman inquiries; administrative enquiries; disciplinary procedures) policies and implementing rules/guidelines are in place and are duly implemented.
- Ensure compliance with the financial regulatory framework and update where necessary.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- As for the IT solution for programming purposes, there was no development in 2021 and this activity is postponed for development in 2022 where two existing solutions in EMSA and Eurojust will be analysed, and a proposal was elevated for the managerial consideration towards implementation in the Agency.
- *Ex ante* verification of financial transactions was performed in line the financial circuits in place while *ex post* controls complementing the *ex ante* verification were performed in line with the annual work programme established.
- During the reporting period the central service's capacities were gradually enhanced including the availability of an internal network of confidential counsellors and the following activities were completed:
 - awareness raising sessions dedicated to middle, senior and executive managers were organised with the support of an external trainer as well as for all Frontex staff members (in English and Polish) with the support of the appointed confidential counsellors;
 - initiative of an inter-agency confidential counsellor network with other EU Agencies (ECHA, EFCA, ECDC and Eurojust) was launched. Upon the establishment of the Confidential Counsellor Task Force by EUAN Central Service, the Agency pledged its confidential counsellors' network for this joint initiative;
 - ensured necessary case management with regard to anonymous cases and informal procedures.
- In the framework of Frontex Anti-Harassment Policy, awareness raising sessions were developed for managers (executive, senior, middle managers until team leader level) as well as targeted sessions were carried out for staff.
- Continuous improvement in terms of compliance with the financial regulatory framework was pursued through development of internal policies for grants and FPA or an update to the financial delegations' framework.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Partially achieved. The work on the monitoring tool at corporate level was initiated and expected to be completed within the first half of 2022.
2. Achieved. Number of cases **opened per type** (informal procedure registered by the Central Service, anonymous cases reported to the Central Service, whistleblowing; administrative enquiries; disciplinary procedures) are provided here: informal procedure: 4, anonymous cases reported to the Central Service: 31, whistleblowing: 3; complaints: 4; European Ombudsman inquiries 13; administrative inquiries: 1; disciplinary procedures: 0.
3. Achieved. Number of cases **closed per type** (informal procedure registered by the Central Service: 4, anonymous cases reported to the Central Service: 27, whistleblowing: 1; complaints: 3; European Ombudsman inquiries: 11; administrative inquiries: 2; disciplinary procedures: N/A).
4. Achieved. All transactions subject to financial *ex ante* verification processed within the SLA time limits.

5. Achieved. Number of inspections where ICO participated in the framework of interservice missions, fact finding missions, Greece (2 times), Lithuania, Latvia, Spain, Italy (2 times), Cyprus, Albania, Montenegro, Romania: 11 ICO – standing corps-related missions in total.
6. Not Achieved. Number of investigations related to the standing corps in the context of the supervisory mechanism: 0.

Key Activity 6.3.4. Develop and implement the system aimed at preserving legal conformity of all Frontex activities with applicable legal framework.

Specific Objectives in AWP 2021

- Ensure that legal risks in Frontex activities are minimised through LEG governance and operational legal support. This also includes providing legal support to category 1 members of the standing corps (i.e. statutory staff).
- Further streamlining the effective and efficient processing of public access to documents (PAD) applications in light of the continuous increase of applications, including risk mitigation to avert European Ombudsman and Court of Justice of the EU cases.
- Support business units in complying with the applicable regulatory framework related to procurement procedures and in implementing the approved Annual Procurement Plan.
- Establishing the Central Contract Management Team (CCMT) to (inter alia) monitor that the contract management framework in Frontex is effective, efficient and compliant with the applicable rules.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

LEG successfully met the envisioned objective of minimising the legal risks of the Agency through rendering support, advice to the entire spectrum of Frontex activities, spanning from governance and administrative related issues (e.g. on updating the complaints mechanism rules to monitor and ensure respect for fundamental rights in all the activities of the Agency), to operational matters (e.g. on operationalisation of the standing corps, legal compliance of operational plans with particular focus on the EBCG Regulation and Regulation 656/2014, reviewing relevant SOPs, legal support for implementation of coast guard functions etc.) as well as litigation cases filed against the Agency always within the respective deadlines given. The introduction of the standby duty contributed to swift reaction to time-sensitive issues.

Awareness with regard to public access to documents was raised through the organisation and delivery of comprehensive PAD training for all Frontex entities, including standing corps members as well as of two PAD workshops on best practices, trends and challenges relating to PAD, including in the framework of Frontex' Presidency of the Justice and Home Affairs. The Agency sought to increase the general awareness of its staff on legal matters in the Agency by organising a training week, which included a series of sessions dedicated to Frontex' activities and mandate from a legal perspective.

With regard to procurement activities, the level of implementation of the procurement plan was overall particularly high i.e., all tenders included in the APP and submitted until October 2021 were launched in 2021.

Steps were taken towards the implementation of a contract management function, however, these efforts were hampered by the unavailability of statutory staff. Despite two posts being earmarked, the overall recruitment priorities for the Agency deferred the start of these recruitments. Resolute progress in 2022 will complete the set-up of the CCMT.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. The catalogue of services provided includes:
 - Management Board as well as Executive Director Decision;
 - client-oriented solutions to the different levels of the Agency managements flagging legal risks;

- legal advice on a variety of operational matters such as the compliance of operational plans with the applicable legal framework, reviewing relevant SOPs (e.g., Article 46 SOP);
 - legal guidance on governance issues (e.g., on updating complaints mechanism rules or on AIPN powers);
 - legal guidance on human resources (e.g., staff cases and recruitment);
 - successfully defended the Agency in pre-litigation (e.g., Article 90(2) complaints) and litigation cases (e.g. before the General Court).
2. Achieved. Necessary advice and support by PROC was delivered to business units throughout the procurement process in a service-oriented approach attested by an anonymised survey where 100 participants rated the service as very positive. Further to this, cases with potential non-compliances with the applicable regulatory framework related to procurement were flagged, assessed and the necessary mitigating measures were taken proportionally to the relevant risks.
 3. Achieved and exceeded. Overall tenders in the APP 2021 submitted in October 2021 were launched in 2021 (100 %).
 4. Not achieved. As a bridge-the-gap measure interim staff was employed until contract management earmarked staff could be recruited work was carried out in the last part of 2021 and more intensively in first quarter 2022 drafting a set of documents related to contract management framework, methodology, charter and professional standards shared for internal consultation.
 5. Achieved. During 2021 the transparency office, an integral part of LPU/LEG responsible for processing applications for public access to documents continued accomplishing a 100 % rate of timely replies to initial and confirmatory PAD applications, as well as to requests submitted by the European Ombudsman and deadlines set by the Court of Justice of the European Union in the framework of a court case related to PAD processing.

Focus Area 6.4. Provide management framework designed to uphold EU values

Key Activity 6.4.1. Ensure comprehensive fundamental rights framework throughout all Frontex activities, with strong focus on implementing the additional fundamental rights elements under the Regulation, including partial decentralisation of functions in the context of the fundamental rights monitors.

Specific Objectives in AWP 2021

- Support and advisory capacity on fundamental rights which is compliant with IBM.
- Strengthened fundamental rights monitoring system in all of Agency's activities.
- Enhanced strategic cooperation with the consultative forum on fundamental rights.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- The Fundamental Rights Action Plan which enables a more systematic monitoring of the European Border and Coast Guard was adopted at the end of 2021.
- The Fundamental Rights Officer provided advice and input to all operational plans and assessments, with a very high uptake of these recommendations as well as for training curricula, training of trainers, and for the training of standing corps and national officers.
- Frontex Management Board adopted rules which enhanced the independence of the Fundamental Rights Officer and their staff providing a more solid framework for the performance of these functions.
- The Fundamental Rights Officer pursued the recruitment of the additional 20 fundamental rights monitors – recruitment processes initiated during 2021 and expected to be concluded in the first half of 2022 – to complete the required minimum pool of 40 FROMs and requested additional monitors for the coming years; additionally, the FR office was assigned additional resources with two Seconded National Experts joining in the first few months of 2021.
- The 20 FROMs onboarded during first half of 2021 were trained and available for deployment from September 2021, with more advanced additional training provided foreseen for spring 2022.
- The number of serious incidents reports logged notably increased and were more closely followed up on during the year. The Fundamental Rights Officer stressed to the Management Board the impor-

tance of the role of national authorities cooperating to effectively achieve the pursued impact. Frontex Management Board took action on the advice of the FR Officer and improvements at national level were discerned.

- The complaints mechanism will be reinforced by improved rules developed during 2021, expected to be adopted early in 2022; more resources were devoted to cooperating with the complaints' mechanism aimed at better linking it with the regular monitoring.
- With staff recruitment initiated during 2021, the support to the Consultative Forum will be boosted; effectivisation measures were agreed upon between the Consultative Forum and the Fundamental Rights Officer in 2021. Cooperation was reinforced through monthly meetings between the Office and the Forum as well as regular exchanges with the monitors, *inter alia* ahead of the Forum's information visits.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Partially achieved (80 % implementation). During 2021, all envisioned documents were either initiated or adopted; the MB decision on the establishing a supervisory mechanism to monitor the application of the provisions on the use of force by statutory staff of the standing corps was taken; standard operating procedure on rules on complaints and procedures related to Article 46 of the Regulation was adopted in January 2022 through ED Decision;
2. Partially achieved (70 % implementation). As many as 20 of the required fundamental rights monitors were employed and deployed during 2021, but the processes to achieve the minimum requirement was well under way in the first half of the next year (2022); the tools developed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights were made extensive use of in the training and deployment.
3. Achieved. The Fundamental Rights Officer reports were regularly provided to the Management Board on Serious Incident Reports and Complaints; the Management Board followed up and national authorities paid more attention to these processes; there is still, however, room for improvement in the follow up at national level in terms of transparency on efforts devoted to investigations.
4. Achieved. With over 200 deployment days during less than six months of operation, with monitoring visits to 10 countries, and supported by systematic monitoring at the headquarters.
5. Achieved. Regular reports to the Management Board submitted and the first annual report published in September 2021.
6. Achieved. The Consultative Forum provided training sessions for the monitors in 2021. Input from the Consultative Forum was sought on the drafts of the following procedures: standard operating procedure on Frontex's Serious Incident Reporting Mechanism, action plan to the Fundamental Rights Strategy, Standard Operating Procedure – setting up the mechanism to suspend, terminate, withdraw the financing or not to launch Frontex activities, rules on the complaints' mechanism.

Key Activity 6.4.2. Design and implement the framework for legitimate personal data collection and processing throughout all Frontex activities.

Specific Objectives in AWP 2021

- Awareness raising on DP obligations.
- Data protection consultancy and advice is provided.
- Data protection coordination is ensured.
- Administrative personal data.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- In 2021, the DPO provided 38 training sessions. The training continued together with the regular actions undertaken to raise data protection awareness among all newcomers, members of the standing corps and two additional sessions especially developed for information officers. Additionally, and considering the shortcomings in awareness identified by the DPO at managerial levels, the DPO conducted 22 sessions focused solely on data protection obligations for controllers and focusing on the accountability principle. The sessions were attended by heads of units and offices and the relevant staff, as well as by all directors of divisions.

- DPO provided four opinions to the attention of the Executive Director on drafts of MB decisions. The DPO issued the following number of recommendations provided to the attention of executive management: on implementing rules for the DPO: 27 recommendations issued; implementing rules on restrictions of data subjects' rights: 10 recommendations issued; on implementing rules on operational personal data: 89 recommendations issued; on implementing rules of general implementation of the EUI DPR: 40 recommendations issued.
- 41 records were published into the Frontex public record on processing operations. The number of records checked by the DPO over the 2021 exceeded the expectations, with a 241.6 % increase compared to the previous year.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved and exceeded (192 % increase). Acknowledging the importance of increasing awareness and knowledge on compliance with data protection obligations the DPO provided 7 induction training sessions to newcomers, 3 sessions to ETIAS staff (one specifically dedicated to data protection in ETIAS and 2 sessions on data protection obligations in the ETIAS legal framework), 1 data protection briefing to FLO Eastern partnership region, 22 ad-hoc sessions specifically addressing the obligations of data controllers and 5 specific training sessions addressing the standing corps, including 2 specific training for information officers.
2. Achieved. Opinions within the DPO remit on: MB decisions on the DPO and delegated controllers, MB decision on operational personal data, on implementation of the general data protection regulation, on restrictions of rights. Target achieved in 100 %.
3. Partially achieved. DPO and ETIAS TF/ETIAS CU division mapped workflows and requirements to ensure that appropriate process is in place for exercising data subject rights in ETIAS, including the assessment of the need to restrict data subject rights. The task relies on the interpretation of Article 64 of ETIAS Regulation and the adoption of the respective implementing decision by the Commission. The implementing decision was adopted by the Commission ⁽²³⁾ 2021/1240 in June 2021, however, it does not address the issue of data subject rights, despite having provided provisions to the draft.
4. Achieved and exceeded. Frontex DPO met with the EDPS twice a year during the DPO-EDPS Network meeting. Additional meetings took place with the EDPS in the framework of the DPO network related to international data transfers and with the Justice and Home Affairs in relation to the position of the data protection officers. Further to those the DPO met bilaterally with the EDPS on 14 occasions.
5. Achieved and exceeded. 41 Records being published in 2021.

Focus Area 6.5. Establish a sound mechanism to interrelate all Frontex strategic functions and to ensure consistency of Frontex exchanges with external stakeholders

Key Activity 6.5.1. Develop and implement a model for organising and harmonising the delivery of all Frontex functions at strategic and executive level, including Frontex relations with external stakeholders.

Specific Objectives in AWP 2021

1. Ensure cross-divisional coordination of Agency's tasks, including operational coordination, protocol function, document management and Executive Management support functions, including executive advisory function to the Executive Management.
2. Ensure smooth functioning of the Frontex Management Board and its supporting functions.
3. Provide for coordination with and timely reporting to the EU institutions and other relevant EU bodies based in Brussels.

⁽²³⁾ Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/627 of 15 April 2021 laying down rules on keeping and accessing of the logs in the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1240 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

- After thorough analysis and following an intensive transformation effort the amended organisational structure of Frontex adopted in December 2020 was implemented in 2021. The new organigramme of the Agency includes 3 Deputy Executive Directors, 9 divisions and numerous offices, some of which are independent in the performance of their functions. To ensure smooth communication and work-flows between the many business entities, cross-divisional coordination in the Agency became a task of crucial importance for the efficient and timely performance of Frontex activities.
- Hence, the cross-divisional coordination was further strengthened in 2021 by the creation of the Executive Affairs Unit and coordination offices in each division. Regular cross-divisional meetings at different levels were organised, starting from the operational board and directors' briefing where strategic issues and current affairs were discussed, to more technical meetings including cross-divisional coordination meetings which provided space for joint brainstorming as well as alignment with wider objectives of the Agency.
- To enhance cross-divisional cooperation and improve document management as well as executive management support functions, collaborative tools available through MyFX platform were extensively used to store and share documents across different entities, allowing for better exchange of information and teamwork. Moreover, the centralised approach towards the task distribution provided an opportunity to involve relevant entities and ensure cross-divisional cooperation whenever necessary. To improve quality of the products and effectiveness of the processes, the preparation of dossiers for the executive management, regular feedback and follow-up were ensured by the centralised coordination mechanism.
- The digital tools implemented previously by Frontex proved crucial when operating still under the COVID-19 pandemic. All workflows were fully maintained in paperless form (including the establishment of specific paperless workflows, e.g., financial circuit) and cross-divisional coordination was ensured throughout the year with staff working in shifts. All internal and external meetings were organised in a hybrid format combining limited physical presence of staff in the HQ with the video-conferencing connections.
- As regards the meetings of the Frontex Management Board and its supporting bodies, namely the Executive Board, the Working Group on Budget and Accounts and the Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations, the Agency supported the coordination and preparation of their meetings and activities.
- The Agency continued to provide to the Secretariat of the Management Board, as mandated by the Regulation. With the new Rules of Procedure of the Management Board adopted in July 2020, the tasks of the Management Board Secretariat were enhanced and re-defined to facilitate and support the Management Board's decision-making processes, including the intensified planning and reporting cycle. Furthermore, the internal procedures for the Agency's input to the work of the Management Board were reviewed and strengthened in 2021.
- Frontex provided for timely reporting and coordination with the EU institutions and other relevant EU bodies based in Brussels. Although the pandemic-related challenges reduced the physical presence in different Council Working Groups, JHA Council, European Parliament Committees, thematic seminars and European Council Expert Groups, the Agency managed to provide for timely presence in the videoconferencing format and several times in physical meetings, interacting with Member States experts and corroborating the results of the technical discussions with more operational and hands-on approach in the application of the EU policies, as per the Agency's mandate.
- At the same time, Frontex interacted with the counterparts in the European Migration Network and the European External Action Service. The Agency provided for regular coordination on positions with sister Agencies' Liaison Offices in Brussels (Europol, EUAA, CEPOL, INTERPOL, eu-LISA) on technical files, explaining the Agency's operational mandate (i.e., new framework of different Interoperability components (EES, ETIAS, SIS, MID), law-enforcement cooperation, Innovation Hub, Future Group, CSDP cooperation, migration flows, border management and returns).
- Regular meetings with the international organisations (UNHCR, IOM Brussels-bureaux) took place and provided for further coordination on the provisions of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum. Frontex Brussels Liaison Office supported a study visit in Brussels of Frontex experts and liaison officers in third countries (WB, Turkey, EAP), having a rich information exchange with the services of the Commission, Council counterparts, EEAS regional desks, sister Agencies present in Brussels and international organisations.

- Following a decision of the LIBE Coordinators of 23 February 2021, a new group was set up by the European Parliament in the LIBE Committee, the Frontex Scrutiny Working Group, with the mandate to permanently monitor all aspects of the functioning of Frontex, including its reinforced role and resources for integrated border management, the correct application of the EU acquis, and its execution of Regulations (EU) 2019/1896 and 656/2014. The Agency cooperated fully with the FSWG, hosting a fact-finding visit and ensuring comprehensive and timely responses to requests for information and documents.
- During 2021, Frontex was recognised as an important actor for the legislative and policy in the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) domain. As 2021 was marked by the negotiations of European Migration and Asylum Pact as well as the discharge procedure and allocation of the budgetary ceilings of the EU annual general budgets, the dynamics and reviews of these legislative and financial acts were followed closely by the Agency.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Implementation of the horizontal functions was ensured through the regular Directors' Briefing meetings organised every week, usually on Mondays (circa 48 meetings). Operational matters as well as issues related to the implementation of the new mandate were discussed at a bi-weekly Operational Board meetings (circa 23 meetings took place in 2021). All meetings were organised in a hybrid format, and the business processes for the preparation of the agenda and dissemination of outcomes was progressively consolidated throughout the year.
2. Achieved. As regards the Frontex Management Board meetings, 3 meetings took place in hybrid format allowing for both physical and online participation. The other 6 meetings were organised exclusively via videoconferencing system (2 regular meetings and 4 extraordinary meetings). The Executive Board and the Working Group on Budget and Accounts met regularly throughout the year (each of these bodies held 10 meetings in 2021), and the Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations held 8 meetings in the period January-March 2021 concluding its operation by issuing its final report on 1 March 2021. The work of the Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations was divided into 3 sub-groups which met more often, but with limited support from the Agency.
3. Achieved. Frontex Brussels Liaison Office provided for timely reporting and attendance of Working Parties in the Council of the European Union (COSI, COSI SG, SCIFA, IMEX, IXIM, Frontiers Working Party, LEWP (police and customs components), JAI-RELEX Working Party (JAIEX), JHA Counsellors on Migration Situation, TWP), supported the attendance of senior management in the Justice and Home Affairs Council. In constant cooperation with the European Commission, the Agency provided for timely reporting and attendance in the expert groups and thematic discussions organised by DG HOME, DG JUST, SecGen and Commissioners' Cabinets.
4. Achieved. At the same time, the Brussels Liaison Office provided for timely reporting on the outcomes of discussions and thematic sessions in the European Parliament (LIBE, FSWG, Schengen Scrutiny, EP Plenaries). On average, almost 25 meetings per month were covered during the entire year, adding up to approximately 300 meetings attended and reported in 2021.

Further to these, the Agency prepared several non-papers related to the new legislative proposals offering Frontex's reflections on potential areas of synergies or further developments needed.

Key Activity 6.5.2. Design and implement a comprehensive and consistent communication model ⁽²⁴⁾ involving internal and external communication functions and providing for partial decentralisation of the Agency's functions.

Specific objectives in AWP 2021

Ensure consistent communication on major themes which fall under the key strategic objectives of the Agency.

Planned results in AWP 2021

1. Regularly updated intranet content and organisation of a variety of internal events aimed at integrating all staff including members of the standing corps.
2. Production and dissemination of high quality, relevant communication products through various communication channels.
3. Transparent and proactive engagement with key international media.

Results achieved in 2021 vs those initially envisioned

Regularly updated intranet content and improve features on internal pages. In 2021, the intranet became even more active as an institutional communication platform, providing staff with news and informative articles, practical announcements, photo gallery and discussion forums.

Based on a satisfaction survey conducted in October 2020, MPR analysed Frontex staff's opinions and suggestions on how to improve the intranet page – 'We All' – in 2021. The main goal of these changes was to increase the users' engagement. MPR worked together with Digital services to implement the following new features:

- New filters for searching articles/ announcements;
- Selecting favourite articles/ announcements;
- New section for the 'Confidential counsellors';
- Enabling email notifications for different sections of 'We All'.

During the reporting period, a total of 140 articles was published on the intranet ('We All'). In 2022, a new project will be developed together with Digital services to improve our intranet pages, aiming to continue implementing new features and to make 'Hyde Park' (internal discussion forum) more engaging for its users.

Production and dissemination of high quality, relevant communication products through various communication channels. Frontex operational activities continued to be a focus of Frontex communication activities. The Agency promoted the rapid deployment in Lithuania in response to the hybrid threats at the Eastern borders and other ongoing activities and regularly published success stories and other updates from all 19 Frontex operations.

In 2021, the Agency took on an even more active role in promoting its activities as part of EMPACT, the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats, which tackles the most important threats posed by organised and serious international crime affecting the EU. In September, MPR held a meeting on EMPACT communication as part of the Agency's Presidency of the European Justice and Home Affairs Agencies Network. Aside from operational activities, MPR also extensively communicated on other tasks of Frontex, including the set-up of ETIAS Central Unit, Entry-Exit System and other technological developments.

⁽²⁴⁾ The communication office of the Agency performs its duties in coordination with its peers within the EC and other EU institutions, in particular JHA agencies. The office strives in delivering coherent, relevant and timely information related to scope of Regulation.

The Agency produced 156 publications including manuals, reports, catalogues, brochures, leaflets, infographics etc., as well as it created 22 videos shared on all communication channels. The Agency was very actively communicating with its online community, posting institutional and operational updates on average 3-4 times per week on the Frontex social media channels.

MPR-supported communication efforts related to seminars and workshops were organised throughout the year, why the media and public relations office developed information and visual materials and disseminated them through internal and external communication channels. The focus was to promote operational activities countering phenomena such maritime pollution, waste trafficking, and cooperation with customs.

Transparent and proactive engagement with key international media. In 2021, the Frontex Media and Public Relations Office provided coherent, relevant and timely information on the Agency's work to its internal and external stakeholders. To reach various audiences MPR used different communication channels, including the Frontex website, social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube), the Agency's intranet and publications. In addition, MPR office actively communicated with a number of European and international media outlets and researchers.

In 2021, 81 press releases were published and numerous interviews organised with the Agency's management. Among the press releases was monthly analysis of the migratory situation at Europe's borders where the Agency responded to questions from media and researchers, an average of 10 questions per day. Frontex provided an updated information pack to media and external stakeholders on a monthly basis. Supplemented by over 30 interviews given by Frontex Executive Director, including with El Mundo, Die Welt, La Stampa, Ta Nea, ARD, TV 5 Monde, France 24, BFM TV, RAI TV, Al Jazeera.

Results on indicators for 2021 vs those initially envisioned

1. Achieved. Frontex 'We All' statistics: last year, for the total of 140 articles published on the 'We All', the number of likes increased to 542, 26 % more compared to 2020; the number of comments increased 13 %, with a total of 123 comments; the number of unique readers was 2 117, 27 % more compared to 2020; and the number of visits was in total 57 913, representing an increase of 54 %.
2. Achieved. In 2021, we reached 3 161 111 pageviews, a 13 % rise compared to the previous year (2 801 361). The increased traffic on our website was due to several factors including the standing corps recruitment campaign as well as launch of rapid border intervention in Lithuania.
3. Achieved. Number of mentions of Frontex in the media and the tone of the coverage (positive, neutral, and negative) of these mentions 2021 was significant. The Agency's visibility increased last year with the launch of the Rapid Border Intervention in Lithuania and related communication activities. The peak in the news mentions was at the end of November and the beginning of December with more than 6 000 news articles, when the news items on Frontex increased significantly due to the launch of the JO Opal Coast in Calais. The Agency was mentioned in news articles around the world about 82 000 times last year, with most articles having a neutral tone. At the end of the year, there was an increase in articles about the agency with about 16 000 news mentions in November, due to the situation at the Belarusian border and in the Channel.
4. Achieved. On Twitter, every week MPR published 3-4 posts with more than 500 new followers ever month. Only in March, the account drew more than 2000 new followers. Every month, there were around 3 000 mentions of Frontex on Twitter and 300 000-400 000 tweet impressions. On Facebook, popular posts reached around 30 000-40 000 users, while the most popular one (video showing standing corps uniforms) over 100 000 users, average engagement rate per post was about 3 000. On LinkedIn, the average engagement rate in 2021 reached 6.25 % (compared to 6.13 % in the previous year) with the average engagement rate for organic LinkedIn content at 3 %. Therefore, keeping up the engagement rate in 2022 at 6 % will be considered a success.
5. Achieved and exceeded. In 2021, Frontex continued to expand its presence on three social media channels: Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn with 43 000, 30 000 and 48 455 followers respectively. The annual increase (compared to 2020) was as follows: Twitter – 33 % – Facebook – 87.5 % – LinkedIn – 29 %.

Part II – Management

2.1. Management Board

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to pose challenges to the working methods of the Management Board. However, thanks to the experience accumulated in 2020 and to adjustments adopted throughout the year, the Management Board was able to address these challenges and to ensure the continued oversight of the functioning of the Agency.

In line with the annual planning for 2021, five Management Board meetings took place. In addition, four extraordinary meetings were organised: in March, May, and two in October 2021. Those extraordinary meetings were dedicated to the inquiry by the Management Board into the alleged involvement of the Agency in violation of fundamental rights at the EU external borders, the amendment of the Agency's organisational structure, strategic decisions regarding the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps, the follow-up to audits and reports addressed to the Agency, and the appointment of the Deputy Executive Directors.

Due to pandemic-related restrictions, it was necessary to hold the 83rd and 84th Management Board meeting, as well as the Extraordinary MB meetings, via videoconferencing. However, also thanks to increasing availability of vaccines over 2021, the Agency was able to hold the 85th, 86th and 87th Management Board meetings in hybrid format, with some participants physically present and some connected via videoconferencing. The sanitary measures implemented by the Agency and the technological upgrade of the Management Board Conference room also played an important role in allowing for hybrid meetings. The 86th Management Board meeting was organised by the Agency and the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU in Portorož, Slovenia, and was opened by a welcome speech by the Slovenian Minister of Interior, Mr Aleš Hojs.

Ahead of the 87th MB meeting in Warsaw, Frontex and the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU co-organised the 2nd high-level meeting between the Frontex Management Board and the Western Balkan partners. The meeting was attended by the Slovenian Minister of Interior, by the Commissioner on European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Mr Olivér Várhelyi, and by the Heads of Border Police from the Western Balkans. The participants adopted joint conclusions with a pledge to strengthen cooperation through intensified dialogue and joint initiatives as well as further investing into joint operational activities and capability building initiatives.

After its establishment in 2020, the Executive Board continued to convene and to assist the Management Board and the Executive Director with the preparation of the agendas and decisions to be adopted during Management Board meetings with a view to improving the Agency's efficiency. Whenever relevant, the Executive Board considered the outcomes of work carried out by the Working Group on Budget and Accounts and by expert groups gathered to discuss technical issues. In light of the extraordinary growth of the Agency's competences, staff numbers and financial resources, in March the Management Board also updated the rules on the functioning for the Working Group on Budget and Accounts. Throughout the year, the Working Group continued to assist the Management Board in discussion of files and decision-making in budgetary and financial matters.

2021 witnessed the start of deployment of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps officers. Following up on the work conducted in 2020, the Management Board continued to hold discussions and take necessary steps for the definition and update of the legal framework related to the standing corps. Among others, the following Management Board Decisions have been taken:

- on adopting rules for the Executive Director to authorise statutory staff to carry and use weapons,
- on establishing specific rules to facilitate the storage of weapons,

- on establishing a supervisory mechanism to monitor the application of the provisions on the use of force by statutory staff of the EBCG standing corps,
- on adopting the profiles to be made available to the EBCG standing corps and their annual planning for 2022,
- on authorising the Executive Director to request the European Commission's prior approval for the adoption of rules related to category 2 of the standing corps.

In 2021, the Management Board also adopted a set of decisions relevant for the acquisition of the Agency's own technical equipment and the development of common standards across the European Border and Coast Guard. The following Management Board Decisions have been taken:

- on adopting the methodology and procedure for establishing the national capability development plans,
- on adopting the Technical Standards for equipment to be deployed in Frontex activities,
- and on adopting the Contingency Planning Methodology and Procedure.

Another major milestone that was achieved in 2021 was the appointment of three Deputy Executive Directors, which took place in October. Following the mandate of the EBCG Regulation, each Deputy Executive Director was assigned a specific area of responsibility: Returns and Operations, Standing Corps Management, and EBCG Information Management and Processes. The allocation of responsibilities reflected the enhanced mandate of the Agency and represented a response to the identified need of supporting the cross-divisional dimension of Frontex.

Additionally, the Management Board further strengthened the framework for the protection of fundamental rights in the Agency's activities. In January 2021, the Management Board adopted special rules to guarantee the independence of the Fundamental Rights Officer and his or her staff. In February 2021, the Management Board adopted a new Fundamental Rights Strategy, a major milestone in the implementation of the EBCG Regulation and followed it up in November with the adoption of the action plan for the implementation of the strategy. In March 2021, the Management Board appointed a new Fundamental Rights Officer, Mr Jonas Grimheden.

Throughout the year the Management Board worked on establishing the framework for processing personal data in the Agency's activities to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 ⁽²⁵⁾ in cooperation with the Frontex Data Protection Officer and the European Data Protection Supervisor. The Management Board adopted implementing rules on the tasks, duties and powers of the Data Protection Officer, as well as rules concerning Designated Controllers in Frontex. These were followed up by the adoption of rules on processing personal data by the Agency, and by rules for processing operational personal data by the Agency. These decisions represent a key step in aligning the Agency's data processing framework with relevant Union regulations and a necessary update in light of the growth of the Agency in terms of mandate, personnel, and activities.

Throughout 2021, Frontex continued to address the allegations of involvement in fundamental rights infringements in operations in the Aegean Sea that were first raised in Autumn 2020. The Management Board investigated on the allegations through the Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal and Operational Aspects of Operations in the Aegean Sea (WG FRaLO), which conducted discussions that included the Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer, the Fundamental Rights Agency, and the Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights.

The Working Group produced a preliminary report at the end of January 2021 and a final report in March 2021. Subsequently in May 2021 the Management Board followed up on cases referred to as still open in the WG FRaLO report. The report established that no conclusive evidence of the involvement of Frontex staff in fundamental rights violations could be found. At the same time, the WG FRaLO expressed a set of recommendations that were endorsed by the Management Board and were later translated into a roadmap produced by the Agency in cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Officer.

⁽²⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) No 2018/1725 of 23 October 2018 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data (OJ L 295, 23.10.2018, p. 39).

At the same time, the Civil Liberties Committee (LIBE) of the European Parliament established a Frontex Scrutiny Working Group (FSWG) to conduct a fact-finding investigation into the alleged violations and to monitor the Agency's compliance with fundamental rights. The Agency cooperated with the FSWG, and the Executive Director and the Chairperson of the Management Board participated to several hearings of the group. In July 2021, the FSWG published its report, which concluded that no conclusive evidence supporting allegations of direct pushbacks and/or collective expulsions by Frontex could be found. The report was welcomed by Frontex, which acknowledged its conclusions and recommendations.

In order to follow up the recommendations received by WG FRaLO, FSWG, as well as those included in reports and audits from the European Court of Auditors (ECA), the European Commission's Internal Audit Capability (IAC) and in decisions of the European Ombudsman (EO), the Frontex Management Board conducted an extraordinary meeting in October 2021. This meeting was attended by representatives of the FSWG, ECA, IAC and the European Ombudsman, who had the opportunity to address the Frontex Management Board directly with their observations and recommendations. During this meeting the Management Board set up procedures to regularly monitor the progress made by the Agency in the implementation of the recommendations.

2.2. Major developments

2021 was a year of ground-breaking changes and challenges for Frontex and the entire European Border and Coast Guard with the establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps, the European Union's first uniformed law enforcement service. In order to reflect the extended mandate of the Agency and the appointment of the Deputy Executive Directors, Frontex adopted significant changes to its organisational structure. At the same time the Agency had to address allegations of involvement in fundamental rights violations in its operations in the Aegean Sea and a fact-finding investigation conducted by the European Parliament. Finally, in the second half of the year Frontex faced the development of a migratory crisis at the external borders of the European Union with Belarus.

The highlight of the year was the establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps. After the preparations undertaken in 2020, in January 2021 Frontex deployed the first European Border and Coast Guard standing corps officers to the European Union's external borders.

Throughout the year, the Agency continued to recruit, train and deploy standing corps officers. The officers, coming from nearly all EU countries, were tested in various countries and under a variety of conditions, facing limitations imposed by COVID-19.

By the end of 2021, Frontex deployed 2 000 officers working with their national counterparts along the external borders. The Agency recruited and trained 629 category 1 officers who are members of EU staff and carry blue Frontex uniforms (the number of employed SC cat 1 as of 1 January 2022 reached 770). In parallel during the reporting period, Frontex also managed to obtain the authorisation for the first category 1 officers to carry and use handguns. This strengthened the nature of Frontex as an operational arm of the European Union.

The establishment of the standing corps allowed the Agency to expand the variety of services provided to Member States to deal with migratory issues as well as cross-border crime. In spite of the travel limitations imposed by COVID-19, in 2021 Frontex supported the return of 18 300 third country nationals. This represented a record figure for the Agency, and it was achieved thanks to the increase of returns through scheduled flights. In 2021, Frontex also started deploying a new profile within the EBCG standing corps: forced-return escort and support officers.

In 2021, the recruitment of staff for the launch of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) started. This process will allow the Agency to set up the ETIAS Central Unit, which is foreseen to become operational by the end of 2022. At the end of the year, in response to a request from Member States, Frontex also declared its willingness to provide support for the implementation of the Entry/Exit System (EES) at the national level.

In August 2021, in reaction to the escalation of the crisis in Afghanistan, Frontex deployed officers to the Tbilisi airport in cooperation with Georgian authorities to support with evacuation operations from Kabul to EU Member States. In November, Frontex started the deployment of a plane to support French and Belgian authorities in the Channel and North Sea coastal region in response to the increased migratory pressure in the area.

The establishment of the standing corps has increased the Agency's ability to react more quickly and decisively to new threats at the external borders, strengthening the role of Frontex as a player in the EU's internal security architecture. The importance of this readiness was confirmed by the role Frontex played in the fight against the use of irregular migrants as a hybrid threat against Member States and the European Union. In response to a request by Lithuanian authorities, in July 2021 Frontex launched a rapid border intervention at Lithuania's border with Belarus. Thanks to the Agency's effort, within days Frontex provided more than 100 standing corps officers and dozens of patrol cars to Lithuania to support on addressing the migration crisis created by Belarus at its borders. The escalation in the use of irregular migration as a hybrid threat has underscored the need for European-level support to Member States in protecting the EU's external borders assuring respect for fundamental rights.

While continuing to support the Member States in the management of EU's external borders, 2021 also witnessed the expansion of the operational footprint of Frontex outside of the European Union. In June 2021, the Agency launched a new joint operation in Serbia, the third country in the Western Balkans to host a fully-fledged Frontex operation after Albania and Montenegro. The start of this joint operation also represented an important step in the implementation of the status agreement between the European Union and Serbia.

2021 witnessed significant amendments to the organisational structure of the Agency. In May 2021, the Executive Director adopted a set of decisions to implement the organisational changes introduced by the Management Board at the end of 2020. Reflecting the expanded mandate of the Agency, these decisions established and allocated staff to new Divisions within the Agency: Deployment Management Division, European Centre for Returns, ETIAS Central Unit Division, Financial, Digital and Security Division and Governance Support Centre.

The Agency's organisational structure was further amended following the appointment of the Deputy Executive Directors. Reflecting the necessity to establish a new entity for the provision of horizontal executive support and cross-divisional coordination to support the members of the Executive Management of the Agency, the Agency established the Executive Affairs Unit within the Governance Support Centre.

All the organisational changes adopted in 2021 were finally engraved in the revised Frontex Internal Structure and Rules of Procedure (FISRoP), adopted by decision of the Executive Director. This document provided an overview of the internal structure and allocation of its tasks to all persons working in the Agency. The FISRoP established transparent working procedures for decision-making, thus providing an internal framework for the sound administration and well-functioning of the Agency.

In 2021, the Agency continued to work for the design and construction of its permanent premises. In September 2021, the Management Board adopted the Early Information Note to the Budgetary Authority, containing information on the building surface and the provisional planning. The Early Information Note was sent to the Budgetary Authority and the EU Council and was presented in the European Parliament's Budgets Committee.

The operational and organisational changes were accompanied by an increased focus on the respect of fundamental rights in the Agency's activities. Frontex cooperated with the fact-finding investigations of the Management Board Working Group FRaLO and the European Parliament's Frontex Scrutiny Working Group. The Agency welcomed their conclusions that found no evidence of violations of fundamental rights by Frontex staff.

Following their recommendations, and in cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Officer, in March 2021 Frontex adopted a new standard operating procedure on serious incident reports which clarified the rules and competences in the process and increased the role of the Fundamental Rights Officer in

the reception and follow-up of reports with allegations of fundamental rights violations. Starting from 2021, the Fundamental Rights Officer was supported in the monitoring of Frontex activities by the 20 Fundamental Rights monitors recruited by the Agency. Additionally, Frontex started drafting a standard operating procedure for the application of Article 46 of the EBCG Regulation, which supports the Executive Director's decision-making process for the suspension or termination of Frontex activities, including in cases of fundamental rights violations. The standard operating procedure is foreseen for adoption in early 2022.

2.3. Budgetary and financial management

2.3.1. Implementation of appropriations

Table 6. Summary overview of 2021 implementation per fund source.

Fund source	Budget (EUR)	Total commitments (EUR)	Ratio	Total Payments (EUR)	Ratio
	A	B	C = B/A	D	E = D/A
C1 Regular budget	535 245 042	506 899 631	95 %	269 883 196	50 %
C2 Non-automatic carry-over	1 157 587	1 157 587	100 %	1 157 587	100 %
C4 Internal assigned revenue	1 479 275	813 613	58 %	213 351	16 %
C5 Internal assigned revenue carry-over	3 492 918	3 481 112	100 %	681 828	20 %
C8 Automatic carry over	159 381 960	139 046 277	87 %	139 046 277	87 %
Sub-total:	700 756 783	651 398 220	93 %	410 982 239	59 %
R0 Earmarked expenditure	24 707 745	18 980 683	77 %	10 109 645	41 %
Total:	725 464 528	670 378 903		421 091 884	

The initially adopted budget of EUR 543.5 million was amended twice during the year, resulting in the final budget of EUR 535.2 million. In 2021, 95 % of the C1 appropriations were committed and 50 % of those committed were paid. The financially committed but not yet paid appropriations of EUR 237 million from the 2021 budget were carried forward to the budget of 2022 (45 %) as C8. These commitments will be paid during 2022 with the final delivery of the goods or services and the completion of operational activities.

A significant amount of the funds carried forward i.e., EUR 216.4 million (91 %) were related to title 3 of the budget 'operational expenditure' with EUR 86.6 million for the acquisition and leasing of technical equipment, EUR 77.2 million for the deployment and training of standing corps and financial support to the Member States and Schengen Associated Countries, EUR 22.5 million for return operations, and EUR 21.6 million for special projects and horizontal operational support.

EUR 16.6 million (7 %) of the funds that were carried forward concern title 2 'administrative expenditure' and EUR 4 million (2 %) of the funds concern title 1 'staff-related expenditure'.

The funds automatically carried over from 2020 to 2021 amounted to EUR 159.4 million (44 %). At the end of December 2021, the payment level of the carried-over from 2019 funds reached 87 %, with the remaining amount of EUR 20.3 million which was not paid and had to be cancelled. A total of 82.6 % of the cancellations came from title 3: EUR 5.9 million from leasing of technical equipment, EUR 5 million from joint operations, EUR 3.4 million from training activities, EUR 0.6 million from situational awareness and monitoring and EUR 0.5 million from strengthening capabilities.

Internal assigned revenue concerns the amounts reimbursed from the funds used from Frontex regular budget (C1) – voted by the budgetary authority. Internal assigned revenue amounted to EUR 1.5 million

(C4), 55 % was committed and the rest was carried over as C5 funds. Recovery orders which were carried over from 2020 (C5) amounted to EUR 3.5 million, 99.7 % was committed and 0.3 % was cancelled.

Table 7. Regular budget (C1) implementation per budgetary title.

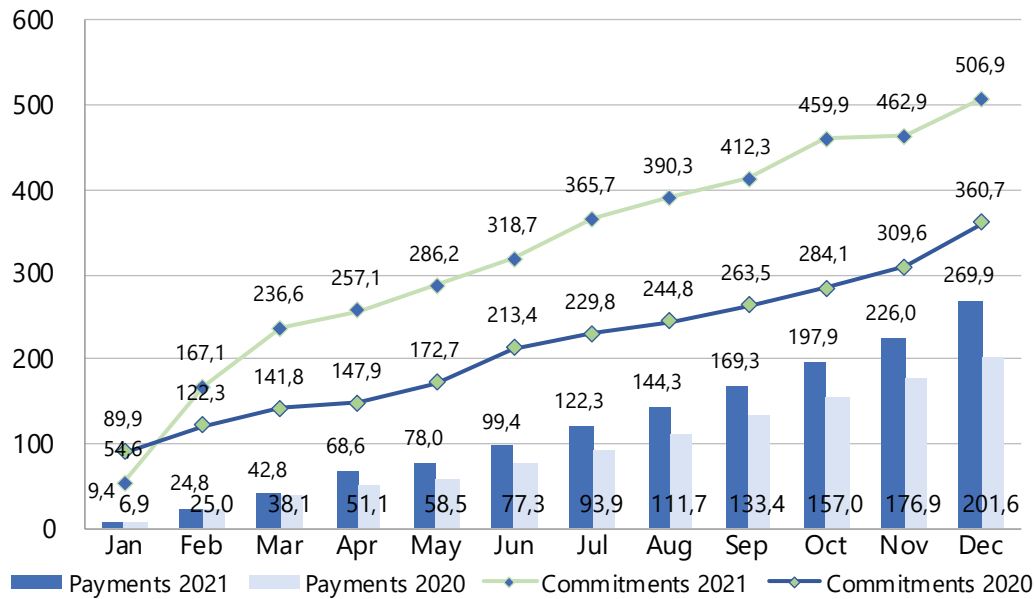
Fund source	Budget (EUR) A	Total commitments (EUR) B	C = B/A	Total Payments (EUR) D	E = D/A
A-1 Staff	119 757 833	108 464 943	91 %	104 463 184	87 %
A-2 Other administrative expenditure	41 840 134	39 375 257	94 %	22 772 632	54 %
A-3 Operational activities	373 647 075	359 059 431	96 %	142 647 381	38 %
	535 245 042	506 899 631	95 %	269 883 197	50 %

Table 8. Performance comparison of the budgetary year 2021 versus 2020.

	2021	2020
Commitments C1	95 %	99 %
Payments C1	50 %	55 %
Funds carried forward to the following year	47 %	44 %
Funds cancelled	5 %	1 %

The budget implementation was still heavily impacted by COVID-19 restrictions which did not ease throughout 2021. The overall percentage level of commitments reached 95 % which is lower level than in 2020 by 4 % and as for the payments, it decreased by 5 % to 50 % in comparison to 2020. The percentage of funds carried forward from 2021 to 2022 is 45 %, and 5 % of the budget appropriations had to be cancelled.

Notwithstanding the above, the Agency draws the attention to the fact that although the percentages of budgetary implementation worsened, the volume of budget implementation at the level of commitments in overall grew considerably from EUR 473 million in 2020 to EUR 670.4 million in the reporting period representing an increase of +42 % (EUR 197 million) and indicating the fact that despite environmental difficulties the Agency keeps progressing in this area.

Graph 1. Comparison of C1 funds (commitments and payments) in 2021 and 2020 in EUR million.

2.3.2. Information on transfers and budget amendments

The initial budget of the Agency for 2021 was EUR 543 521 620. After the budget amendments performed in 2021, the final budget of the Agency for the year was EUR 535 245 042 and it is detailed hereunder:

1) On 15 July 2021 the Management Board took the decision to adopt amendment N1 to the Single Programming Document 2021-2023 concerning the annual budget 2021 and the procurement plan 2021. This was the first budget amendment of 2021 budget. The rationale and objectives for this amendment were:

- Receiving additional EU contribution as a surplus of 2019 budget outturn.
- Revising the Schengen Associated Countries contribution to Frontex 2021 budget.

Frontex's 2021 budget was amended, and an overall amount of EUR 7 249 263 was returned to the general EU budget. The increase of the budget also included the revision of the financial contribution of the Schengen Associated Countries (SAC) to the Agency's budget 2021.

2) On 7 September 2021 the Management Board took the decision to adopt amendment N2 to the Single Programming Document 2021-2023 (in particular the annual budget 2021 and the annual work programme 2021).

This was the second amendment of 2021 budget. The rationale and objectives for this amendment were to release a part of the Agency's budget to the EU general budget. Frontex released from its budget to the EU general budget EUR 14 546 840.50. The transfer consisted of appropriations of all titles: (1) staff, (2) administrative and (3) operational.

The return of EUR 14 546 840.50 to the EU budget required a proportionate decrease in the financial contribution from the Schengen Associated Countries (SAC) to the Agency' budget 2021 and this decrease amounted to EUR 979 000.

Eight budget transfers were adopted by the Executive Director in 2021:

1. On 26 January 2021 in order to ensure financing continuation of operational deployments of host Member States' human resources and light technical equipment, operational deployments of third

- countries' human resources and light technical equipment. The amount of EUR 8.9 million had been transferred within title 3 and it includes Albania's hosting capacity and running costs of focal points and coordination points.
2. On 17 February 2021, in order to ensure financing charter services for return operations, namely Framework Contract FRONTEX/OP/947/2029/JL (short notice charters) and under lot 1 of Framework Contract FRONTEX/OP/343/2017/JL/AG EUR 3 million has been transferred from return operations to acquisition and leasing of technical equipment. Further, EUR 1.4 million has been transferred to training in order to ensure training-building EBCG capacities, such as Schengen Evaluation, EES, IBM, CIRAM, etc.
 3. On 29 April 2021, in order to ensure proper financing:
 - a. deployments for Frontex Situation Centre operations, EUR 0.5 million was added to budget line dedicated to category 3 – short-term deployments;
 - b. training of standing corps batch 4, health protection measures for batch 2 and 3, and re-design of the basic training to adapt it to the requirements of the new group of recruits without law enforcement background, budget for standing corps training was increased by EUR 5.3 million; furthermore, budget for training for building capacity in the Member States was increased by EUR 0.7 million;
 - c. 3rd round of grants for return operations with the implementation period of 1/10/2021–31/01/2022, the budget for return was increased by nearly EUR 10 million;
 - d. Aerostat II pilot project, additional EUR 0.15 million was added to the budget for border management research, technology innovation and capacity development;
 - e. Fundamental Rights Monitors and standing corps related travel expenditure, additional EUR 0.7 million was added for operational missions;
 - f. consultancies studies regarding situational awareness and monitoring (reallocation of funds within title 3 to the relevant budget line);
 - g. Member States deployments of human resources and light technical equipment (reallocation of funds within title 3 to the relevant budget line).
 4. On 26 August 2021, in order to ensure proper financing:
 - a. Standing corps category 3 operational deployments due to the rapid border intervention launched in Lithuania plus additional deployments scheduled for Greece, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, and Romania, EUR 2.2 million was added;
 - b. Additional amount for MALE RPAS and setting a reserve for additional budgetary needs for leasing of technical equipment for rapid border interventions, EUR 10.1 million was added;
 - c. Specific contract No 89 under Opera Evolution project and the procurements planned under 2021/CAP/01, two procurement procedures on organisational transformation of the capacity building division (consultancy services) and on capability development plan (consultancy services), EUR 0.6 million was added;
 - d. New ICT enabled projects identified after the planning exercise for ICT operational budget for 2022. The amounts are related to maintenance of the existing ICT solutions (EUROSUR, SAS), EUR 6.8 million was added;
 - e. Member States' deployments of human resources and light technical equipment due to the rapid border intervention launched in Lithuania plus additional deployments scheduled for Greece, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, and Romania, EUR 1.5 million was added.
 5. On 22 September 2021, in order to ensure financing extension of the Entry Exit System Land Border pilot projects in Bulgaria and Spain as well as extension of grant agreement with Spain; and in order to top up of the contract amendment on Aerostat II pilot project, EUR 0.2 million was added.
 6. On 2 December 2021, in order to ensure the financing of:
 - a. additional Specific Contract under Frontex Surveillance Aircraft I (EUR 3.5 million) and MALE RPAS Specific Order 3 (EUR 8.16 million);
 - b. translation of Common Risk Indicators into 11 EU languages;
 - c. top-up value of the contract for PAM4DIS (Performance Assessment Methodology for Document Inspection) in relation to performance assessment of document information systems, and external support for the preparation of a well-developed business case for the Border Management Innovation Centre for the MB;
 - d. 10 promotional videos under specific contract with ICF next for the information and recruitment campaign for the standing corps. The top-up will also finance ad-hoc layouts/printings for situation and monitoring division.

7. On 10 December 2021 to:
 - a. top-up the budgetary needs for financing Frontex Surveillance Aircraft I additional LOT 3 SC 5;
 - b. two management consultancy services run by SAMD: for elaboration of the risk descriptions for risks related to ETIAS and the operational management of the ETIAS Screening Board; and the other for continuation of support for CSAM restructuring process per priority capabilities.
8. On 13 December 2021 to finance:
 - a. amendments of 2021 grants for standing corps category 3 subsidy and training compensation (Art 61) with EUR 2.5 million,
 - b. amendments of grants for Member States and Schengen Associated Countries heavy technical equipment deployments with EUR 0.2 million,
 - c. amendments of grants of host Member States human resources and light technical equipment deployments with EUR 0.8 million.

Table 9. Budget transfers in 2021.

#	Description	Transaction number	Date	Title 1 – staff expenditure (EUR)	Title 2 – other administrative expenditure (EUR)	Title 3 – operational expenditure (EUR)
1	Transfer Decision N1	FRO.27007	26.01.2021	0	0	8 930 000
2	Transfer Decision N2	FRO.27041	17.02.2021	0	0	4 427 500
3	Transfer Decision N3	FRO.27148	29.04.2021	4 298 240	4 454 140	19 208 882
4	Transfer Decision N4	FRO.27248	26.08.2021	40 000	2 608 050	21 335 811
5	Transfer Decision N5	FRO.27313	22.09.2021	0	0	189 700
6	Transfer Decision N6	FRO.27398	02.12.2021	1 156 123	156 725	11 466 185
7	Transfer Decision N7	FRO.27438	10.12.2021	100 000	28 050	4 732 265
8	Transfer Decision N8	FRO.27464	13.12.2021	0	306 809	3 580 086

2.3.3. Implementation of appropriations from 2020 carried forward to 2021

The amount carried forward from 2020 to 2021 (C8 funds) amounted to EUR 159.4 million out of which 87 % was paid. The remaining 13 % (EUR 20.3 million) had to be cancelled.

Table 10. Implementation of appropriations carried from 2020 to 2021.

Title		Budget	Commitments		Payments		Cancelled
		A	B	D = B/A	C	E = C/A	
A – 1	Staff	3 924 671	1 804 845	46 %	1 804 845	46 %	2 119 826
A – 2	Other administrative expenditure	12 108 896	10 692 848	88 %	10 692 848	88 %	1 416 048
A – 3	Operational activities	143 348 393	126 548 583	88 %	126 548 583	88 %	16 799 810
		159 381 960	139 046 277	87 %	139 046 276	87 %	20 335 684

2.3.4. Procurement procedures

Milestones achieved in 2021:

- Launch and/or signature of several contracts related to the implementation of the EBCG Regulation using procurement instruments of the Agency or via participation in inter-institutional tenders (e.g., service uniforms and weapons, aerial surveillance services, handheld equipment, patrol vehicles, physical aptitude testing, medical checks, media campaign);

- Signature of a high number of specific contracts covering the needs of the Agency in terms of ICT services for software development, as well as development, consultancy and support of information systems in the 1st year of the 4-year perspective (of the total value of EUR 50 million);
- The content of the future joint procurement initiative has been elaborated and further defined in consultation with procurement specialists of relevant national authorities. The Agency through its procurement sector stands ready to enter into negotiations with any interested purchasing unit of Member States' border or coast guard authorities to explore synergies in acquisition;
- Frontex' COVID-19 response: various COVID-19-related procurement procedures were concluded, and contract management issues were handled professionally, supporting the business units, securing the financial interests of the Agency, and ensuring duty of care in parallel with business continuity;
- Data population in ABAC legal commitments module;
- Strengthening of annual procurement planning and monitoring processes via formal exercises, consultation in the Management Board's Working Group of Budget and Accounts and submission of needs and cost and benefit analysis of projects entailing significant costs to the Agency, in line with the requirement set forth in Article 63(3) of the Regulation;
- Increased number of inter-institutional and inter-agency procurement procedures in which Frontex participates (highest consumption usually linked to ICT software equipment, management consultancy, HR-related services);
- Support and advice were timely provided to business units throughout the procurement process, in a service-oriented approach, identifying potential non-compliance events with the applicable regulatory framework related to public procurement and assessing, as well as mitigating relevant risks.

Most important tenders conducted in 2021:

In 2021, a significant portfolio of tenders (in terms of complexity and/or budget) was finalised leading to the signature of strategically important contracts listed below.

- Inter-institutional Framework Contract on Frontex Surveillance Aircraft Support for Border and Coast Guard Function Services (FSA I) – contract value EUR 84.5 million;
- Inter-institutional Framework contract for the provision of personal protective equipment and sanitary supplies – contract value EUR 60.6 million;
- Purchase of service uniforms for standing corps cat-1 officers – contract value EUR 20 million;
- Provision of SARS-CoV-2 PCR, rapid antigen and RT-LAMP testing for Frontex HQ in Warsaw – contract value EUR 6.3 million;
- Supply of four-wheel drive off-road vehicles for the operational activities of European Border and Coast Guard Agency – contract value EUR 5 million;
- Supply of service weapons (compact 9x19 mm semi-automatic pistol), ammunition and accessories – contract value EUR 5 million;
- Development of ICT software solution for EBCG Team Members Access to Schengen Information System (A2SISII) – contract value EUR 5 million;
- Provision of mobile telephony services for Frontex – contract value EUR 4.5 million;
- Single framework contract for satellite imagery provisioning – contract value EUR 4 million;
- Delivery of map production services – contract value EUR 4 million;
- Satellite imagery provisioning – contract value EUR 4 million;
- Provision of meteorological and oceanographic information services to support Frontex operational activities contract value EUR 2.2 million;
- Purchase of drones and payloads contract value EUR 2 million;
- Provision of Entry-Exit System Land Border Pilot in Bulgaria and Spain – Lot 1 contract value EUR 0.5 million and Lot 2 contract value EUR 0.7 million.

Knowledge-sharing activities in 2021:

A well-defined procurement training plan was implemented within 2021:

- Training sessions on specialised topics were delivered;
- Specific procurement training sessions for newcomers were delivered additionally on regular basis;

- Frontex Procurement Training Week – a 5-days internal training on procurement organised in February 2021;
- New articles and tutorials were published on Frontex intranet (MyFx);
- To ensure a better understanding of the procurement procedures, rules and processes, a procurement manual was developed and published on Frontex intranet (MyFx). The manual, as well as the existing articles on Frontex intranet, are living materials, which are updated regularly so that colleagues gain a better insight into the procurement processes in Frontex.

Inter-institutional and international cooperation and progress in implementation of EU policies in Procurement field in 2021:

- Visibility of Frontex procurement at inter-institutional fora was enhanced and the perception of Frontex (procurement sector) as a highly professional and reliable partner was strengthened through giving presentations, advising and having an active involvement in Network of Agencies' Procurement Officers (NAPO) and Inter-Agency Legal Network (IALN) working groups, and through conducting/participating in inter-institutional tenders.
- Informal regular (quarterly) meetings with Member States' procurement officers (Proc-Net) aiming at knowledge sharing, raising awareness and paving the way to potential cooperation within the framework of joint procurement.
- No procurement-related complaints were filed with the Court of Justice of EU in 2021. All issues with unsuccessful tenderers were solved without resorting to litigation via detailed letters of response while protecting the interests of the Agency.
- Contribution of procurement to the Agency's green, sustainable goals: dedicated staff has been assigned to raise awareness of the importance of making Frontex tenders more environmentally friendly and assist the Business Units accordingly (e.g. relevant presentations are given, such as in the context of Justice Home Affairs Agencies Network, and use of the different services offered by the Green Public Procurement Helpdesk is constantly encouraged).

Procedural statistics in 2021:

- The total value of procurement procedures processed by the Procurement Sector in 2021 amounted to EUR 406.9 million;
- Open tenders launched in 2021 amounted to over EUR 268 million;
- Out of all 36 open tenders ongoing in 2021, 18 were signed. Their total value sums up to EUR 218.4 million. There are still 18 ongoing procedures of an estimated value of EUR 241 million to be signed in 2022.
- 29 low and medium value procedures (negotiated with 3 and 5 candidates) of total value of EUR 12 million were handled in 2021 – out of the 29 procedures, 25 resulted in signed contracts in 2021 (of the total value of EUR 11.8 million), while 4 of them (of the total value of EUR 0.3 million) are still ongoing for finalisation in 2022;
- 203 very low-value procedures (negotiated with one candidate) of a total value of EUR 2.5 million were handled by the procurement sector in 2021;
- 991 procedures under existing framework contracts of total value of EUR 194.6m have been handled in 2021 – out of the 991 procedures, 900 resulted in signed specific contracts or order forms in 2021 (of the total value of EUR 172.2 million), while 91 of them (of the total value of EUR 22.3 million) are still ongoing and shall be finalised in 2022;
- The number and value of SC/OF concluded under reopening of competition dramatically increased. Compared to 2020, the number of above-mentioned orders and contracts increased from 79 to 188. As a result, we also observed an 88 % increase of their value. All SCs/OFs under reopening of competition signed in 2021 summed up to EUR 55 million. Reopening competition is always a welcomed procedure as it works to support sound financial management. However, conducting such a procedure employs more efforts on the party of the contracting authority.

Table 11. Overview of procurement processes in 2021 in comparison to 2020.

Procurement procedures 2020-2021 overview (excluding amendments)	2020		2021		Change in % vs 2020
	Number (excluding amendments)	Value in EUR*	Number (excluding amendments)	Value in EUR*	
Open tenders	24	167 602 950	18	218 434 810	30 %
Orders and contracts issued under existing framework contracts	776	91 451 076	900	172 231 144	88 %
Negotiated procedures with min 3 and 5 candi- dates	30	2 764 706	25	11 767 926	326 %
Exceptional negotiated procedure	3	191 940	11	1 861 081	870 %
Negotiated procedures with min 1 candidate (be- low 15 000)	213	1 347 650	203	2 538 071	88 %

*Estimated value of procedures as registered in procurement logs.

Table 12. Overview of all procurement procedures 2020-2021.

Overview of all procurement procedures 2020-2021	2020	2021
Value of all procurement procedures in million EUR	263.4	406.8
Number of all procurement procedures processed (including amendments)	1 447	1 619
Number of procedures processed by procurement officers	132	135
Average value of one procurement procedure per officer in EUR	182 031.79	251 266.21
Staffing	11	12

Table 13. Accumulated values of different types of procedures 2020-2021.

Accumulated values of different types of procedures 2020-2021	2020	Var. %	2021
Open and restricted tenders (above 139 000)	167 602 950	30 %	218 434 810
Negotiated procedures with min 1 candidate (below 15 000)	1 347 650	88 %	2 538 071
Negotiated procedures with min 3 candidates (15 000 – 60 000)	2 764 706	326 %	11 767 926
Negotiated procedures with min 5 candidates (60 000 – 139 000)			
Negotiated procedure without publication of the contract notice (p.11 of Annex I of Financial Regulation)	191 940	870 %	1 861 081
Orders and contracts issued under existing framework contracts	91 451 076	88 %	172 231 144
Orders and contracts with re-opening of competition	20 764 452	165 %	54 973 790
Total:	263 358 322		406 833 032

Negotiated procedures – point 11 – Annex I to Financial Regulation

Table 14. Summary of negotiated procurement processes in 2021.

List of contracts awarded by Frontex in 2021 on the basis of point 11 of Annex I to the Financial Regulation - exceptional negotiated procedures						
Contract number	Subject	Supplies / services	Budget line	Contractor	Signature date	Value in Euro
1188/2020	Economist Intelligence Unit – subscription to global country risk briefing (early warning) and country reports for 20 selected countries of origin and transit.	services	3102	The Economist Intelligence Unit Third Avenue 750 5th floor 10017 New York, United States	20/01/2021	30 742.50
0069/2021	Provision of psychological support/consultation for standing corps in Bari.	services	1513	Andrea Milic N.Udine Algarottia 9, 51500 Zagreb, Croatia	02/02/2021	1 500.00
0369/2021	Provision of facility management-related services (FWC Frontex/NP/369/2021/AH/AA).	services	2040	Zintegrowane Systemy Techniczne sp. z o.o. Al. Jerozolimskie 212A 02-486 Warsaw, Poland	21/09/2021	1 500 000.00
0599/2021	Third-country intelligence services: military and security assessments, terrorism and insurgency centre, and data analytics (country risk).	services	3301	Jane's Group United Kingdom Ltd Sentinel House, 163 Brighton Road, Coulsdon, Surrey, CR5 2YH, United Kingdom	25/08/2021	133 713.58
0691/2021	Acquisition of legal services for court case T-282/21.	services	2330	WAGENBAUR SC SPRL Avenue de Cortenbergh, 66, bte. 11 B-1000 Brussels, Belgium	11/08/2021	4 800.00
0816/2021	Legal assistance in investigation before Brussels police.	services	2330	SPRL JOHN BIART AVOCATS Avenue Latérale 33 1180 Brussels, Belgium	15/10/2021	14 500.00
0913/2021	Ground handling services and related costs provided by handling company outside of the operational hours of Lampedusa Airport, Italy.	services	3100	AST Aeroservizi S.p.A. C/da Cala Francese Aeroporto Lampedusa 92031 – Lampedusa, Italy	05/10/2021	46 200.00
0945/2021	Subscription to global country risk briefing (early warning) and country reports for 27 selected countries of origin and transit.	services	3301	The Economist Intelligence Unit Third Avenue 750 5th floor 10017 New York, United States	21/10/2021	42 797.00
0967/2021	Psychological assistance for IPU (International Partnership Unit) colleagues.	services	1513	Grupa Synapsis sp. z o.o. ul. Dembowskiego 3 m. 32 02-784 Warsaw, Poland	06/10/2021	1 000.00
1102/2021	Acquisition of legal services for court case T-600/21.	services	2330	WAGENBAUR SC SPRL Avenue de Cortenbergh, 66, bte. 11 B-1000 Brussels, Belgium	09/11/2021	26 420.00
1249/2021	Database of passenger flows at air borders.	services	3303	OAG Aviation Worldwide Limited 1 Capability Green LU1 3LU Luton, United Kingdom	16/12/2021	59 408.00

2.3.5. Late payments – interest paid to suppliers

When compared to year 2020 the amount of interest paid in 2021 was lower i.e., EUR 2 493 in 2021 to EUR 4 032 in 2020. The interests paid is decreasing while the overall budget authorisation increases which displays an improved financial and budgetary management in the Agency.

Table 15. Late payments in 2021.

Year	Number of transactions	Late payments	Percentage of late payments (in % of the amount paid late)
2015	11313	1768	16 %
2016	13011	1804	14 %
2017	15905	2949	19 %
2018	17078	2846	17 %
2019	16966	2258	13 %
2020	8563	1971	12 %
2021	14967	5399	12 %

2.4. Delegations and sub-delegations

All expenditure is implemented in the form of centralised management. As a general rule, the Agency uses the financial circuit model 3 'decentralised circuit with central counterweight', where the operational initiation and verification functions, as well as the financial initiation function, are executed within each division. The *ex ante* financial verification is centrally performed by the financial services within the Financial Services Unit under Financial, Digital and Security Division.

Two different financial circuits are in place at Frontex: (a) standard circuit, (b) simplified circuit for payments up to an amount of EUR 15 000.

- a. The standard circuit is followed for all transactions, except where the simplified circuit is allowed and consists of the following steps:
 1. The operational actor(s) ensure the correctness of the operational aspects of a transaction.
 2. The financial initiation function is to be performed by a staff member of the respective entity initiating the transaction or by a staff member in the Financial Services Unit.
 3. Financial verification function to be performed by a staff member in the Financial Services Unit nominated as a financial verifier.
 4. Performing at the same time the role of an operational verifier, the authorising officer by delegation and authorising officer by sub-delegation performs his/her duties for the respective budget line in accordance with the respective Executive Director Decision on delegation of authority or act of sub-delegation of powers.
- b. The simplified circuit for payments is followed for payment transactions up to an amount of EUR 15 000, excluding mass payments:
 1. The operational actor(s) ensure the correctness of the operational aspects of a transaction. In the case of low-risk transactions, the role can be combined with the financial initiation function.
 2. Financial initiation function to be performed by a staff member of the respective entity initiating the transaction or by a staff member in the Financial Services Unit.
 3. Financial and operational verification functions to be performed by the authorising officer by delegation and authorising officer by sub-delegation.
 4. The authorising officer by delegation and authorising officer by sub-delegation performs his/her duties for the respective budget line in accordance with the respective Executive Director Decision on delegation of authority or act of sub-delegation of powers.

The system of delegations and deputising in Frontex respects the following principles:

1. Executive Director and Deputy Executive Directors are entitled to sign all transactions for all amounts and all budget lines.
2. Delegations are granted by the Executive Director to the division directors and heads of entities outside divisions. The delegated authorising officers may propose to further sub-delegate to the heads of units, heads of sectors and other selected staff. The sub-delegation is in force when countersigned by the Executive Director. For commitment and payment transactions different financial

thresholds apply to these delegations and sub-delegations depending on the level of responsibility of the delegated or sub-delegated authorising officer (as a general rule: Director – EUR 5 million, for the heads of units – EUR 500 000, for heads of sector – EUR 200 000, for team leaders EUR 50 000).

3. Deputising: as a general rule, deputising is performed downwards; which means that the heads of units replace directors and that heads of sectors replace heads of units; when heads of sectors are absent, they are replaced by team leaders. In all cases when deputising for an AO by delegation or sub-delegated, the rights of the absent actor are given to the 'acting' AO by delegation or sub-delegation with no change to the threshold.

2.5. Human resources management

2.5.1. Human resources developments

The year 2021 was another year of substantial growth, following the gradual implementation of the extended mandate received that significantly increased resources in the area of budget and staff. Frontex strengthened its position as one of the largest EU Agency in terms of the number of staff, recruiting 432 newcomers in 2021. Due to internal turnover (44 staff members were appointed to a new position after having successfully participated in an external recruitment process) and an external turnover (68 staff members left the agency) the net increase in staff was 320 (the second largest increase after 2020) with 1 234 staff at the beginning of the year and 1 554 positions filled (temporary agents, contract agents and seconded national experts) at the end of the year. Compared to December 2019 when the staffing numbers reached 749, the Agency has doubled its size during the last 24 months.

This growth has led to an additional and constant workload for all HR services. In order to handle this change and growth, HR statutory staff were supported by a significant number of interim staff. Further to this, HR also managed two additional personnel programmes: the Blue Book traineeship programme which allowed 49 new trainees to get their first professional experience in the Agency and an interim workforce programme supporting the entities with 115 additional employment agency workers.

In the area of digitalisation of aspects related to HR management, Frontex continued its progress by rolling out SYSPER TIM module and its components on leaves, absences and teleworking for the staff. For the standing corps category 2 during 2021 it was decided in April 2021 to continue to use LeaMa for both the flexi-time recuperation and for leaves and absences and subsequently in July 2021 HR coordinated with DG HR the implementation of SYSPER II HR reporting module in the Agency. The necessary preparatory work was performed such as signing an addendum with DG HR, preparation of project charter, preparation of test plan, and initial training on the reports. It is planned that in 2022 HR will finalise HR reporting module's implementation.

Additionally, in 2021 DIG started the implementation of the automated time registration solution based on badges. HR supported DIG in this project throughout its two phases and prepared the needed data for SYSPER TIM flexitime functionality to be rolled out on 1 January 2022 for all staff members.

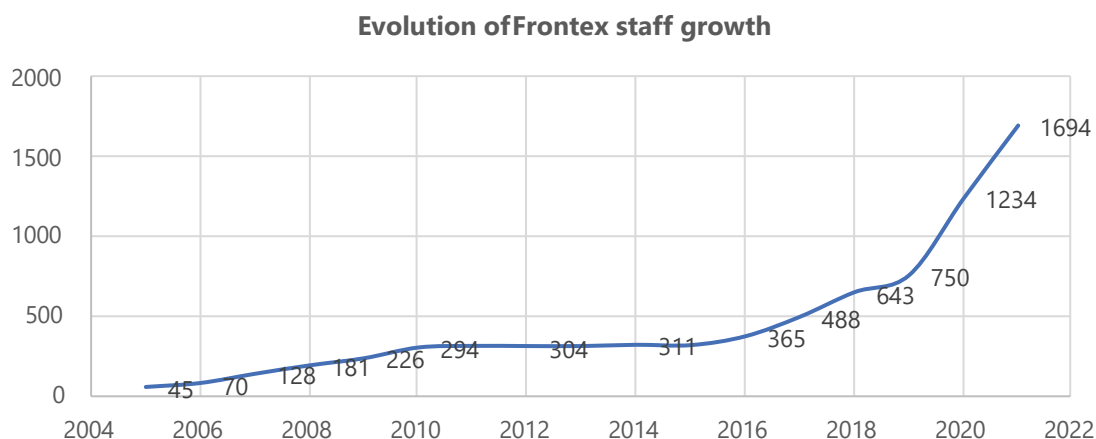
Following the Management Board adoption of the new Agency structure and in order to facilitate the transition, HR had to implement the reorganisation in SYSPER II. In total, during 2021 HR facilitated two Frontex reorganisations. With support from DG HR and following thorough preparation, HR services successfully implemented both reorganisations enabling impacted staff to receive the personnel administration adjustments through SYSPER II without caveats.

One of the aspects of the Agency's updated structure included the incorporation of expatriate services within HR. The expatriate services provided assistance to staff members remotely but also physically despite the COVID-19 situation. The demand for the service was partially decreased due to the teleworking mode introduced. Expatriate services were also involved in helpline-COVID-19 activities. In total, 107 tax refund claims covering 451 invoices were successfully processed.

In the course of 2021, new implementing rules to the Staff Regulations were adopted on the basis of the European Commission model 'On the conditions of employment of contract staff'.

2.5.2. Recruitment

Graph 2. Overview of the Frontex growth from inception. The overall positions filled as of 01/01/2022 was 1694.



The total workforce at 31/12/2021 amounted to 1 554 staff, 861 Temporary Agents (TA), 506 Contract Agents (CA) and 187 Seconded National Experts (SNE).

Recruitment activities in 2021 were focused on the following key areas:

- a. Recruitment of Fundamental Rights Monitors (20 onboarded and the recruitment for the remaining published);
- b. Recruitment and onboarding of the Fundamental Rights Officer (completed on 1 June 2021);
- c. Onboarding of the new Deputy Executive Directors (one DED took up her duties on 16 November 2021 with the two other DEDs scheduled to join in January/February 2022);
- d. Recruitment and onboarding of the next three batches of the European Border and Coast Guard Officers;
- e. Recruitment and onboarding of the first batch of ETIAS Case Handlers;
- f. Launch of the second campaign for future European Border and Coast Guard Officers with the first group targeted to join Frontex in January 2022.

Table 16. Overview of recruitment processes in 2021 vs 2020.

Process	2020	2021	Var % 2021 vs. 2020	Additional comments
New external procedures concluded in 2021	49	44	-10 %	Several procedures covered more than one post to be filled.
Recruitments completed – newcomers joined Frontex in 2020 (A)	100	156	56 %	Figure refers to new non-standing corps staff members (non-EBCG officers) without former employment contract with Frontex.
Recruitment completed – change of contract and/or status in 2020 (B)	47	44	-6 %	Figure refers to Frontex non-standing corps staff members (non-EBCG officers) assigned to a new position after having successfully participated in a completed external recruitment process.
Recruitment completed – standing corps category 1 (C)	430	232	-46 %	Figure refers to the third, fourth and fifth batches of newcomers of EBCG Officers recruited in February and in summer 2021.
TOTAL Recruitment completed (A + B + C)	577	432	-25 %	
Departures	34	68	100 %	Figure refers to non-standing corps staff members (non-EBCG Officers) that left the Agency.
Departure in standing corps category 1	11	23	109 %	Figures refers to standing corps staff members (EBCG Officers) that left the Agency.
Internal reassignments and internal mobility	23	28	22 %	-
Traineeship programme	48	49	2 %	Positions filled during spring and autumn intake.
Interims programme	74	115	55 %	Positions filled at the end of the year (on a rotation basis).

Graph 3. Recruitment 2021. NB: 33 refers to new external procedures published throughout 2021 (with many of them to be concluded in 2022).

2.5.3. Staff development and training

Training

In the area of training and learning activities, the adoption by the Management Board of the Decision on the Framework for Learning and Development ⁽²⁶⁾ was an important milestone in the new framework for the training in the non-operational, corporate area within the Agency.

The provisions of the implementing rules on the framework for learning and development have been amended to exclude from its scope the rules on mandatory training, which is obligatory for some groups of staff, since this kind of training is organised under a different framework (according to the provisions of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation). Following the adoption of this decision, the Agency shall adopt the learning and development policy by means of an ED Decision prepared in 2021 and its adoption is planned for early 2022.

The new process for learning needs analysis was implemented to assess requirements on strategic level. The first exercise of this process was conducted in the form of interviews with Frontex managers at all levels. As a result, identified strategic training priorities were gathered into a final report. The relevant follow up actions were undertaken, and the first delivery of training offers was launched and will be continued in 2022.

In addition to the standard onboarding programme delivered regularly for the non-standing corps staff, the specific induction for standing corps staff was run simultaneously. In total, three editions of the special standing corps induction programme were delivered for batches 3, 4 and 5, for 229 participants, supplemented with induction training for non-standing corps staff for 349 participants. Further to this, a custom-tailored version of the induction training for the ETIAS staff joining in the last quarter 2021 was designed and delivered in cooperation with ETIAS Central Unit Division. HR also contributed to the basic training for the ETIAS staff following its initial induction.

All training activities organised by HR in 2021 were delivered in an online mode. Part of them supported the implementation of the frameworks and rules applicable to Frontex staff (anti-harassment policy, new tool for missions' management etc.). Significant learning needs that had been identified in the previous years as it concerns project management and PM2 methodology were satisfied. The number of staff who completed at least one module of PM2 training cycle almost doubled (from 126 to 240), while the number of staff who accomplished full training cycle on PM2 increased by 35 % (from 99 to 134).

The portfolio of learning opportunities was extended by access to the comprehensive high-quality external library of e-learning courses. HR learning and development team also provided support for processes related to the confirmation of the ability to work in the third EU language (submitting candidates for testing, diplomas assessment and authorisation for the external tests). The number of requests processed in 2021 was almost tripled in comparison to 2020 (26 processes in 2020 vs. 71 in 2021).

Career development

The changes in the Agency structure resulted in the massive re-allocation of staff and changes in the reporting lines. HR revised the situation of each individual and prepared relevant decisions and individual communications to finalise the process within the 30-day transition period. Several staff were temporarily assigned to the posts of Directors of Division, Heads of Unit and Heads of Sectors or Offices. Some of those staff were reassigned to those positions in the interest of the service in November 2021.

As a result of the growth of the Agency and its amended organisational structure, HR commenced revising the decision on the delegation of powers conferred by the Staff Regulations of Officials on the Appointing Authority and by the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the EU on the authority authorised to conclude contracts. The work has been in progress at the time of drafting this consolidated annual activity report.

⁽²⁶⁾ Management Board Decision No 60/2021 of 25 October 2021 on the Framework for Learning and Development.

At the same time, the work on a new version of probation report adjusted to the process foreseen for middle management was initiated in collaboration with Digital Services Unit. This enhancement will facilitate the management of the process which includes a mid-term review for middle management.

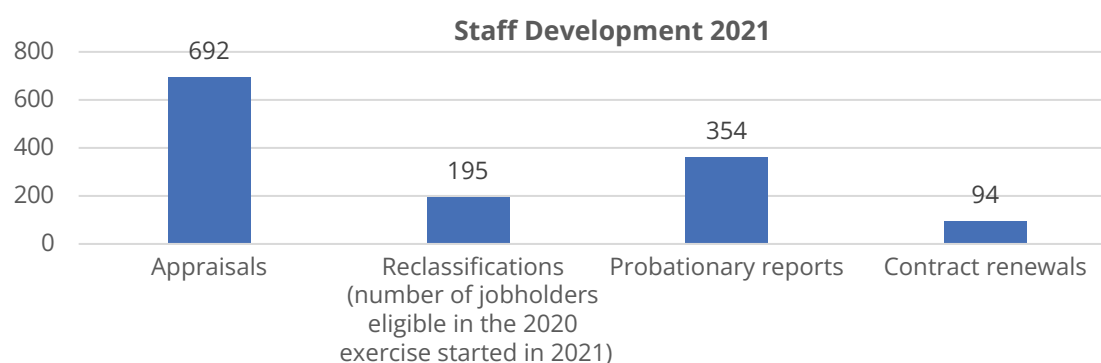
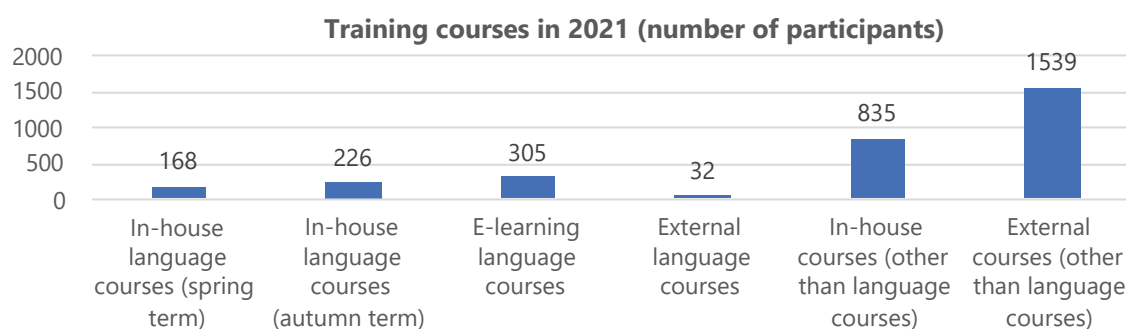
In line with the Management Board Decision 25/2021 delegating the powers of appointing authority, implementing provisions on the appraisal of performance of the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Directors, Fundamental Rights Officer and Deputy Fundamental Rights Officer were prepared and, following Management's Board agreement, forwarded to the European Commission for the agreement pursuant to Article 110 EU Staff Regulations. The Commission has not finalised internal consultations leading to the agreement at the time of drafting this report.

Finally, at the end of 2021, HR commenced preparations to the 2022 annual appraisal exercise. It is the first exercise including the members of standing corps category 1 who had been recruited in 2020 and 2021. The number of appraisals to be launched increased by 75 % in comparison to the previous year.

Table 17. Overview of main activities performed related to staff development in 2021.

Process	Quantity	Additional comments
Appraisal	692 appraisal reports processed. The number of reports increased by 20 % in comparison to the previous year due to the increase in the number of staff.	94 % of appraisal processes were finalised by 13 December 2021 (formal closure of the 2021 Appraisal exercise). No complaints under Article 90(2). There was 1 appeal filed by the closing date (appeal within the appraisal procedure as per Article 7 of the appraisal rules).
Reclassification	195 jobholders (104 TAs and 91 CAs) eligible for the 2020 reclassification exercise.	The 2020 reclassification exercise was launched in 2021 and is ongoing.
Probation	158 probationary periods of non-standing corps staff started in 2021. 196 probation periods started in 2021 for standing corps category 1.	So far two contracts that were concluded in 2021 were not confirmed at the end of the probationary period (some probationary periods that started in 2021 are to be finalised in 2022). Dismissals concerned members of standing corps category 1.
Contract re-newal	94 contract renewal procedures for contracts ending in 2022 were launched in 2021. 12 of them led to an indefinite contract. This corresponds to the increase in the number of processes equal to 54 % (61 processes in 2020).	A contract renewal process is launched several months prior to the end of a given contract of employment. Out of 94 processes started, 73 were completed in 2021. The remaining processes were launched according to schedule at the end of 2021. They are pending the Appointing Authority's decision. No complaints under Article 90 (2).

Process	Quantity	Additional comments
Training	In-house language courses: 27 groups in the spring semester (6 languages – German, English, Spanish, French, Polish and Italian) – 168 participants	<p>Apart from language courses, other in-house courses as well as external courses and newcomers' induction programme were delivered in 2021 in three versions: for Frontex non-standing corps newcomers (349 participants), for standing corps members (229 newcomers in 3 batches) and for ETIAS newcomers (as a customised programme prepared in adjusted version and delivered for 41 participants). All courses throughout 2021 were delivered in remote mode.</p> <p>After the COVID-19-related drop down in the number of training courses in 2020, training activities in 2021 resumed in remote mode and the total number of training participants in 2021 increased significantly.</p> <p>We continued to extend the training portfolio to respond to current learning needs of staff working remotely and in dispersed teams, and to provide staff with easily accessible educational resources in online mode (for example: the access to the e-learning platform LinkedIn Learning). Part of them (due to its characteristics of freely accessible materials from variety of sources, intended for the self-guided usage) were not included in the training statistics.</p> <p>Although the core training activities dedicated to standing corps were organised by training unit (basic training, profile-related and specialised training), this group of staff also benefited from the general training offer organised by HR unit. Standing corps members participated in, among others, e-learning language courses, training on appraisal rules, management essentials, usage of Frontex internal tools (MyFX).</p> <p>NB: the number of participants in training activities means the total number of persons participating in the training courses altogether. Consequently, the same staff member participating in 2 training courses, for the purpose of training statistics will be counted as 2 participants.</p>
	In-house language courses: 31 groups in the autumn semester (6 languages – German, English, Spanish, French, Polish and Italian) – 226 participants	
	e-learning language courses: 305 participants	
	external language courses: 32 requests	
	In-house courses (other than language courses) – 835 participants	
	External courses (other than language courses) – 1539 participants	

Graph 4. Staff development 2021.**Graph 5. Number of participants in training courses in 2021.**

Frontex continued to implement other new or revised HR policies (i.e., ED Decision on the process of filling a middle management vacant post) and proceeded to sign new service contracts with external providers, namely on pre-employment medical services, new social measures.

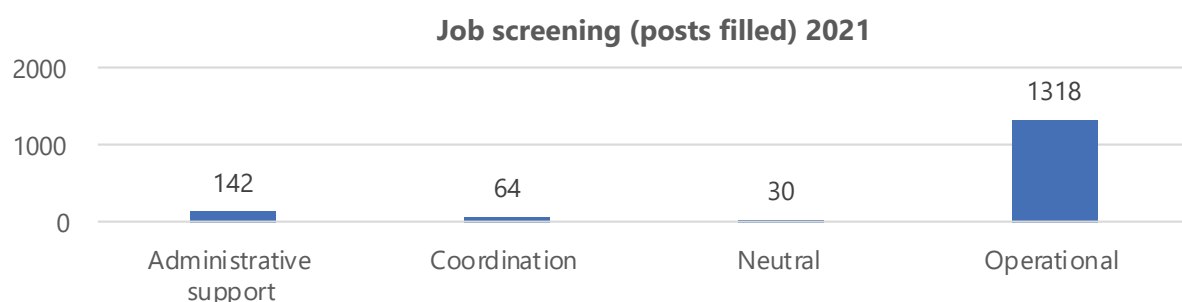
In order to continue to support the crisis management structure (COVID-19 crisis cell, strategic crisis cell, project manager exit strategy) and communication lines in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the 'Guidelines on teleworking in Frontex during COVID-19 pandemics' were adapted to the evolving situation through different version updates.

2.5.4. Job screening

The standardised job screening exercise (classifications of posts into the roles of administrative support, coordination, neutral and operational) was done according to the guidelines defined by the EU Agencies Network and based on staff figures including temporary and contract staff as well as seconded national experts and existing posts with an open replacement on 31 December 2021. The outcome of the exercise is detailed both in numbers and in percentages in the table below.

Table 18. Job screening exercise 2021.

TYPE/ROLE AND CATEGORY	Posts filled		Posts vacant		Total posts	
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	142	7.00 %	78	3.90 %	220	10.90 %
RES DIR/HOA	1	0.00 %	1	0.00 %	2	0.10 %
DOC	6	0.30 %	2	0.10 %	8	0.40 %
HR	46	2.30 %	22	1.10 %	68	3.40 %
IA	11	0.50 %	17	0.80 %	28	1.40 %
ICT	28	1.40 %	7	0.30 %	35	1.70 %
LOG	50	2.50 %	29	1.40 %	79	3.90 %
COORDINATION	64	3.20 %	33	1.60 %	97	4.80 %
GEN COORD	23	1.10 %	12	0.60 %	35	1.70 %
COMM	13	0.60 %	6	0.30 %	19	0.90 %
LEGAL	28	1.40 %	15	0.70 %	43	2.10 %
NEUTRAL	30	1.50 %	11	0.50 %	41	2.00 %
FIN/CONT	30	1.50 %	11	0.50 %	41	2.00 %
LING	0		0		0	
OPERATIONAL	1318	65.30 %	343	17.00 %	1661	82.30 %
TOP COORD	17	0.80 %	7	0.30 %	24	1.20 %
EVAL	98	4.90 %	11	0.50 %	109	5.40 %
GEN OPER	1078	53.40 %	282	14.00 %	1360	67.40 %
PGM M/IMPL	125	6.20 %	43	2.10 %	168	8.30 %
	1554	77.00 %	465	23.00 %	2019	100 %

Graph 6. Job screening (posts filled) 2021.

2.6. Strategy for efficiency gains

In a context in which the Agency continues to grow at a fast pace, combined with the implementation of the significantly enhanced mandate received by Frontex, there is a need to continue the improvement of the management systems to ensure that the assurance framework is in line with the new risks.

The strategy for efficiency gains encompasses management activities in all entities within the Agency, and the processes have to be established and implemented in a gradual manner. The main areas of focus in relation to the strategy are:

- Use of synergies within entities of the Agency and with external stakeholders (e.g., network of agencies) at all levels for the implementation of the budget, human resources development, establishment of policies and processes.
- Application of sound financial management principle, which allows for better and more efficient use of the funds available.
- Improvement of managerial methods through training.
- Staff knowledge and expertise improvement through training, mentoring and on-the-job training.
- Analysis and implementation of better processes in the operations of the Agency.

The activities already identified in the programming document for 2021-2023 included:

- Develop modern digital environment, including digitalisation of business processes, towards implementing the modern workplace principle to improve the efficiency of staff-led processes and productivity of staff. This objective was translated into the implementation of paperless process as well as online (self-paced) multiple learning opportunities.
- Fully on-board and integrate SYSPER, and maximise use of e-recruitment tool (SYSTAL); fully on-board and integrate the mission management system (MIPS), aiming at maximising its use. This objective was mainly attained by the deployment of several modules of SYSPER TIM and HR Reporting module.
- Processing of public access to documents applications with a high degree of automation. An area already developed in view of the growing complex requests the Agency faced with the creation of the portal: Public Register of Document on the Agency external website.
- Maintain and improve IT tools developed in procurement function, as PROC-Log and NP1-workflow towards full automation of the workflows; introduce of all available e-procurement modules deployed by DG DIGIT. This objective was met through the activation of ABAC legal commitments module. Procurement activities were also streamlined with regard to planning, monitoring and regular update of the annual procurement plan.
- Develop, improve and maintain IT tools supporting facility management, management of office supplies, registration of visitors, requests for support, claims, including use outside HQ. Within this remit, an online visitors' register took place in order to facilitate the process of registration of guests visiting the Agency's premises. The tool enables to easily add and manage visitors' data, monitor the visitors' badges and quickly check-in and check-out incoming guests.
- Introduce changes to systems: automation or semi-automation or outsourcing of repetitive tasks leading to reduction in processing time. This objective was met through the creation of IT workflows to manage exceptions and non-compliant events to be recorded.

- Introduce changes to the information management and data management leading to improved transparency, quick access to up-to-date, real-time information and a potentially better use of existing capacities. An example of the achievements in this area relate to the roll-out of Opera Evolution, CIRAM 2.1. EUROSUR integrated framework commenced and the methodology for attribution of impact levels.
- Introduce a more systematic and continuous set-up of cooperation platforms as well as establishing shared services with other Agencies (e.g., use of inter-agency procurement and framework contracts). Objective addressed through active involvement in the Network of Agencies' Procurement Officers (NAPO) and Inter Agency Legal Network (IALN) working groups.
- Simplify, where possible, the rules and procedures to be applied in human resources management, ICT management, facilities management, asset management, stock management, financial management, operational activities. Continuous efforts were performed in this regard i.a. automatising of claims for reimbursement for public transport, sports, schooling costs.
- Introduce efficient system of delegations in terms of financial and budget management as well as powers of the Appointing Authority. The framework of financial delegations was updated following a risk-based approach and taking into account the onboarding of the three Deputy Executive Directors.

2.7. Assessment of audit results during the reporting year

2.7.1. Internal Audit Service (IAS)

In 2021, the Internal Audit Service (IAS) performed and/or completed the following audits, follow-up audits and exercises:

- **Multi-entity audit on governance, stakeholder management and external communication** – launched in April 2021 and completed in January 2022.
Objective: to assess the adequacy of the design and the effective implementation of: (1) the governance structure and arrangements in Frontex; (2) DG HOME's oversight role and responsibilities as concerns Frontex.
Outcome: 4 recommendations issued, 3 of them with the priority status 'very important' and 1 with the status 'important'.
- **Follow-up audit of outstanding recommendations from the past audits in Frontex.**
Objective: to assess the state of implementation of specific recommendations in the original audits.
Outcome: the IAS closed 1 recommendation from the audit on IT governance and project management (2019).
- **IAS risk assessment of the Agency** – launched in June 2020 and completed in June 2021
Objective: a full risk assessment, covering all processes (administrative, financial, operational and information technology). The exercise constitutes the basis for preparing the IAS Strategic Internal Audit Plan (SIAP) 2021-2023 for Frontex, whereby the key risks identified are presented together with topics for future IAS audits.
Outcome: 5 prospective audit topics and 2 reserve audit topics were selected.

2.7.2. European Court of Auditors (ECA)

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) is required to provide its final opinion on Frontex accounts 'no later than 1 June of the following year'. Therefore, the ECA's opinion on Frontex' accounts 2021 was not available at the time when the Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2021 was being prepared. The opinion of the ECA on Frontex' accounts for the year 2020 is provided below as this provides some light on the adequacy of the internal control system.

Opinion on the reliability of the accounts. In the Court's opinion, the accounts of the Agency for the year ended 31 December 2020 present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Agency on 31 December 2020, the results of its operations, its cash flows, and the changes in net assets for the year then ended, in accordance with its Financial Regulation and with accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer. These are based on internationally accepted accounting standards for the public sector.

Opinion on the legality and regularity of the transactions (revenue and payments) underlying the accounts. In the Court's opinion, the transactions underlying the annual accounts for the year ended 31 December 2020 are legal and regular in all material respects.

Observations on the legality and regularity of transactions. Frontex relies on estimations provided by the cooperating countries for the financial planning of its return operations. The completeness and timeliness of this information is crucial. In one case, a national authority included two previously unannounced return operations totalling EUR 355 000 in a grant agreement at the financial closure of the action. To cover the resulting sudden budgetary deficit, Frontex made an *ex post* budgetary commitment. This contravened the Agency's financial regulation.

Frontex's Management Board launched an internal inquiry following reports about 13 cases of alleged fundamental rights violations in October 2020. In eight cases, the inquiry concluded that no breaches had occurred. For the remaining five cases the inquiry concluded that there was no evidence of breaches of fundamental rights but because of a lack of comprehensive data it could not conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that there were. The European Ombudsman also opened two own-initiative inquiries. The first one was opened on 10 November 2020, with an aim to assess the effectiveness and transparency of Frontex's Complaints Mechanism available to those who believe their rights have been violated in the context of Frontex border operations, as well as to assess the role and independence of Frontex's 'Fundamental Rights Officer'. On 15 June 2021, the Ombudsman concluded that there had been a delay by Frontex in implementing the important changes introduced by the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, however, since this delay was in the process of being resolved, the Ombudsman did not find it justified to pursue this matter further. Nevertheless, based on the inquiry, the Ombudsman issued nine suggestions for improvement to Frontex. These include suggestions on how to make it easier for potential victims of fundamental rights violations to be aware of redress possibilities and to report incidents, as well as suggestions to improve how complaints are handled and followed up on. The second inquiry was opened on 4 March 2021 to look into how the Agency complies with its fundamental rights obligations and ensure accountability in relation to its new enhanced responsibilities.

Two other ongoing investigations can be also noted: on 11 January 2021, OLAF opened an investigation over allegations of harassment, misconduct and migrant pushbacks concerning the Agency, and, on 29 January 2021, the European Parliament decided to set up a working group to look into possible allegations of violations of fundamental rights in Frontex. These investigations are of different nature and go much further than the financial audit. On 14 July 2021, the European Parliament working group announced that it did not find conclusive evidence on the direct performance of pushbacks or collective expulsions by Frontex in the serious incident cases under its investigation but identified deficiencies – among others – in Frontex's mechanisms to monitor, report and assess fundamental rights situations, and made recommendations for improvement.

Moreover, Article 110 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, requires Frontex to recruit 40 fundamental rights monitors by 5 December 2020. By 31 December 2020, none of the monitors had been appointed. The main reasons given by Frontex for the delay incurred were the following:

- The job description of the Fundamental Rights Officer needed to be revised to reflect the new characteristics of the post (a middle-management role), while the Regulation significantly increased the power and the remit of the FRO. Regarding the fundamental rights monitors, it entrusts the Head of the FRO the powers of appointing authority, which in this role is independent from the management, only accountable to the Management Board. This required an internal reorganisation. In addition, extensive consultations with the European Commission were necessary.
- There was a general slowdown in recruitment caused by the COVID-19 crisis, especially during the period from mid-March to June 2020. This added time to the process.
- On 25 November 2020, the composition of the pre-selection board for the selection procedure of the new Fundamental Rights Officer was established.

The delay in the recruitment of the fundamental rights monitors posed a serious risk to the operations and reputation of the Agency as shown in the previous paragraphs.

Observations on internal controls. Under the Regulation, a European border and coast guard standing corps were created. This resulted in the swap of 100 AD-level posts to 100 AST post within Frontex' headquarters with effect from 2019. On 1 September 2020, Frontex requested the European Commission (DG HOME) for permission to upgrade 100 AST posts into advanced-level posts (grade AD 7 or higher) for the standing corps. In anticipation of the Commission's reply, on 9 September 2020, Frontex sent out 47 job offers to advanced-level candidates. The following day, the Commission denied Frontex request, and the Agency immediately withdrew those job offers. This exposed Frontex to an unnecessary risk of reputational damage and litigation.

To guarantee the transparency and effectiveness of Frontex's internal control system, staff members playing a role in financial workflows must log any exceptions in a central register. In one case, Frontex had changed the provisions governing the payment schedule for a contract for aerial surveillance services. The change was authorised in an exception note, but it was not recorded in the central register at the time of the audit.

Observations on budgetary management. Frontex's initial budget amounted to €460 million. This amount comprised an EU contribution and the contributions by four Schengen Associated Countries (SACs); Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. In the course of the year, Frontex may receive additional financing for specific programmes and/or actions, as well as other revenues from administrative operations.

The EU's contribution was initially set at EUR 428 million. Budget line 18 02 03 of the EU's general budget funded this amount in the following way: EUR 412 million was to come from the appropriations of the 2020 general EU budget, and EUR 16 million was to come from Frontex's budgetary outturn from 2018.

The SACs' contribution was initially set at EUR 32 million. The agreements with the SACs state that contributions are calculated as a percentage of the GDP (for Switzerland and Liechtenstein) or GNI (for Iceland and Norway) of each SAC country in relation to the GDP/GNI of all participating countries. When the initial budget was drawn up in 2020, Frontex determined that the overall percentage of the SACs' contributions as a proportion of its budget would be 7.43 %. We observed that the SACs' contributions only made up 6.91 % of that. This suggests that the SACs' contributions are understated. The EU's contribution, on the other hand, is not overstated, as that amount would have been budgeted irrespectively of the SACs' participation. This provided an additional indication of the need for horizontal guidance from the European Commission to EU bodies on how to calculate contributions from non-EU countries consistently.

COVID-19 pandemic affected Frontex's operations and budget implementation in 2020. Frontex reduced its initial budget by EUR 95 million, through two amending budgets. The rate of payment implementation in the final budget was 55.9 %, which is lower than in 2019 (69.2 %). The rate of appropriations carried forward to the 2021 financial year was 44.1 %, compared to 30.8 % carried forward to 2020 in 2019. This reflected a general slowdown in activities (such as return operations) in 2020. In this context, a provisional budgetary commitment of EUR 18.1 million for the preparation of field deployments in 2021 was carried forward without the Agency having entered into legal commitments within the time limit laid down in Article 75 of the Agency's Financial Regulation.

Frontex also changed its presentation of the budget implementation in the 2020 final annual accounts compared to that of the previous year. When calculating its performance indicators, Frontex now treats the two reductions to the budget described above, not as amending budgets, but as acts of budget implementation. Frontex made this change even though it contradicts two decisions by the Management Board. Moreover, the amending budgets in question are aligned with three budgetary transfers which reduced the EU budget line 18 02 03 accordingly. One of the transfers, in November 2020, was approved by the budgetary authority and the other two transfers were approved by the Commission in November and December 2020 respectively.

EU amending budget No 1 of the 2020 financial year increased the EU funding to Frontex by EUR 10 million. It was approved by the budgetary authority in April 2020. However, this increase in EU funding

was not visible in the Frontex's budgetary accounts. This reduced transparency: it made it harder to see how much EU funding was made available to Frontex in 2020, and how that amount changed over time.

ECA performance audits. In 2021, several performance audits were completed:

Audit on the European Border and Coast Guard Agency

- **Objective:** to assess if Frontex effectively supported the Member States in implementation of European Integrated Border Management.
- **Outcome:** Special Report 08/2021 published in Q2 2021; 5 recommendations issued for Frontex; action plan drafted for implementation of the recommendations.

Performance audit on EU readmission arrangements with priority third countries – Frontex part of the scope.

- **Objective:** to assess the EU progress since 2015 in concluding relevant readmission agreements or similar arrangements with priority third countries, and the EU action to facilitate effective implementation of third countries' readmission obligations.
- **Outcome:** Special Report No 17/2021 in Q3 2021, all 4 recommendations addressed to European Commission.

Audit on migrant smuggling – Frontex included in the scope.

- **Objective:** to assess the effectiveness of Europol support to Member States in combatting migrant smuggling since 2016.
- **Outcome:** Special Report 19/2021 published in Q3 2021; all 4 recommendations were addressed to Europol.

ECA reviews. In 2021, two reviews were completed:

Review on third country contributions

- **Objective:** to respond to the public interest and provide a comprehensive picture of contributions provided to the EU and its Member States by non-EU countries, including details on the way the contributions are established, managed, reported and audited.
- **Outcome:** Review 03/2021 published in Q2 2021 with closing remarks and challenges.

Review of the draft (C)AARs for financial year 2020

- **Objective:** a thorough review of CAAR 2020, based on the obligations arising from the regulatory framework (FR, FFR, EC Communication for the Consolidated Annual Activity Report)
- **Outcome:** findings provided in Q3 2021, 2 findings for Frontex; improvements to be introduced in CAAR 2021.

2.8. a. Follow-up of recommendations and action plans for audits ⁽²⁷⁾

At the beginning of the 2021 Frontex had in total 17 recommendations from previous audits in the implementation phase. As a result of the IAS follow up audit performed in March 2021, one recommendation was closed, namely audit on IT governance and project management 2019 – Recommendation No 3 (important): project management methodology and practices

During 2021, four other recommendations were reported as implemented, with the status 'ready for review':

⁽²⁷⁾ This section of the report takes into account IAS contribution to the Agency's CAAR 2021, document reference ARES (1416128) of 24/02/2022, whereby as set forth in article 78(7) of Frontex Financial Regulation, beyond reporting on his findings and recommendations in audit reports, the internal auditor shall also report to the management board and the executive director in cases of significant delays in the implementation of the recommendations made in previous years.

Audit on Contract Management (2019)

- R4: Feedback mechanism between contract management and procurement strategy
- R7: Fraud prevention and detection

Audit on Data Validation and Quality Assurance for the Risk Analysis (2015). R2: Establish and implement a strategy for further consolidation and automation in data processing and validation.

Audit on HR Planning, Allocation and Recruitment (2020). R5: Compliance and effectiveness of selection and recruitment procedures.

The remaining 12 recommendations are overdue in implementation.

Significant delays in the implementation of action plan concern:

Audit on **Human Resources management** (2015). R2: Reshape the training policy. The MB Decision on Framework for Learning and Development (LD) was adopted (MB Decision 60/2021 of 25 October 2021). The ED Decision on LD Policy was reviewed and amended to better reflect the context of the standing corps and is aligned with the MB Decision. The assessment of the draft and clarification are underway at the time of preparation of this Consolidated Annual Activity Report.

The following recommendations are overdue in implementation for over six months:

Audit on contract management (2019). Very important recommendations, with revised implementation date 30.06.2022. Out of 24 actions identified for the pending recommendations, 7 actions are not yet implemented. Implementation rate 71 %:

- R1. Recognition of contract management function (very important);
- R2. Contracts are managed by several business units (very important);
- R3. Monitoring and reporting on contract management (very important);
- R5. Feedback mechanism between contract management and procurement strategy (very important).

Audit on IT governance and project management (2019). Out of 22 actions identified for the pending recommendations, 6 actions are not yet implemented. Implementation rate 73 %:

- R1. IT governance framework (very important), initial deadline 30.06.2021. Only actions related to the implementation of Frontex information management strategy are pending. New DL Q3 2022;
- R2. IT Security governance (very important), initial deadline 31.12.2020. One action is pending i.e. corporate policy defining FRONTEX IT security ambition;
- R4. Project resource management (important), initial deadline 30.06.2021. Actions related to establishment of PMO are open.

Audit on HR Planning, Allocation and Recruitment (2020). Out of 16 actions identified for the pending recommendations 11 actions are not yet implemented. Implementation rate 31 %:

- R1. HR Strategy and monitoring (very important), initial deadline 30.06.2021, new DL Q2 2022;
- R3. Attractiveness as an employer and grading (very important), initial deadline 30.03.2021, new DL Q2 2022.

The following recommendations are overdue for less than 6 months:

Audit on HR Planning, Allocation and Recruitment (2020).

- R2. Staff allocation process (very important), initial deadline 31.12.2021, new DL Q2 2022;
- R4. Planning of selection procedure (important), initial deadline 31.12.2021, new DL Q2 2022.

Follow-up on ECA observations from previous years

This follow-up is based on a table annexed to the ECA annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2020, Chapter 3, point 3.30. The table provides an overview of the actions taken.

Table 19. ECA observations.

Year	ECA observations	Actions taken
2015	There is an unaddressed risk of double funding from the Internal Security Fund managed by the European Commission and Frontex funding.	<p>Measures taken to mitigate the risk of double funding as well as to monitor the legal obligations related to the specific actions, i.e., registration in Opera Evolution and making the equipment available for deployment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management: the possibility to register equipment in the Agency's records indicating whether it is co-financed by the EU was included in Opera 2.0. However, Opera 2.0 was mainly used for keeping a record of the Technical Equipment Pool. With the launch of the development of the follow-up, today known as Opera Evolution (in short: Opera Evo), a far wider scope was envisaged. With the initial operating capability established at the beginning of 2020 and full operational capability a year later, Opera Evo enables the management of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Records of the Technical Equipment Pool; – Planning of operational needs; – Mobilisation of resources and their allocation to the operational activities; – Deployments; – Financial reconciliation. • Registration: For every asset to be registered by Member States in Opera Evo, a set of fields needs to be filled in including a declaration of whether the asset was co-financed by the EU. Opera Evo also comes with the possibility of declaring whether the asset was specifically co-financed under the specific actions of the Internal Security Fund. • Overview of grants awarded to Member States: in early 2021, the Commission provided the Agency with a comprehensive overview of equipment co-financed by the specific actions of the Internal Security Fund. As a follow-up, the Agency has been cross-checking this overview with what has been recorded in Opera Evo. • Raising awareness and training: during interaction with Member States through e.g., the Pooled Resources Network and Annual Bilateral Negotiations, the Agency raised awareness among Member States about the need to indicate whether registered assets have been co-financed by the EU. The details of how to do so can be found in the Operating Manual for Opera Evo. • Monitoring and reporting: the Agency reports on a regular basis to the Pooled Resources Network and the Management Board (MB) on the registration, availability and deployments of assets co-financed by the specific actions of the Internal Security Fund. Reporting to the MB is done on a quarterly basis in compliance with Article 65 of the Regulation. • Allocation, deployments and financial reconciliation: for equipment that is selected, allocated and deployed by the operational entities, the information on EU co-financing is conveyed through the Opera Evo System. For the financial reconciliation managed by the operational and financial entities, Member States need to declare again if the deployment to be reimbursed was co-financed by the EU.

Year	ECA observations	Actions taken
2015	States participating in border operations declare the costs incurred on the basis of cost claim sheets. The ECA in its special report 12/2016 recommended that agencies should use simplified cost options whenever appropriate to avoid such inefficiencies.	<p>The pilot project to establish unit costs for assets was performed in 2017-2018. The assets used in the framework of the pilot project were a fixed wing aircraft and a coastal patrol boat deployed by two Member States. Both assets were deployed to Frontex coordinated operations in 2018.</p> <p>The results of the pilot project were the following: it was a big challenge for the Member States to establish the unit costs due to the lack of a specific cost calculation methodology. Establishing the unit cost for just one year (2018) by Frontex was possible due to the fact that Frontex had historical data (past REM sheets). However, establishing the unit cost for future years would not be possible because Frontex would lack knowledge of the real costs in the most recent periods. Moreover, establishing the asset unit cost under the pilot project proved to be very work- and time-consuming for Frontex. As the unit cost would have to be updated every year in order to react to changing prices, an assumption that in longer term it would save time and resources in Frontex was not justified.</p> <p>The Agency believes that the establishment of unit costs for the deployment of heavy technical equipment is a complex issue. Based on the outcome of the pilot project to establish a unit costs per asset, from 2020 Frontex implements the recommendation gradually by introducing unit costs for selected cost categories. In 2022, all beneficiaries will be requested to provide Frontex with extended lists of unit costs for REM cost categories which will simplify the reimbursement process and will reduce the number of documents to be delivered with the payments. The goal is to introduce the unit costs for cost categories where simplification and efficiency gains can be achieved.</p>
2016	The level of carry-overs was high. There is a need to obtain more precise cost estimates and more timely cost reporting from cooperating countries. The Agency may also consider introducing differentiated budget appropriations.	A new financial scheme was introduced, with an increased use of units which simplifies the estimations.
2017	Although the Agency already moved to its current premises in 2014, the Agency still has no comprehensive Business Continuity Plan approved by the Management Board.	Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was adopted on 03.02.2022.
2018	The <i>ex ante</i> verifications were ineffective. The Agency should work on the development of a simplified and transparent financing scheme that also covers equipment-related costs.	<p>The pilot project to establish unit costs for assets was performed in 2017-2018. The assets used in the framework of the pilot project were a fixed wing aircraft and a coastal patrol boat deployed by two Member States. Both assets were deployed to Frontex coordinated operations in 2018.</p> <p>The results of the pilot project were the following: it was a big challenge for the Member States to establish the unit costs due to the lack of a specific cost calculation methodology. Establishing the unit cost for just one year (2018) by Frontex was possible due to the fact that Frontex had historical data (past REM sheets). However, establishing the unit cost for future years would not be possible because Frontex would lack knowledge of the real costs in the most recent periods. Moreover, establishing the asset unit cost under the pilot project proved to be very work- and time-consuming for Frontex. As the unit cost would have to be updated every year in order to react to changing prices, an assumption that in longer term it would save time and resources in Frontex was not justified.</p> <p>The Agency believes that the establishment of unit costs for the deployment of heavy technical equipment is a complex issue. Based on the outcome of the pilot project to establish unit costs per asset, from 2020 Frontex implements the recommendation gradually by introducing unit costs for selected cost categories. In 2022, all beneficiaries will be requested to provide Frontex with extended lists of unit costs for REM cost categories which will simplify the reimbursement process and will reduce the number of documents to be delivered with the payments. The goal is to introduce the unit costs for cost categories where simplification and efficiency gains can be achieved.</p>

Year	ECA observations	Actions taken
2018	The Agency should adopt and implement a sensitive post policy.	The draft policy on sensitive posts is being finalised.
2018	The budget carry-overs to 2019 and the cancelled carry-overs in 2018 were high. The Agency should strive for more precise cost estimates and budget forecasts.	<p>The carry overs are linked to the lifecycle of activities which have a final date in December, which makes the carry overs inevitable. Many of these projects have grants associated to them.</p> <p>The risk of cancellation is mitigated by the fact that all of them must have a legal commitment in place which gives a level of certainty that the amounts would be paid. However, in 2021 Agency could only make payments for 87 % of the carry overs. This indicator must be put into perspective as the activities of the Agency were heavily impacted by COVID-19 restrictions and the level of cancellations should not be used for the evaluation of the Agency's performance in this area. These restrictions led to the contractors and suppliers not being able to deliver. Often, they are also dependent on their own suppliers which are also affected creating a snowball effect.</p>
2018/2019	The Agency did not reach the required occupancy laid down in the staff establishment plan. The Agency should improve the guidance given to selection committee members and verify more closely the candidates' financial entitlements for salary payments.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The situation which Frontex is facing in its rapid and unprecedented staff increase (505 new posts allocated as of January 2022) is still very challenging. The Agency is still facing the following problems: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> limited HR resources which the Agency may allocate to both administration of recruitment procedures as well as to participate in thousands of interviews with candidates and to assess their written tests. Administrative resources of Frontex were only mildly increased by the new EBCG Regulation despite the major impact of the mass-scale recruitments and increased personnel administration needs; the overall timeframe needed to recruit an EU servant from publication of a vacancy to the moment of the newcomer's arrival is sometimes longer than one year due to need for republication after rejections of job offers sent to successful candidates; the needs of Frontex often call for specific recruitment procedures to fill one or just very few posts, while the use of large recruitment procedures (typical for EU institutions) is rather limited, although we have already arranged several such recruitments; steadily low correction coefficient for Poland reducing attractiveness of Frontex for newcomers – the number of refused job offers is still very high (selected candidates often quoting as their reason that they have received other more interesting job offer). This fact significantly extends the period of a 'job vacancy' by several months or ultimately, if the reserve list of candidates is exploited, leading to a republication of the whole recruitment; tools used for processing of recruitments in Frontex are rather elementary and not suited for large-scale recruitments. Our 2019 – 2020 efforts to procure an advanced e-RCT tool were ended in 2021 due to data security issues following Schrems II ruling and European Data Protection Board (EDPB) recommendations; Frontex strives to constantly improve awareness of the members of the Selection Committees and provided training in 2021 to several dozens of new members. Financial entitlements of newcomers are being defined by PMO based on existing SLA (Frontex pays for this service and PMO guarantees proper execution of this activity). New implementing rules to simplify the recruitment procedure and to better use HR capacities in the recruitment process are currently being finalised.

Year	ECA observations	Actions taken
2020	<p>Declaration by a national authority of unannounced return operations totalling EUR 355 000 in a grant agreement at the financial closure of the action.</p> <p>Frontex made an <i>ex post</i> budgetary commitment to cover the resulting budget deficit which is not in line to its financial regulation.</p>	<p>To mitigate the high risk of losing possible unspent budget e.g., in case of C8 cancellations, the following system is in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The budget is initially estimated by the Agency to the minimum required based on information provided by Member States; • Member States send on a monthly basis monitoring tables, indicating up to date real costs borne; • Based on the monitoring tables, the Agency amends the originally allocated budget by increasing/decreasing it. <p>This system carries a certain degree of risk of non-compliance in case of not precise or delayed monitoring tables, but it has proven to ensure better management of resources and much less critical cancellation of funds.</p> <p>The fulfilling of monitoring obligation deriving from grant provisions is a crucial element in the estimation of costs by Member States. Frontex continues to improve the monitoring mechanisms and estimations to remain compliant with the budgetary rules.</p> <p>In order to improve the mechanism for monitoring of costs and forecasting needs under grant provisions, the Agency started a process of upgrading its electronic tools used for the management of return related activities: FAR (Frontex Application for Return) and IRMA. The main goal is to have all costs connected with each activity in the system as a binding process for the management of grants. MS will be obliged to insert both operational and financial details of activities at an early stage for Frontex approval. It will support the monitoring of funds allocated under each grant respecting the cost-efficiency rule. As a next step, a process for monitoring the costs during the implementation period of grants will become a part of this system.</p>
2020	<p>Ombudsman in two own-initiative inquiries: (a) in the first opened in November 2020 it assessed the effectiveness and transparency of Frontex Complaint's mechanism as well as the role and independence of Frontex's 'Fundamental Rights Officer' and issued on 15 June 2021 nine suggestions for improvement to Frontex (b) the second opened in March 2021 aimed to look into how the Agency complies with its fundamental rights obligations and ensure accountability in relation to its new enhanced responsibilities.</p> <p>Furthermore, there are two other ongoing investigations: (a) From OLAF over allegations of harassment, misconduct and migrant pushbacks concerning the Agency and (b) from the European Parliament (EP) into possible allegations of violations of fundamental rights in Frontex. The EP in July 2021 announced that had identified deficiencies – among others – in Frontex's mechanisms to monitor, report and assess fundamental rights situations, and has made recommendations for improvement.</p>	<p>The Agency is fully committed and cooperates closely with all institutions.</p> <p>To address all the recommendations originating from Ombudsman, WG FRaLO, FSWG and additionally ECA Special Report 8/2021, Frontex developed a comprehensive action plan (altogether 115 actions, out of which 58 were implemented by the end of 2021). The progress in implementation of recommendations is regularly presented to the Management Board.</p>

Year	ECA observations	Actions taken
2020	Delay in the recruitment of the required 40 fundamental rights monitors which poses a serious risk to the operations and reputation of the Agency.	As of the end of January 2022, 20 fundamental rights monitors (5 of AD7 and 15 of AST4) were recruited, trained and are fully operational. A selection procedure for fundamental rights monitors at AD5 grade is ongoing to fill the vacant posts. Interviews were planned until mid-February 2022, and the newcomers are expected to join the Agency in Q2 2022.
2020	Agency was exposed to reputational damage and litigation due to the offers sent to 47 candidates as advanced level (AD7 or higher) without expecting the Commission's reply on the posts. Commission subsequently concluded that Frontex had not legal authority to upgrade these posts.	Frontex was not involved in the negotiations related to staffing needs during the preparation of the new EBCG Regulation. Frontex fully recognised the reputational risk which was considered against the highest political priority to swiftly build solid foundation for the newly created standing corps. The risks of litigations were mitigated by swift follow-up communication to the candidates and backed by keeping sufficient margin of vacant AD posts at the end of the year 2020. The increase in AD7 posts in the establishment plan 2022 will allow the Agency to comply with the initial job offers, and the recruitment of those candidates is planned for 1 February 2022.
2020	No registration of an authorised exception in a payment schedule governing a contract, into the Agency's central registry.	Since April 2020, the registration of exceptions and non-compliance events is automated and recorded in the Document Management System – this automated workflow will help to avoid similar events in the future.
2020	The four Schengen Associated Countries (SAC) contributions in FRONTEX initial budget are understated as they made up of 6,91 % instead of 7,43 % of the budget. There is a need for horizontal guidance from the European Commission to EU bodies on how to calculate contributions from non-EU countries consistently.	After reviewing the issue, the Management Board of Frontex during its 86th meeting concluded that the methodology to calculate SAC contributions will not change.
2020	A provisional budgetary commitment of EUR 18.1 million for the preparation of field deployments in 2021 was carried forward without the Agency having entered into legal commitments within the time limit laid down in Article 75 of the Agency's Financial Regulation.	The situation did not repeat in 2021, this has been confirmed by ECA during the audit mission No 2 of 2021.
2020	When calculating its performance indicators, Frontex treated the reductions to the budget not as amending budgets but as acts of budget implementation which contradicts two decisions by the Management Board.	The Accounting Officer will maintain the approach in 2021.

Year	ECA observations	Actions taken
2020	An increase of EUR 10 million of the EU funding by the EU amending budget No 1 is not visible in the Agency's budgetary accounts. This reduces transparency.	On 17 April 2020 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Council position on draft amending budget No 1/2020 of the European Union for the financial year 2020, on the basis of which the Agency should have received an additional EUR 10 million to support return operations from Greece. Indeed, the amount never entered the Agency's accounts. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, many return operations had been suspended and by mid-year 2020 the Agency concluded that it will not be in need of additional support to finance those operations. Therefore, the granted amount of EUR 10 million was released to the EU general budget by the decision of the Management Board (the same as for other budget amendments).

Follow-up on relevant aspects of service that received a 'red light' from the ECA for one of the two last years

For the financial year 2020 – N/A.

For the financial year 2019, the ECA made the 'emphasis of matter' regarding the legality and regularity of payments underlying the accounts. The Court drew the attention to the fact that reimbursements of equipment-related expenditure are still based on actual costs and as such more prone to errors. At the same time the ECA recognised that simplified financing scheme (covering the deployment of human resources) seems to be contributing to a reduced administrative workload, increased simplification and better monitoring of grants, thereby also reducing the risk of errors.

The Agency believes that the establishment of unit costs for the deployment of heavy technical equipment is a complex issue. Based on the outcome of the pilot project to establish a unit costs per asset, from 2020 Frontex implements the recommendation gradually by introducing unit costs for selected cost categories. In 2022, all beneficiaries will be requested to provide Frontex with extended lists of unit costs for running expenses of means (REM) cost categories which will simplify the reimbursement process and will reduce the number of documents to be delivered with the payments. The goal is to introduce the unit costs for certain cost categories (instead of per asset) where simplification and efficiency gains can be achieved.

2.8. b. Follow-up of recommendations issued following investigations by OLAF

No recommendations received in 2021.

2.8. c. Follow-up of observations from the discharge authority The discharge authority's (European Parliament) observations and measures taken by Frontex

Regarding the observations in the Report to the Discharge Authority on measures taken in the light of the Discharge Authority's recommendations issued in respect of the implementation of the budget in 2019, in 2021 Frontex has reported the following:

The observations as completed/implemented:

1. Regarding the review of payments mechanism
2. Regarding possible fraud cases
3. Regarding prudence in the implementation of the budget and organisation of events
4. Regarding the assessment of the Agency's policy on protecting the dignity of the person and preventing harassment
5. Regarding cooperation with the Frontex Scrutiny Working Group on the Agency's internal management, including procedures for reporting and handling of complaints

6. Regarding the recruitment of a Fundamental Rights Officer and Deputy Fundamental Rights Officer
7. Regarding the definition of competences and areas of responsibilities of the Deputy Executive Directors
8. Regarding the establishment of the Transparency Register
9. Regarding the resolution of legal cases involving Frontex and the recovery of legal fees
10. Regarding the awareness of the European Parliament on the outcome of the OLAF investigation
11. Regarding the communication and cooperation with the Commission on legal aspects of critical situations at external sea borders

The observations reported as in progress:

1. Regarding the revision of key performance indicators
2. Regarding the adoption and implementation of a Business Continuity Policy
3. Regarding the adoption and implementation of a Fundamental Rights Strategy and Action Plan
4. Regarding the resources and staff of the Fundamental Rights Office and the Agency's reporting to the European Parliament on fundamental rights and serious incidents
5. Regarding the digitalisation of the Agency and online security
6. Regarding the Cybersecurity action plan 2020-25
7. Regarding transparency of the Agency's activities
8. Regarding the recruitment of Fundamental Rights Monitors
9. Regarding the gender balance in the Management Board (*not dependent on the Agency*)
10. Regarding the HR Strategy, including HR monitoring and reporting systems
11. Regarding the development of a long-term human resources policy framework
12. Regarding the publication of CVs and declarations of interest of all management board members
13. Regarding the amendment of declaration of absence of conflicts of interest
14. Regarding the policy on sensitive functions
15. Regarding the cooperation and exchange of good practices with other Union bodies on human resources, building management, IT services and security
16. Regarding reporting to the European Parliament about the Agency's work at the external borders
17. Regarding cooperation with the European Ombudsman and implementation of its recommendations
18. Regarding the implementation of recommendations of the Working Group FRaLO

Other observations

1. Regarding the application of unit-cost based reimbursements for heavy technical equipment (not feasible)
2. Regarding the Frontex establishment plan (no influence from the Agency)
3. Regarding a sensitive post policy.

2.9. Legality and regularity of transactions

2.9.1. *Ex ante* controls

All actors involved in the financial workflow are subject to the ED Decisions on financial management of the agency namely:

1. ED Decision 2020-192 on delegating and sub-delegating the powers of budget implementation to the staff of the Agency;
2. ED Decision 2020-188 on the financial circuit in Frontex 2021.

Following the introduction of the paperless workflow for financial transactions in 2020, the Agency implemented a paperless financial initiator checklist, an operational actor's 'certified correct' form, and a written guidance for financial verification of payments and commitments for the financial verifiers. The checklists for all three actors provide additional assurance to the control mechanism in terms of an increased assurance to the Authorising Officer in the financial workflow. All paperless checklists related for all the financial actors of the agency are published on the portal of Financial Services.

A complimentary platform was created through the *ex ante* policy adopted in 2020. ED Decision R-ED-2020-56 Art. 106(4)-(4) provides that *ex ante* and *ex post* controls should be regarded as complimentary in the process of mitigating risks related to the various categories of expenditure and revenue. In practical terms, a coordinated and consistent method for their management shall contribute towards compliance.

2.9.2. *Ex post* controls

By Q2 of 2021 the Inspection and Control Office completed controls of three Member States: Portugal, France, Italy as well as member of EEA: Norway, and their respective institutions. *Ex post* controls were implemented in line with the plan covering the years 2020/2021. They covered EUR 8.3 m which constitutes 5.42 % of the total granted EUR 153.7 m in 2020. The ineligible amount within the grants checked amounted to EUR 136 700 and it constitutes 1,64 % of a total amount checked *ex post*.

In terms of the Grants *ex post* controls Plan 2021/2022, until the moment of reporting to CAAR 2021 (April 2022), the controls of the following Member States were as reported:

- Draft, Revised and Final reports related to Germany (Return Activities), the Netherlands and Greece were issued and closed by Q1 of 2022.
- Draft, Revised and Final reports related to Germany (Heavy Technical Equipment), Germany (Human Resources Deployments), Czechia and Spain will be issued and closed within Q2 of 2022.
- In line with the grants *ex post* controls Plan 2022/2023, Draft, Revised and Final reports related to Luxembourg, Lithuania, Denmark, Bulgaria and Romania will be issued throughout 2022 until Q2 of 2023.

2.9.3. Register of exceptions

The exceptions and non-compliances are recorded following the procedure for its management adopted by ED decision No R-ED-2020-115. As set out in the procedure, quarterly reports are prepared, focusing on the following aspects:

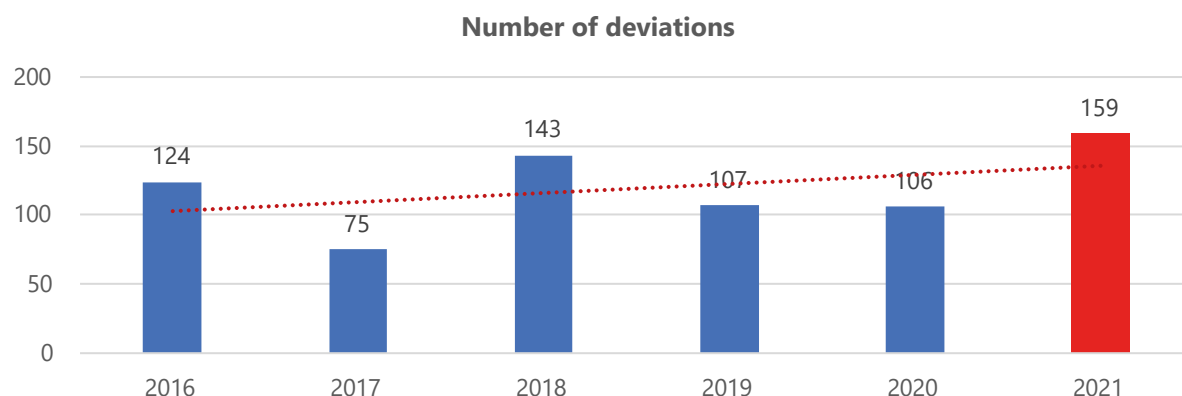
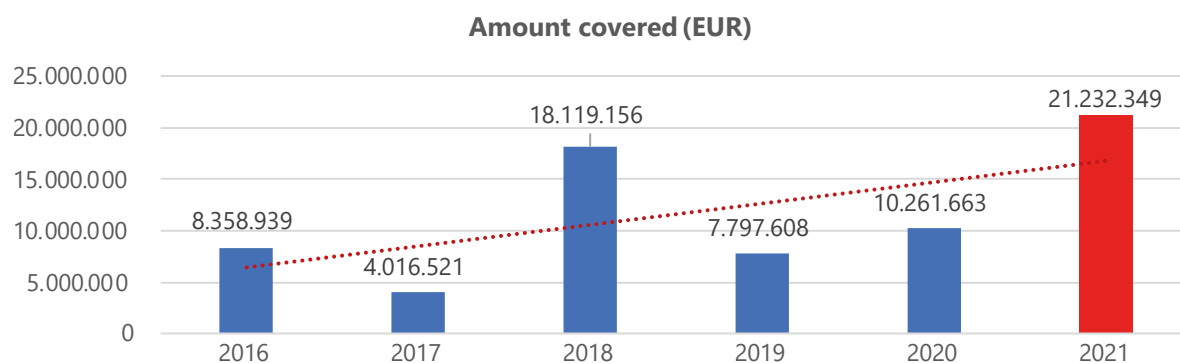
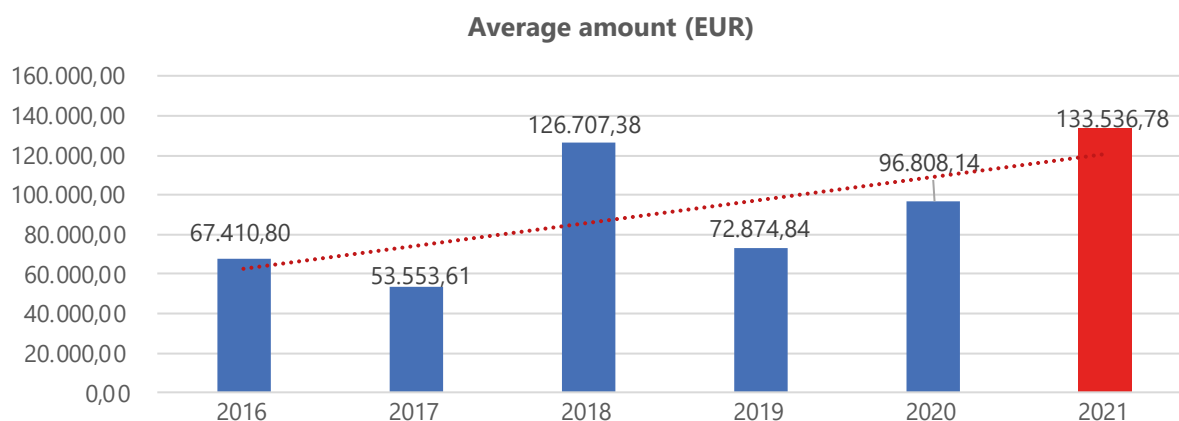
- statistics on the numbers registered, amounts and categories;
- conclusions on established control indicators and evolution of trends;
- recommendations for improvement actions.

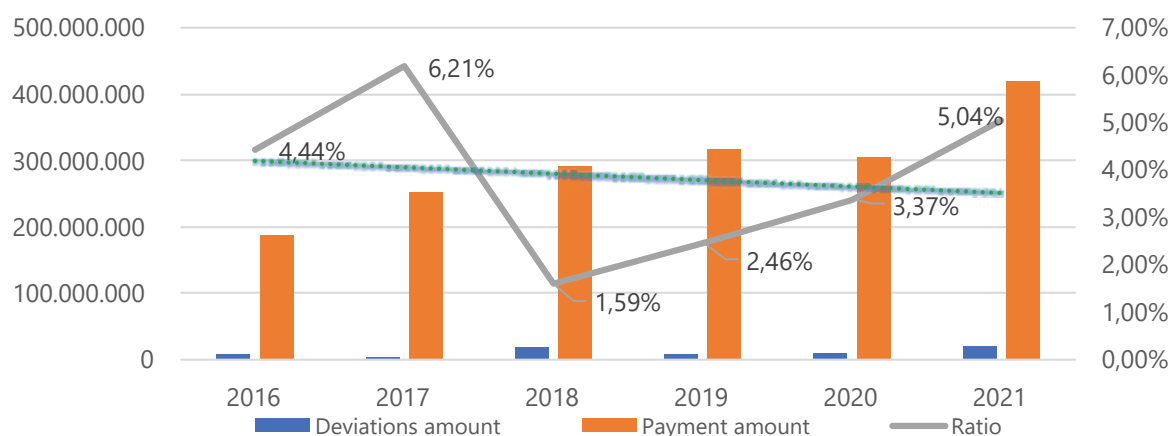
Exceptions and non-compliant events are deviations which are not initially foreseen by the processes and procedures and therefore they require an individual follow-up, are categorised as follows:

- exceptions: control-overrides or deviations that are approved before the action is taken (*ex ante*);
- non-compliances: control-overrides or deviations detected after they occurred (*ex post*).

Overview of 2021 and presentation of trends

The number of deviations registered in 2021 amounted to 159 which is the highest number for the period since 2016 (Graph 7). The total amount covered by deviations in 2021 is EUR 21.2m. This is also the highest amount over the last 6 years (Graph 8). That trend applies as well for the average amount per deviation (Graph 9). Despite the general tendency as regards number of deviations, and the amount covered (increase – Charts 7–9), the ratio (total amount of deviations registered for a certain period compared to the total amount of payments made for the same period) shows a decreasing trendline (Graph 10).

Graph 7. The number of deviations registered in 2021 in comparison with period 2016 -2021.**Graph 8. The total amount (EUR) covered by deviations registered in 2021 in comparison with period 2016 -2021.****Graph 9. The average amount (EUR) covered by deviations registered in 2021 in comparison with period 2016 -2021.**

Graph 10. The performance indicator in 2021 in comparison with period 2016 -2021.

Performance indicator – the indicator established for the procedure of registering of exceptions and non-compliance events is the ratio of the total amount of deviations registered for a certain period compared (put in relationship) to the total amount of payments made for the same period.

Payments related to transactions logged as deviating from standard procedures during 2021 amounted to EUR 21.2 m; while the overall amount of all payments in the period reached EUR 421.1 m. Hence, the indicator for the entire year was calculated at 5.04 %.

It was the objective to keep the ratio below 2 %, and we have to conclude that for the 2021 this objective was not achieved.

NB: As displayed in Table 20 below, several deviations with an overall amount of EUR 6.3 m are attributable to beneficiaries of grant agreements who failed to submit their final request for payment within the agreed deadline (in some cases even several months after the deadline). Not computing those records, the indicator for the overall ratio for 2021 would reach 3.8 %, significantly less but still above the target value.

Table 20. Deviations of high financial materiality registered in 2021.

ID	Description	Rule	Amount EUR
R-EXC-2021-41	<p>The staff schooling costs reimbursement from the Polish Ministry of Education (MoE). The reimbursement of the second tranche for 2020-21 is currently pending (at the time of registration), due to the numerous cases of incomplete staff documentation submitted and requests for correction, combined with understaffing of Personnel Administration (PA) team, processing of documents has been delayed.</p> <p>In order to avoid potential implications for the staff, both financial and regarding university enrolment, HR decided to exceptionally advance the payments to staff which Accountant (ACO) authorised to pay, only exceptionally and with the previous endorsement of the AO. The total amount involved is PLN 4 929 396.66 and it will be regularised by the payment received from MoE on 28 June.</p>	Financial regulation	1 106 518.81

ID	Description	Rule	Amount EUR
R-NC-2021-31	The Mobile Surveillance Systems (MSS) Lot 3 OF 1 Amendment 1 set the deadline for delivery of the prototype at 10 Aug 2021. On 2 Jul 2021 the Contractor requested extension of the deadline from 10 Aug 2021 to 30 Sep 2021 due to delays in the supply chain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. On 5 Jul 2021 EAQ found the request justified and confirmed to the Contractor via email the readiness to amend the OF1. On 13 Jul 2021 EAQ started the Procurement Request workflow to amend the OF1 accordingly. On 27 Jul 2021 EAQ realised that the workflow did not reach the Financial Initiator and resumed it. The workflow passed Financial Verification on 4 Aug 2021 and was signed by DIEC on behalf of ED on 9 Aug 2021. On 9 Aug 2021 PROC sent the signed Amendment to the Contractor. On 16 Aug 2021 the Contractor returned the countersigned contract. Therefore, we amended the OF1 6 days after the prior deadline for delivery.	Contract Management	1 374 224
R-EXC-2021-61	The deadline to submit the request for final payment under Grant Agreement 2020/46/FDU issued to the Dutch Royal Marechaussee was 16/04/2021. The Beneficiary was open in their communication that they would not be able to meet the deadline. This is an annual grant and collection of invoices is time consuming, especially in COVID-19 times. Moreover, in the grant issued for Royal Marechaussee, there are also deployments of Seaport Police, which needs to submit the documents to them.	Grant Management	1 094 979
R-EXC-2021-59	Two Grant Agreements issued to the Romanian Border Police (2020/99/FDU) and Guarda Nacional Republicana, Portugal (2020/143/FDU), fall under the same factual circumstances, therefore both are gathered under one exception case. The requests for final payment were submitted after additional deadlines given in the official reminders. Therefore, in accordance with Administrative Notice No R-AN-2021-5 on Revised Policy on Outdated Reimbursement Claims, they can be processed only if RoE is presented and approved.	Grant Management	1 572 471
R-EXC-2021-56	The budgetary ceiling of the framework contract RP/159/2017 (FWC) is increased by EUR 1 000 000. Now, c.a. EUR 586 000 out of the initial ceiling of the FWC is still available, while c.a. EUR 1 500 000 is needed to maintain the business continuity until the new FWC is in place. The increased budgetary ceiling of the FWC shall be sufficient to cover needs until March 2022. Details: The framework contract RP/159/2017 (FWC) was signed on 20th of July 2018, following a restricted, two-stages procurement procedure. The business requirements for this procedure were collected during the second half of 2016 and tender documentation was finalised in January 2017. Internal circulation of Tender Dossier RP/159/2017 was started on 1st of February 2017. At that time the budgetary ceiling of prospective framework contract RP/159/2017 was estimated as EUR 12 000 000. The current contract is used to maintain and make evolve the EUROSUR Communication Network (ECN) connecting 30 MSs and SACs with each other and with Frontex, maintain and make evolve the EUROSUR Application, AnTools and other minor applications, and to develop and maintain the Vulnerability Assessment Platform (VAP). With the initially un-anticipated items of work (VAP) and generally increased demand for services, with costly remodelling and replacement of the aging Network's infrastructure (ECN Retrofit project) and with the changes tightening the security perimeter of the RESTRICTED network, the initial ceiling of the FWC was set on a course for premature exhaustion. This became apparent in 2019 and at that time the reminder of the available ceiling was estimated and reallocated to support the most important processes (maintenance of the Network and its applications, development of VAP) until end of October 2021. Subsequently, a new restricted, two-stages successor procedure RP/80/2021/AH/AA was launched in January/February 2021 with planned entry into force in August and full availability of services in October 2021. Regretfully, the overall procurement process is now delayed in evaluation of Stage 1 and in preparation of the documentation for Stage 2. The delay can be attributed to several factors, but the major are challenges and limitations coming with COVID-19 and low quality of documentation submitted by participants of the RP/80/2021/AH/AA call for tenders, requiring an additional time for tenderers for corrections. As a result of the delay, the initial deadlines are no longer achievable, this is threatening the continuity of main strategic services like the maintenance of the EUROSUR or development of VAP. Additionally, the chances of effective handover of the projects and related know-how from the contractors to Frontex are significantly decreasing. The requested increase for the ceiling of the current framework contract RP/159/2017 is meant to provide continuity of the said services and processes until March 2022.	Contract Management	1 000 000

ID	Description	Rule	Amount EUR
R-EX-2021-117	GA 2020.40.FDU was signed on 12.01.2020. ED decision 2020.56 of 25.03.2020 came into force on the day of its signature i.e., on 25.03.2020, hence the previous ED decision on <i>ex ante</i> 2018.157 should have been applied and 2 <i>ex ante</i> processes should be carried out. However, the 1st <i>ex ante</i> process took very long time. It was launched on 06.05.2021 but the final supporting document confirmation was only received in early December 2021 leaving approximately 2 weeks for carrying out the 2nd <i>ex ante</i> . As it was not achievable to complete it within the current financial year and the budget used were C8 funds, it was proposed and agreed with Czechia that ED decision 2020.56 would be used for this grant. There were 4 amendments to the grant throughout the duration, all of which were signed after the <i>ex ante</i> ED decision 2020.56 entered into force, so in this regard it could be considered as applicable to the grant too. GA claimed value is EUR 3 335 248.40 and error rate applied to the whole amount was EUR 40 382.47.	Grant Management	3 335 248
R-EXC-2021-114	The exception concerns two final payments for Grant Agreements, 2020/36/FDU, 2021/127/FDU. They are put together in the workflow as the Beneficiary is the same – Guardia Civil. The final payments have been submitted after the deadline.	Grant Management	1 523 989
R-EXC-2021-100	The purpose of this Exception Note is to receive approval to process the Final Payment of the Austrian Ministry of Interior, under GA 2020/28/FDU, despite delayed submission of the claim. Final request for final payment (RFFP) deadline expired on 15/04/2021. Due to discrepancies between the ABNet monitoring tool and ORD Resources table, it was not easy to identify the errors.	Grant Management	2 066 069

Conclusions

Generally, the process for registration of exceptions and non-compliance as an element of internal control is functioning and thereby contributing to provide reasonable assurance of the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions (ICF principle 12).

Tendencies in 2021, as regards the number of deviations, the total amount, and the average amount of one deviation show that the values were increasing (Graph 7, Graph 8, and Graph 9), however, the value of the ratio shows a slightly decreasing tendency (Graph 10). Despite that, the target value set for the performance indicator (ratio 2 %) was not achieved in 2021. Special attention is to be given to deviations of high financial materiality. In 2021, 8 deviations were registered with an amount higher than EUR 1 million (Table 20).

Some improvements in comparison to the previous year are to be noticed in the domain of contract management. Improvements were reported in strengthening of controls in the contract administration process and as a result, Q1 and Q2 2021 showed a decreasing trend of deviations. However, in Q3 two deviations with a high materiality level were related to contract management. Nevertheless, the contract management related deviations constitute only 12 % of total materiality and 9 % of total number of deviations registered in 2021.

The major concern when looking at the results for 2021 is the increasing number of deviations related to grants' management. Statistics show that most deviations registered in 2021 are in the domain of grant management – 72 % of the amount covered or 40 % in number of cases.

A notable number of grant-related deviations are related to outdated claims. An increase of such cases in Q2, Q3 and Q4 could be directly connected with the amendment of 'Policy on Outdated Reimbursement Claims'. Until June 2021, outdated claims submitted by the Member States were paid without requiring issuing an exception. With administrative notice No R-AN-2021-5, this policy was revised. Accordingly, a delay on side of the MS now triggers an exception procedure.

The Agency is considering revising this administrative notice, since the Agency is confronted with requests for final payments submitted after – and in some cases several months after – the deadline, Frontex needs to balance its compliance with the legal framework, rules and processes with the need for flexibility required to maintain the necessary cooperation and support by MS to EU border control

operations. For such endeavour, MS resources will remain vital to complement the capacities Frontex is building in line with the mandate received.

Grant agreements are a significant part of Frontex administrative and operational activities, hence an important aspect of the Agency's measure to implement its budget. Furthermore, the Agency is in a process of personnel and budgetary growth and expanding its activities. Hence special attention needs to be given to improve the situation in this domain. It is also important to increase awareness of the legal and financial aspects of the procedures applicable to grant management amongst operational colleagues and beneficiaries.

Additionally, it is needed to increase the general awareness of the procedure for registration of exceptions and non-compliance events among the authorising officers, reminding that exceptional reporting cannot be used to avoid, transfer responsibilities, authorise or condone breaches.

Regarding the implementation of the improvement actions identified for 2021, out of 7 actions identified, 3 were implemented and 4 are in progress, the implementation of which will continue in 2022, together with the 4 new actions proposed (Table 21).

Table 21. Improvement action plan 2021.

No	Actions proposed	Responsible	Deadline	Status
1	The contract management function is to be strengthened at the centralised level. This action is related to the implementation of the IAS recommendation and will be considered as implemented when the recommendation will be closed by the IAS.	ICO	Q2 2022	Ongoing
2	To enhance control activities: <i>ex ante</i> check in procurement, finance, human resources, and contract management. Clear procedures establishing controls with clear roles and responsibilities for the control activities.	LPU FSU HRU ICO	Q4 2022	Ongoing and will continue in 2022
3	To enhance project management, especially the IT projects. This is in line with IAS recommendation, which is related to establishment of the PMO and FRONTEX-wide project management methodology (PM2).	DSU ICO	Q2 2022	Ongoing
4	Establishing a compendium of FAQ related to grants management to be confirmed by FIN, so that contradicting interpretations are possibly avoided.	CORD/DMD	Q1 2022	Ongoing
5	To revise the policy on outdated claims (AN No R-AN-2021-5), giving beneficiary MS more time to collect documents from high number of service providers.	CORD/FIN	Q2 2022	New
6	To increase an awareness among operational colleagues and beneficiaries on the legal and financial aspects of the procedures applicable to grant management (preparing dedicated articles and guidelines; organising training for new colleagues at least once a year).	CORD/FIN	Q4 2022 to be an on-going process	New
7	To update the procedure for management of exceptions and non-compliance events, clarifying the responsibility of different actors; improving of the workflow for registration of deviations.	ICO	Q2 2022	New
8	To increase a general awareness on the procedure for registration of exceptions and non-compliance events among the authorising officers (to communicate new procedure; to prepare special guidelines; to share the important cases of deviations during the DB).	ICO	Q4 2022 to be an on-going process	New

2.10. Environment management

NB: in line with the Commission communication Brussels, 20.4.2020 C(2020) 2297 final, on guidelines to elaborate the CAAR, this segment of the report constitutes a summary of the more detailed information provided as Annex IX of this document.

Frontex and the Green Deal. In line with the Green Deal's priorities set out by the European Commission, in June 2021, Frontex launched 'The Green Deal and the European Border and Coast Guard' initiative, aiming to expedite the transition towards climate neutrality. The research study's goal is to promote environmental sustainability in all processes, actions and operations undertaken by the Agency. It will propose several actions in the short, medium, and long term, embedding environmental issues in decision-making processes, reducing the Agency's environmental footprint.

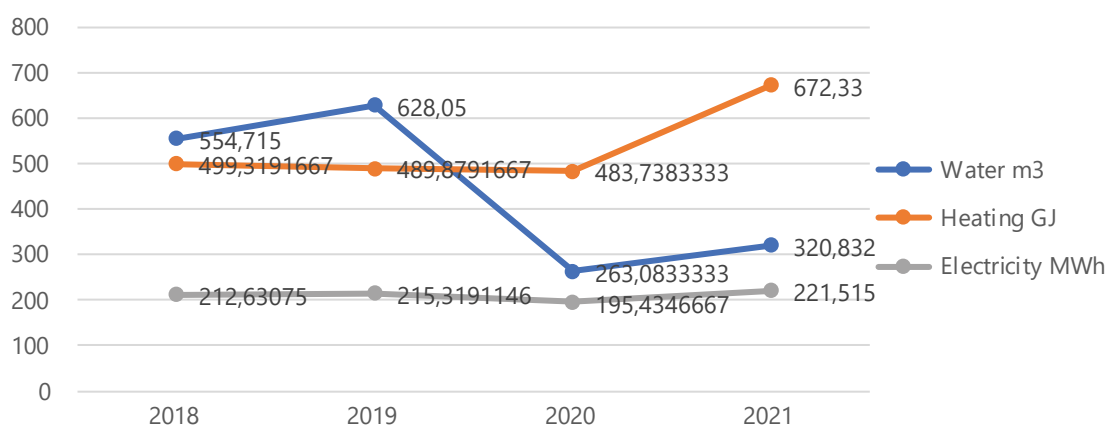
Environmental performance of the premises. The Agency leases the offices in two modern A-class buildings in the centre of Warsaw.

- Warsaw Spire building B was completed in 2014. The entire Warsaw Spire complex was granted BREEAM 'Excellent certificate' and the 'Green Building of the Future Award'.
- The second Frontex premises, the Wronia 31 building was completed in 2017 and it obtained two green certificates: BREEAM 'Outstanding certificate' in post-construction phase and 'Green Building Standard'.

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, as of mid-March 2020 Frontex employees were divided into weekly shifts A and B and office presence varied depending on pandemic developments. The rest of the staff continued to work from home which resulted in significant reduction of CO₂ produced when commuting to work. Weekly shifts arrangements continued throughout 2021 with varying percentages of staff allowed to come to the office, according to the epidemiological situation, but generally higher office presence than in 2020.

Utility consumption. The present premises are located in leased buildings which are connected to the municipal power grid. The energy supplied to the buildings originates from renewable sources namely from onshore wind farms.

Graph 11. Electricity, heating, and water consumption 2018-2021.



Waste management. At Frontex, waste is segregated according to the Polish law. Garbage is divided in four fractions: plastic and metal, glass, paper and mixed. It is then managed by the building's staff. The canteen operator separates also a fifth fraction: kitchen/bio waste.

Sustainable use of paper, stationery and office supplies. Paperless document circulation was introduced in March 2020 in several fields of activity made it possible to reduce paper consumption by more than 90 %. Due to partial take-up of office activities, in 2021 an increase was noticed in line with the increased 24/7 staffing.

Promoting of videoconferencing and reduction of travel needs. Several Frontex' meeting rooms are well furnished with VC equipment (mainly CISCO system). On a daily basis, corporate VC tools (e.g. Skype, Teams, Zoom) are used for both internal meetings and with external stakeholders. It is expected that thanks to this experience with the use of this means they replace or reduce many physical meetings that involve traveling.

Encouraging greener modes of transport. For years, the Agency has been encouraging its staff to use public transport when commuting to work by supporting financially such practice.

Environmental Management in Frontex operational activities and other areas

Return operations. The Agency organises several thousand returns to third countries each year, by means of both scheduled and chartered flights. The objective of the Agency is to offset the carbon footprint of each supported flight or passenger by compensating the financial equivalent of the carbon footprint for each passenger anticipating the timeframes set in the EU Green Deal.

Deployment management. A careful planning of rotation with aim to deploy members of the teams on longest possible basis would have a positive effect on all aforementioned aspects and would reduce the number of travels thus being in line with efforts under green deal.

Logistics support. The acquisition of equipment and integrated logistics support took into consideration the lowest possible environmental footprint, an objective to be gradually enhanced through the following actions:

- Adherence to the principles of green procurement in acquisition of profile related equipment by stipulating a requirement in Terms of Reference to apply EU standards for production, retail in each tender procedure;
- Inclusion of a contractual obligation for all phases of the services acquired i.e., supply, transportation, storage, maintenance, disposal, etc., to be in accordance with eco-friendly principles and EU standards.

Towards more sustainable European Border and Coast Guard Capabilities

A concept for Sustainability and Resilience (SURE) was developed during 2021 and it covers the strategic, operational and tactical levels. At the strategic level, it is reflected in the draft Multiannual Strategy for Developing the Agency's own Technical Capabilities, accompanied by a detailed implementation plan, which is slated for adoption by the Management Board in early 2022. The concept of resilience is also embedded in the overarching ongoing work on capability development planning.

At the operational and tactical levels, in the short-term, in 2021 the focus was on implementing activities which can quickly bring positive impact. One of activities identified, was to provide category 1 standing corps members with eco-driving training. The contract for a pilot training for 25 category 1 standing corps members was signed in December 2021, with the implementation planned for February and March 2022. If the pilot is successful, more training activities will be carried out in 2022 in this regard.

Focusing on the longer perspective, the Agency launched a project of mapping and assessing current environmental impact of delivering capabilities for implementation of operational activities. The work commenced in December 2021 and will last for 7 months. Following the results of the study, specific activities aiming to improve sustainability aspect of the EBCG capabilities and addressing priorities and targets set will be planned for end of 2022 and beyond.

Frontex Presidency in the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies' Network. In 2021, Frontex led the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies' Network (JHAAN) under a thematic topic focused on the European Green Deal. In this respect, the Agency organised three thematic seminars:

- 'Understanding the Influence of Climate Change on Justice and Home Affairs',
- Seminar on environmental crime, followed by the publication of [Joint Paper on environmental crime](#),
- Seminar 'How to make the JHA Agencies administrations carbon neutral by 2030?'.

On 22 November 2021, all JHA Agencies signed [Joint Statement on the EU Green Deal committing to adhere to the European policy objectives related to this framework and supporting the EU and the Member States in their implementation](#).

2.11. Assessment by management

2021 was marked by the achievement of several milestones in the implementation of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation. Challenges continued to persist due to the pandemic, but thanks to the instruments and activities developed over the previous year the Agency was able to proceed with the implementation of its mandate.

In particular, 2021 was the first year of deployment for the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps, the European Union's first uniformed law enforcement service. At the end of the year Frontex was deploying 2 000 officers, with more than 630 category 1 officers. Frontex also managed to obtain authorisation from Member States for category 1 officers to carry and use weapons. In 2021 the Agency also started the recruitment of staff for the launch of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS).

Another significant element in the implementation of the new Regulation was the appointment of the three Deputy Executive Directors by the Management Board. Their appointment was also accompanied by an amendment of the organisational structure of the Agency, together with the creation of new Divisions reflecting the Agency's expanded mandate: Deployment Management Division, European Centre for Returns Division, ETIAS Central Unit Division, Financial, Digital and Security Division, and Governance Support Centre.

The organisational changes were reflected in the adoption of a revised Frontex Internal Structure and Rules of Procedure (FISRoP), which established transparent working procedures and provided an internal framework for sound administration and well-functioning of the Agency.

Over 2021 the Agency significantly strengthened the framework for the protection of fundamental rights in its activities. The Management Board appointed a new Fundamental Rights Officer, Mr Jonas Grimheden, and adopted special rules to guarantee the independence of the Fundamental Rights Officer and his staff. The Management Board also adopted a new Fundamental Rights Strategy and an Action Plan for its implementation. In 2021 the Agency recruited 20 Fundamental Rights monitors, who starting from August 2021 have been monitoring and providing advice on the protection of fundamental rights in Frontex operational activities.

A significant challenge that arose this year was the increase of the use of irregular migration as an element of hybrid threats against Member States and the European Union. In order to address this, in July 2021 Frontex in cooperation with Lithuanian authorities launched a rapid border intervention at the border between Lithuania and Belarus. Within this operation Frontex provided more than 100 standing corps officers and dozens of patrol cars to deal with the crisis created by Belarus at the external border. Frontex was also able to provide assistance after the outbreak of the conflict in Afghanistan, in particular through deployments at the Tbilisi airport to support evacuation operations from Kabul to EU Member States in cooperation with Georgian authorities.

Over 2021 the Agency continued to work with the Management Board Working Group on Fundamental Rights and Legal Operational Aspects of Operations in the Aegean Sea to clarify allegations concerning fundamental rights violations. The Agency also cooperated with the fact-finding inquiry conducted by the European Parliament's LIBE Committee Frontex Scrutiny Working Group. The Executive Director and the Chairperson of the Management Board participated to several meetings of the Frontex Scrutiny Working Group in order to provide information and clarifications to MEPs. At the end of the inquiries of these working groups, which did not find conclusive evidence that Frontex was involved in fundamental rights violations, the Agency drew an action plan for the implementation of their recommendations. Updates on the status of implementation of the action plan are provided to the Management Board at each regular meeting. The Agency has followed the same approach with recommendations received over the last year by the European Ombudsman and the European Court of Auditors.

Cooperation with the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors continued, and their valuable observations and recommendations were considered and implemented, albeit with delays in some areas. These areas will be treated with priority in 2022 to ensure the

Agency's compliance with the recommendations received. At the end of 2021 in total 16 recommendations were in the implementation phase, 4 of which related to the new Audit on governance (2021) and still pending within the deadline. 12 recommendations were in the implementation phase, with no critical recommendations, and with 9 very important recommendations that have the status 'pending' under audits on contract management (2019), IT governance and project management (2019), HR planning, allocation and recruitment (2020), HR Management (2015). Implementation of these recommendations is a crucial step towards the improvement of the efficiency of key processes within the Agency, and as such must be prioritised.

The initially adopted budget of EUR 543.5 million was amended twice during the year, resulting in the final budget of EUR 535.2 million. The budget implementation was still heavily impacted by COVID-19 restrictions which did not ease throughout 2021. However, although the percentages of budgetary implementation worsened, the overall volume of budget implementation at the level of commitments grew considerably, indicating the fact that despite environmental difficulties the Agency keeps on progressing in this area. The total value of procurement procedures processed by Frontex in 2021 amounted to a remarkable figure of EUR 406.9 million.

2021 was demanding for the human resources service. Frontex grew from 1 234 at the beginning of the year to reach the overall number of 1 554 posts filled (temporary agents, contract agents and seconded national experts) at the end of the year. Compared to December 2019 when the staffing numbers reached 749, the Agency has doubled its size during the last 24 months.

Part III – Assessment of effectiveness of internal control systems

The internal control is a process that helps an organisation to achieve its objectives and sustain operational and financial performance, respecting rules and regulations. It supports sound decision-making, taking into account risks to the achievement of objectives and reducing them to acceptable levels through cost-effective controls. Internal control applies to all activities, irrespective of whether they are financial or non-financial.

Following the expanded mandate and responsibilities of Frontex under the Regulation as well as the introduction of changes to the European Commission's internal control framework in April 2017, the Frontex internal control framework (ICF) was updated accordingly ⁽²⁸⁾ in order to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of the five objectives:

1. effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations;
2. reliability of reporting;
3. safeguarding of assets and information;
4. prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities, and
5. adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments concerned.

To appropriately and effectively address its objectives, Frontex follows a risk-based approach. This approach enables the Agency to act according to its strategic directions ensured by internal control processes and mechanisms that provide the Executive Director with reasonable assurance that Frontex delivers effectively even in cases where business continuity measures are activated.

The current ICF defines five major components that underpin the framework's structure and support the Agency in its efforts to achieve its objectives, namely: (1) control environment, (2) risk assessment, (3) control activities, (4) information and communication, and (5) monitoring activities. These five components are incorporated and must be present and effective at all levels of the Agency, in order for the internal control over Frontex's operations to be considered effective.

Each of the five components consists of several principles (17 in total). This structure facilitated the implementation of the ICF during 2021 and served as a guidance for the management when assessing whether each of the above-mentioned components is present and functioning effectively and in harmony. A holistic approach of assessing the framework from 17 perspectives contributes to providing a reasonable assurance that the Agency's objectives are met, as they specify the actions required for effective internal control.

The Executive Director was mandated to implement the framework, and to conduct an overall assessment of the presence and functioning of all internal control components at least annually (in the context of the preparation of the consolidated annual activity report), in order to:

- establish and/or streamline the processes, structures and functions to accommodate changes resulting from the revision of the Frontex internal control framework, and in particular the processes of risk management, control, planning and evaluating, reporting, and communicating;
- ensure the adequate resources for an efficient and consistent implementation, and effective assessment of the internal control system;

⁽²⁸⁾ Frontex internal control framework was adopted by the Management Board on 22 November 2017.

- with the support of the Inspection and Control Office, to take appropriate actions to establish and manage the revised internal control framework; by performing the internal control coordinator function the Office shall facilitate the process and support the managers in defining the baselines and targets as regards internal control, taking into account their specificities and risks, and to improve awareness and understanding of the internal control framework by all staff, in particular through training, information and support activities.

3.1. Effectiveness of the internal control system

Principle 16 of the Internal Control Framework states that 'The Agency selects, develops, and performs ongoing and/or separate assessments to ascertain whether the components of internal control are present and functioning'.

The following five components of the ICF work together to establish the foundation for sound internal control within Frontex:

1. **Control environment** – directed leadership, shared values and a culture that emphasises accountability for control.
2. **Risk assessment** – the various risks facing the company are identified and assessed routinely at all levels and within all functions in the organisation.
3. **Control activities** – control activities and other mechanisms are proactively designed to address and mitigate the significant risks.
4. **Information and communication** – information critical to identifying risks and meeting business objectives is communicated through established channels across the organisation.
5. **Monitoring activities** – the entire system of internal control is monitored continuously, and problems are addressed timely.

The Authorising Officer performed the required assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal control system, based on the Frontex Internal Control Framework. A number of surveys, reports, audit results, non-compliances, complaints, risks, opportunities, *ex post* evaluations and other sources of information were analysed to draw conclusions.

Description of the ICS assessment exercise. The exercise has been performed according to the following steps:

Figure 1. Process of the ICS assessment exercise.



Internal control indicators. To measure the performance of the separate internal control characteristics and principles in general, soft and hard indicators are established. The list of indicators has been selected by choosing the most relevant from the list made available by DG BUDG.

Self-assessment survey. **Soft indicators** are being measured via a self-assessment survey, and these are the indicators showing a perception, hence are subjective in character. The internal control self-assessment survey was initiated on 22 December 2021. The managers were invited to assess statements (control indicators) related to different control characteristics or principles and to show their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements (on a scale from 5 – fully agree to 1 – fully disagree). The target set was to reach a level of 85 % agreement with the statements. The assessment results have been calculated by scoring from 0 (characteristic is not effective at all) to 3 (very effective), taking into

consideration the percentage of agreements with the survey statements accordingly: 0 < 25 %/1 – 50 % < 25 %/2 – 85 % < 50 %/3 > 85 %.

Hard indicators are measured based on facts. The majority of hard indicators are measured via desk review and are related to an assessment of appropriate control documentation or activity. Such indicators answer closed questions (yes/no). The scoring is given accordingly: 0 – not all, 1 – started, 2 – in progress, 3 – yes.

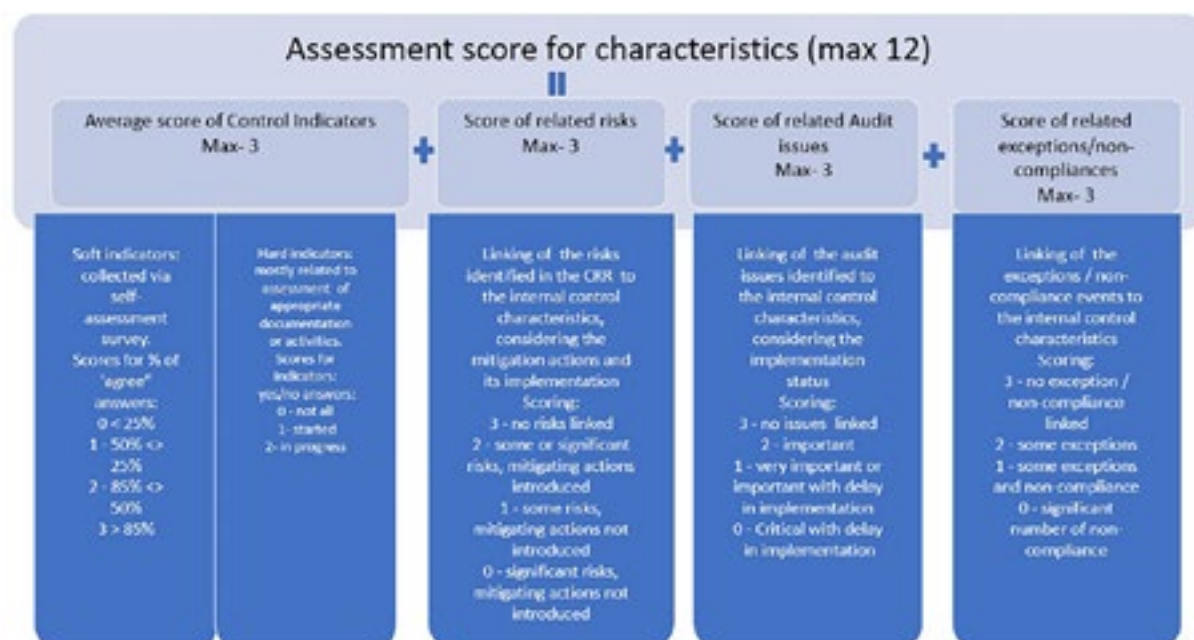
The output of the internal control indicators' assessment is a **score given to a characteristic**. If a characteristic has more than one indicator, the final score was calculated by creating an average of all indicators. The maximum score given is 3 – no risks linked, followed by 2 – some or significant risks, mitigating actions introduced, 1 – some risks, mitigating actions not introduced and 0 – significant risks, mitigating actions not introduced.

Assessment of characteristics taking into consideration audit issues (recommendations). The status of ECA and IAS observations and recommendations has been analysed, linking issues identified with the internal control characteristics. The final score was given accordingly: 3 – no issues linked, 2 – important, 1 – very important or important with delay in implementation and 0 – critical with delay in implementation.

Assessment of characteristics and principles taking into consideration the report on exceptions and non-compliance events. The exceptions and non-compliance events were linked with the internal control characteristics. The final score was given accordingly: 3 – no exception/non-compliance linked, 2 – some exceptions, 1 – some exceptions and non-compliance, 0 – significant number of non-compliance and exceptions.

After all the steps listed above had been finalised, the results were compiled and the final score for each characteristic was calculated as a sum of all 4 scores, having the maximum score of 12 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Assessment score for characteristics.



The severity of identified deficiencies in relation to the characteristics is according to the scale:

- **Minor deficiency** – it has a minor impact on the presence and/or functioning of the principle. The principle is in place and functions well, if only minor improvements are needed, when at least 1 of 4 pillars contributing to the final assessment are having the highest score 3, meaning the total score is ≥ 9 .
- **Moderate deficiency** – it has a moderate impact on the presence and/or functioning of the principle. With such a deficiency, the principle is in place and functions, but some improvements are needed, when the total score is from 6 to 8.
- **Major deficiency** – it has a significant impact on the presence and/or functioning of the principle, making the principle partially effective. With such a deficiency, the principle is partially in place and/or is partially functioning; substantial improvements are needed, when are scored at least 1, meaning the total score is from 4 to less than 6.
- **Critical deficiency** – it has a fundamental impact on the presence and/or functioning of the principle and the principle is not effective. With such a deficiency, the principle is not in place and/or essentially does not function as intended, when is scored 0, meaning the total scope for all 4 pillars is less than 4.

Description of the defined conclusions on presence and functioning of the principles

- **Category 1.** The principle is present and functioning well, only minor improvements are needed. Only minor deficiencies are identified, or one moderate deficiency is identified, however, the average score is more than 10.
- **Category 2.** The principle is present and functioning, but some improvements are needed. Minor or moderate deficiencies are identified, or one major deficiency is identified, however, the average score is more than 8 but less than 10.
- **Category 3.** The principle is partially present and functioning, major improvements are needed. When a major deficiency or combination of moderate deficiencies exists – the principle is partially effective, the average score is more than 6 but less than 8.
- **Category 4.** The principle is not present and functioning. The existence of a critical internal control deficiency or combination of several major deficiencies, combined with the average score of the principles less than 6, determines that the principle in general is not effective. A critical/major deficiency in one principle cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level by the effectiveness of other principles.

ICS 2021 assessment results

I Control environment – the component is partially present and functioning, some improvements needed.

Out of the five principles of the component, four are assigned to category 2, meaning the principle is functioning, however some improvements are needed, and one is assigned to category 1 – only minor improvements are needed.

The assessment showed **no deficiencies** are identified in the domain of:

- planning;
- annual activity reporting and declaration of assurance;
- establishing of reporting lines.

Some improvements are needed in the areas of:

- compliance with Fundamental Rights (IAS recommendation in the report on governance from January 2022);
- overseeing of the internal control systems by the managers within their function at division/unit level;
- comprehensiveness of the management structures (IAS recommendations – audit on IT Governance and Project Management);

- delegation of authority and responsibility and segregation of duties (IAS recommendation in the domain of decision-making and coordination – IAS report on Governance January 2022);
- competence framework (IAS Audit 2019 Human resources planning, allocation and recruitment);
- professional development (IAS Audit 2019 Human resources planning, allocation and recruitment);
- succession planning and deputising arrangements (IAS Audit 2019 Human resources planning, allocation and recruitment).

A major deficiency is identified in relation to Principle 5: Agency holds individuals accountable for their internal control responsibilities in the pursuit of objectives.

Table 22. Control environment.

Characteristics/Principles	Final Score	Deficiency/Category
1. Demonstrates a commitment to integrity and ethical values.	9.72	Category 2
1.1. Tone of the top.	11.33	Minor
1.2 Standards of conduct.	10.33	Minor
1.3. Alignment with standards:	7.50	Moderate
2. Internal Control function demonstrates independence from management and exercises oversight of the development and performance of internal control.	10.50	Category 1
2.1 Internal control function.	10.00	Minor
2.2. Each manager oversees the internal control systems within his/her division/unit/function.	8.00	Moderate
2.3. The Planning and Evaluation.	12.00	No deficiencies
2.4. The Annual Activity and declaration of assurance.	12.00	No deficiencies
3. Management establishes, with political oversight, structures, reporting lines, and appropriate authorities and responsibilities in the pursuit of objectives.	9.53	Category 2
3.1. Management structures are comprehensive.	8.33	Moderate
3.2. Authorities and responsibilities.	8.25	Moderate
3.3. Reporting lines.	12.00	No deficiencies
4. Demonstrates a commitment to attract, develop, and retain competent individuals in alignment with objectives.	7.50	Category 2
4.1. Competence framework.	7.33	Moderate
4.2. Professional development.	7.00	Moderate
4.3. Mobility.	9.00	Minor
4.4. Succession planning and deputising arrangements.	6.67	Moderate
5. Holds individuals accountable for their internal control responsibilities in the pursuit of objectives.	8.67	Category 2
5.1. Enforcing accountability.	4.00	Major
5.2. Staff appraisal.	11.00	Minor
5.3. Staff promotion.	11.00	Minor

II Risk assessment – the component is present and functioning, only minor improvements are needed.

Improvements are needed with respect to:

- non-financial reporting objectives;
- risk identification at all organisational levels;
- risk of fraud to be considered during the risk identification and assessment;
- allocation of resources based on the objectives (project resource management – IAS audit on IT Governance and Project Management).

Table 23. Risk assessment.

Characteristics/Principles	Final Score	Deficiency/Category
6. Specifies objectives with sufficient clarity to enable the identification and assessment of risks relating to objectives.	10.19	Category 1
6.1. Mission.	11.50	Minor
6.2. Objectives are set at every level.	11.00	Minor
6.3. Objectives are set for the most significant activities.	11.00	Minor
6.4. Objectives form the basis for committing resources.	9.00	Minor
6.5. Financial reporting objectives.	11.00	Minor
6.6. Non-financial reporting objectives.	8.00	Moderate
6.7. Risk tolerance and materiality.	10.00	Minor
6.8. Monitoring.	10.00	Minor
7. Identifies risks to the achievement of its objectives across the organisation and analyses risks as a basis for determining how the risks should be managed.	10.33	Category 1
7.1. Risk identification.	8.00	Moderate
7.2. Risk assessment.	11.00	Minor
7.3. Risk identification and risk assessment are integrated into the annual activity planning.	12.00	Minor
8. Considers the potential for fraud in assessing risks to the achievement of objectives.	9.29	Category 2
8.1 Risk of fraud.	7.25	Moderate
8.2 Anti-fraud strategy.	11.33	Minor
9. Identifies and assesses changes that could significantly impact the internal control system.	10.00	Category 1
9.1. Assess changes.	10.00	Minor

III Control activity – the component is partially present, functioning and major improvements are needed.

The assessment of this component has identified major deficiencies in relation to principle 10 – Selects and develops control activities that contribute to the mitigation of risks to the achievement of objectives to acceptable levels:

- high amount of non-compliance events in the domain of contract and grants management;
- delay in implementation of audit's recommendations: 12 recommendations from IAS audit on contract management, IT governance and project management; HR management and planning and allocation;
- ECA observations related to different control activities;
- self-assessment survey results, which showed that only 47 % of managers agree that 'the key controls in place are functioning as intended' and 'the controls/supervisory activities are sufficiently focused on high-risk areas';
- policy on sensitive posts pending adoption.

Table 24. Control activity.

Characteristics/Principles	Final Score	Deficiency/Category
10. Selects and develops control activities that contribute to the mitigation of risks to the achievement of objectives to acceptable levels.	7.30	Category 3
10.1 Control activities are performed to mitigate the identified risks and are cost-effective.	4.50	Major
10.2 Control activities are integrated in a control strategy.	9.00	Minor
10.3 Segregation of duties.	9.00	Minor
10.4 Business continuity plans based on a business impact	10.00	Minor
10.5 Sensitive positions are identified.	4.00	Major
11. Selects and develops general control activities over technology to support the achievement of objectives.	7.58	Category 2
11.1 Control over technology.	6.67	Moderate
11.2 Security of IT systems.	8.50	Moderate
12. Deploys control activities through corporate policies that establish what is expected and in procedures that put policies into action.	9.61	Category 2
12.1 Appropriate control procedures ensure that objectives are achieved.	7.33	Moderate
12.2. Exceptions and Non-Compliance reporting.	11.50	Minor
12.3 The impact assessment and evaluation.	10.00	Minor

IV Information and Communication – the component is partially present and functioning, some improvements are needed.

Out of three related Principles, two Principles are assigned to Category 1 and one to Category 2. A moderate deficiency is identified in relation to external communication, 15 – Communicates with external parties about matters affecting the functioning of internal control. This is due to:

- No external communication and stakeholders' management policy in place.
- High level risk related to stakeholders' management identified in the Corporate Risk Register (CRR).
- Delay in implementation of the IAS very important recommendation in the domain of IT security.

Table 25. Information and communication.

Characteristics/Principles	Final Score	Deficiency/Category
13. Obtains or generates and uses relevant quality information to support the functioning of internal control.	10.33	Category 1
13.1 Information and document management.	10.33	Minor
14. Internally communicates information, including objectives and responsibilities for internal control, necessary to support the functioning of internal control.	10.00	Category 1
14.1 Internal communication.	9.00	Minor
14.2 Separate communication lines are in place	11.00	Minor
15. Communicates with external parties about matters affecting the functioning of internal control.	8.25	Category 2
15.1 External communication.	6.50	Moderate
15.2 Communication on internal control.	11.00	Minor

V Monitoring activities – the component is present and functioning.

Both principles of this component are assigned to category 1, meaning the principles are present and functioning well, only minor improvements are needed.

Table 26. Monitoring activities.

Characteristics/Principles	Final Score	Deficiency/Category
16. Selects, develops, and performs ongoing and/or separate assessments to ascertain whether the components of internal control are present and functioning.	10.92	Category 1
16.1 Continuous and specific assessments.	9.75	Minor
16.2. Sufficient knowledge and information.	11.00	Minor
16.3. Risk-based and periodical assessments.	12.00	Minor
17. Assesses and communicates internal control deficiencies in a timely manner to those parties responsible for taking corrective action.	10.25	Category 1
17.1 Deficiencies.	11.50	Minor
17.2. Remedial action.	9.00	Minor

Conclusions on the functioning of the Internal Control System (ICS): the system of internal controls was partially effective in 2021.

- Two components are present and functioning – risk assessment and monitoring activities.
- Two components are partially present and functioning and requiring some improvements– control environment and information and communication.
- One component is partially present and functioning and requiring major improvements – control activity.

Implementation of improvement action plan in 2021

In the ICS assessment for 2020, 15 improvement actions have been proposed to strengthen the controls in the areas where control deficiencies have been identified. In the course of 2021, 7 actions have been implemented, 4 actions require improvement on an ongoing basis, and 4 with defined outcome are in progress, however, their implementation was not completed during 2021.

Actions implemented:

- Action 4. Improvements in alignment of the up-to-date mission statements across all hierarchical levels and clarity of objectives in the revised FISRoP.
- Action 5. The improvements in the risks identification and assessment process were implemented following the Risk Management Manual guidelines.
- Action 6. The risk assessment 2022 was done following the new guidelines.
- Action 7. The accountability for control on the implementation of risks mitigation actions is enhanced via dedicated ED mission letter sent to the responsible managers.
- Action 8. The responsibility on control functions is clearly identified for the procurement, financial and HR procedures. New FISRoP was adopted to reflect the structural changes and ensure the correct division of the responsibilities between staff.
- Action 10. Business Continuity Policy was adopted by the ED Decision No 2022/27 on 3 February 2022.
- Activity 15. Enhanced awareness among managers on the internal control system in general – the risk management and internal control related topics (such as report on exception and non-compliance events, report on implementation of audits recommendations, results of self-assessment survey etc.) are included into the agenda of the Directors' Briefing.

Actions with defined outcome that are in progress but not implemented yet:

- Action 11. To adopt and implement a sensitive posts policy (final stage).
- Action 12. To adopt and implement a corporate information management strategy.
- Action 13. To adopt and implement an internal communication policy.
- Action 14. To adopt and implement an external communication policy, including stakeholders' management.

Actions requiring improvement on an ongoing basis, for some of them improvements were implemented in 2021 and they will be ongoing in 2022:

- Action 1. Improvement in the controls in the domain of contract management activity.
- Action 2. To enforce accountability of individuals and entrusted entities for the performance of internal control responsibilities. To properly address cases of underperformance.
- Action 3. Timely implementation of the IAS recommendations issued in regard to the strengthening of the internal control system supporting staff planning and allocation, and the management of selection and recruitment processes.
- Action 9. The control procedures have to ensure that the staff member(s) put in charge to perform the control activities in a timely manner and with due diligence, taking corrective action where needed.

Improvement action plan 2022**Table 27. Improvement action plan 2022.**

No	Improvement recommendations	Responsible	Status /DL
1	Continuously improve the control activities ensuring those are performed to mitigate the identified risks. Special attention to be made to improve the controls in the domain of contract management, by implementation without further delay the IAS recommendations (Characteristic 10.1).	All entities ICO	Ongoing 2022
2	To enhance accountability of individuals and entrusted entities for the performance of internal control responsibilities and for the implementation of corrective actions as necessary. To properly address cases of underperformance (Characteristic 5.1). Internal framework to assess, monitor and minimise underperformance, including guidelines defining what is underperformance and how manager should act if the team member is underperforming.	All entities GSC/HR and ICO	Ongoing, will continue in 2022

No	Improvement recommendations	Responsible	Status /DL
3	To ensure the timely implementation of the IAS recommendations issued regarding the strengthening of the internal control system supporting staff planning and allocation, and the management of selection and recruitment processes (Characteristic 12.1).	GSC/HR	Ongoing, will continue in 2022
4	The control procedures must ensure that the staff member(s) put in charge to perform the control activities in a timely manner and with due diligence, taking corrective action where needed (Characteristic 12.1): Further improvements in <i>ex ante</i> and <i>ex post</i> controls, enhance the attention to the implementation of improvement actions.	All entities/ ICO	Ongoing, will continue in 2022
5	To adopt and implement a sensitive posts policy (Characteristic 10.5).	ICO	Ongoing, will continue in 2022.
6	To adopt and implement a corporate information management strategy.	SAM	Ongoing, will continue in 2022.
7	To adopt and implement an internal communication policy.	GSC/MPR	Ongoing, will continue in 2022
8	To adopt and implement an external communication policy, including stakeholders' management.	GSC/EAU IEC	Ongoing, will continue in 2022

3.2. Conclusions of assessment of internal control systems

The conclusions were elaborated based on the following dedicated reports:

- regular internal control activities, including the monitoring and periodical update of Frontex corporate risk register, analysis of the register of exceptions and non-compliance events (quarterly reports), monitoring of implementation of improvement actions, the annual assessment of the internal control system;
- the opinion of the internal auditor (IAS) as expressed in the audit reports and in its assessment of the implementation of post audit recommendations;
- the opinion and observations of the external auditor of Frontex (European Court of Auditors) as well as based on Frontex actions proposed in response to the observations and recommendations received;
- other issues identified ad-hoc during meetings at strategic and tactical levels as part of the ongoing assessment of the internal control system.

These reports result from a systematic analysis of the available evidence. This approach should allow to provide 'reasonable assurance' so as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported.

The control results and other elements that support management's assurance are detailed in sections 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11 and 3.1 of this consolidated annual activity report 2021 as follows: audit observations and recommendations, follow-up on recommendations from audits, investigations and observations from the discharge authority, the register of exceptions and the assessment of the effectiveness of the internal control system.

All directors of divisions, and where appropriate, their subordinated staff were requested to issue individual declarations of assurance which were presented to the Executive Director as an input and supporting evidence for him to prepare his own declaration of assurance as the Agency's Authorising Officer.

The Authorising Officer performed the required assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal control system, based on Frontex's Internal Control Framework.

Compliance and effectiveness of Internal Control Standards

Conclusions as to the overall appreciation of the effectiveness of the internal control system: Frontex has an internal control system (ICS) in place which specifies the necessary requirements, actions and expectations in order to build an effective system of internal control that can provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of Frontex objectives.

The system also includes a number of internal procedures, for example, guidance on conflicts of interests, a code of good administrative behaviour, *ex ante* and *ex post* control policies and procedures and the procurement procedures. New internal procedures are introduced when necessary and existing procedures are revised at regular intervals.

In accordance with the outcome of the annual risk assessment exercise and in view of the existence of overdue audit recommendations, the Agency can conclude that its internal control system, although deemed as overall effective, still requires some improvements as corroborated by the internal control assessment summarised in section 3.1 of this consolidated annual activity report 2021. In view of that, the Agency will continue during 2022 addressing these shortfalls.

The management of the Agency acknowledges the importance of setting the tone at the top for this improvement and expresses its commitment to conclude a major review of the process for the following-up on the implementation of action plans to address audit recommendations received. The Agency envisions gathering objective evidence for a major improvement in this regard within the year 2022 whereby only on duly justified cases an audit recommendation could be overdue by less than six months.

3.3. Statement of the Head of Inspection and Control Office

I, the undersigned, manager in charge of risk management and internal control within Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, in my capacity as manager in charge of risk management and internal control, I declare that in accordance with Frontex's Internal Control Framework, I have reported my advice and recommendations on the overall state of internal control in the Agency to the Executive Director.

I hereby certify that the information provided in the present Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2021 and in its annexes is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate, reliable and complete.

Place: Warsaw, date 19/05/2022

..... (signature)

Michael Juritsch

Part IV – Management assurance

4.1. Review of the elements supporting assurance

Frontex conducts its operations in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, striving to deliver in line with the expected high level of professional and ethical standards while upholding EU values and full respect to fundamental rights.

The Agency's Internal Control Framework, based on the equivalent standards laid down by the European Commission and international best practice, aimed to ensure the achievement of policy and operational objectives. Further to this, Frontex Financial Regulation requires that the organisational structure and the internal control systems are set up in accordance with these principles.

In light of the measures in place to ensure legality and regularity, in particular: the risk self-assessment carried out; *ex ante* verification; the *ex post* evaluations, the systematic registration and follow-up of exceptions; the system for the delegation of the powers of the authorising officer embedded in the Agency's financial management system and the opinions expressed in the final reports by internal and external auditors; the results of the self-assessment on the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal control system carried out at Divisional level, it can be concluded that the Agency's internal control system is appropriate and provides reasonable assurance on the implementation of the five components included in the Internal Control Framework as present and functioning although some improvements were identified for implementation during 2022.

This approach provides sufficient guarantees of the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in exhaustive coverage of the budget delegated to the Executive Director.

4.2. Reservations

Based on the internal control assessment process, the Directors of Divisions who were in charge of risk management and internal control of the activities performed by the Division under their managerial remit, confirmed that the state of internal control in their division during 2021 was duly reported, and the information provided and represented in Part 3.1 of the report is to the best of their knowledge, accurate and complete.

Following these statements, and the outcome of the overall internal control assessment process for year 2021, it can be concluded that the internal control standards are present and functioning effectively. However, as described above, there are areas where improvements are needed. This is especially important given that there will be a continued increase in both financial and human resources envisioned in the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027. The significant changes in the mandate of the Agency will further impact on Frontex's activities, the internal organisation and the way it interacts with the Member States and other external stakeholders. It is anticipated that these changes will put a major strain on the internal control system, thus placing the revised Internal Control Framework in focus.

The information reported above stems from the results of internal control assessment processes, audits and monitoring and is contained in the reports listed above. This approach provides sufficient guarantees on the completeness and reliability of the information reported and provides a comprehensive coverage of Frontex's budget.

Reviewing the elements supporting the assurance as described and the evidence as presented in this Consolidated Annual Activity Report some areas for improvement were identified. However, they do not rise to the level of 'reservations'.

Part V – Declaration of assurance

I, the undersigned, Deputy Executive Director for Standing Corps Management, deputising as of 29 April 2022 for the Executive Director of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, following resignation of the former Executive Director on 28 April 2022 which Management Board accepted with immediate effect,

In my capacity as authorising officer,

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view.

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement, to the best of my knowledge, considering the declaration by Mr Fabrice Leggeri, who was the Executive Director in the period covered by this annual activity report, included in Annex 12, and on other information at my disposal, such as the work of the Internal Audit Service and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the Agency.

However, the following reservations should be noted regarding the statements in the declaration by Mr Fabrice Leggeri, who was the Executive Director in the period covered by this annual activity report, included in Annex 12:

- The Deployment Management Division contributed to this annual activity report, and this contribution was validated by the former Director of the Division at the time of the drafting of the report, as per the usual practice.
- I signed the assurance for former Executive Director in 2022 as Deputy Executive Director – the post I took up on 16 November 2021. It, however, provides my assurance for the areas of my responsibility in 2021, i.e. as Director of Capacity Building Division until 15 November 2021 and as Deputy Executive Director for Standing Corps Management from 16 November 2021.
- The two issues flagged by the former Executive Director, namely the suspected overpricing activities by an external contractor of the Agency and training activities, were reported to the competent authorities in accordance with the applicable legal framework. Frontex cooperates fully with the competent authorities.
- The training activities flagged by the former Executive Director as well as the signature of the legal and financial commitment for these activities took place in 2022 and are not covered by this annual activity report with reservation that the Call for applications, designation of the Evaluation Committee and the Award Decision were signed by the former Executive Director in 2021.
- Frontex will continue its efforts to expose all cases of alleged fraud or mismanagement, in cooperation with the competent authorities and in the spirit of transparency and compliance.

Warsaw, date 15 June 2022

(signature)

Aija Kalnaja

Deputy Executive Director for Standing Corps Management

Deputising for the Executive Director

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