

An integrated approach to combat document and identity fraud

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The seventh Frontex Annual Plenary Meeting of the High-Level Round Table and Expert Group on Document Control took place between 27 and 29 February.

Document and identity frauds are instrumental for a broad range of criminal activities. The ability to assess the identity of a document bearer and the validity of their documents quickly and effectively is essential in facilitating bona fide travellers while preventing cross-border crimes. In 2023 alone, Member States and Schengen Associated Countries reported the detection at the EU's external borders of 17,424 fraudsters using or possessing 22,395 fraudulent documents.

In order to address the issue, the Frontex Centre of Excellence for Combatting Document Fraud (CED) invited managers and document experts from Member States, Canada and the Western Balkans as well as representatives from the European Commission, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Interpol, as well as two EU agencies: CEPOL and Europol, in addition to industries dealing with document security features or document checking equipment.

The event underlined the need for collaboration along the identity chain, both at the national and international level. The goal is to create common standards to govern the performance of document and identity checking for everyone working in the field within the Schengen area and beyond, involving law enforcement institutions, national law enforcement managers and experts, international organisations.

Cooperation on document and identity checks between Frontex and its partners is already bringing its fruits. One is the Frontex - Interpol Electronic Document Library System (FIELDs), a joint 'from border guards to border guards' initiative aimed at supporting first-line officers in their performance of document examination. Providing structured and indexed visual references to documents and related security features, FIELDs can be integrated into existing national systems to speed up document examinations. Representatives from France, where FIELDs was piloted in 2022 at the Lyon airport and later extended to all French crossing points, and from Croatia, where FIELDs is currently being integrated, shared their experience in this regard.



“To combat of documents forgery and impostors, the only way is through an integrated approach”, said Claudio Kavrecic, head of Frontex CED. “The effective protection of the Schengen area requires all involved to discuss and agree on how to establish harmonised procedures and processes, provide access to databases and information and ensure that all those in charge of document an identity checking are able to perform at the same level”.

Given the increasingly important role of technology in document and identity control, the event concluded with an Industry Day. Organised in cooperation with the Frontex Research and Innovation Unit, it gave the opportunity to all attendees to learn about the latest innovative solutions showcased by 13 companies operating in the field of document protection, issuance and inspection technologies.