

The logo for Frontex, featuring the word "FRONT" in a bold, sans-serif font, followed by a stylized icon of three wavy lines representing a border or water, and then the letter "X" in the same font.

FRONTX

A background image showing several hands of different skin tones stacked together in a supportive gesture, all under a blue color filter. The hands are positioned in the upper half of the image, with fingers interlaced or resting on top of each other.

Cooperation between Frontex and third countries in 2025

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of three parallel, slanted lines that transition from a dark blue to a lighter blue color.

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Cooperation between Frontex and third countries in 2025



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Foreword

International cooperation is an integral part of the Frontex mandate, contributing to the broader task of ensuring safe and well-functioning external borders of the EU. I am pleased to share with you this account of our engagement with third countries in 2025, a year which marked the Agency's 20th anniversary. During this year, Frontex advanced its activities in the external dimension by supporting Member States at the external borders and on returns, adapting quickly as situations evolved, strengthening its partnerships in the EU's neighbourhood and across the key migratory routes to the EU. From hybrid threats to geopolitical tensions, the environment in which we operate is increasingly complex, requiring the Agency to adapt its strategies and working methods. This report shows some of the milestones that we reached on a longer-term path building sustainable operational partnerships.

In 2025, Frontex focused its engagements in the external dimension on several regions, in line with the priorities endorsed by the Management Board as part of the Agency's International Cooperation Strategy, continuously readjusting prioritisation based on migratory flows and emerging operational needs, the EU's external action policy, fundamental rights, the security situation and other factors.

The launch of the fully fledged Joint Operation Bosnia and Herzegovina in November was among our operational highlights last year. It is now the sixth joint operation of this kind in the EU's neighbourhood, after Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Moldova and North Macedonia, where such operations continued for yet another year, confirming that EU Status Agreements and Frontex joint operations with executive powers in third countries have been a successful innovation to the Agency's mandate. Besides these operations, Frontex also maintained its operational footprint through so-called coordinated operational activities, with Standing Corps officers deployed as observers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (until November), as well as in Georgia and Kosovo*.

With the aim to develop effective partnerships in response to migratory pressures across the Mediterranean and the Aegean, the Agency took gradual but firm steps to strengthen cooperation with key interlocutors in Africa and the Middle East. Within this context, Frontex



invested into closer relations with Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan. Cooperation with countries in West Africa, particularly Cabo Verde, Senegal, Mauritania, The Gambia and Nigeria, was also among priorities for Frontex, particularly in view of the volatile migratory trends in the Atlantic Route towards the Canary Islands.

Among our top priorities, Frontex also focused on return, widening the outreach of our return operations to 127 third countries and over 63,000 people returned. Pre-return activities and an ever-growing portfolio of post-return and reintegration activities continued to complement these efforts.

Recognising the sensitive nature of our work, the Agency remained vigilant to carry out our activities in the spirit of transparency, accountability and the highest standards of fundamental rights. The Fundamental Rights Office continued to monitor the fundamental rights compliance of Frontex's operational activities in third countries and provided valuable advice in that regard.

Hans Leijtens
Executive Director

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

1. Overview and strategic assessment of cooperation frameworks

In 2025, Frontex actively engaged in structured dialogue and cooperation with key countries of origin and transit along key migratory routes to the EU, building on the priorities set in the International Cooperation Strategy. Our engagements were closely aligned with the EU's external action and carefully calibrated to reflect changing geopolitical circumstances as well as operational needs and opportunities, working towards more effective border management and return. The Agency's cooperation focused on strengthening operational partnerships in the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova, and investing

into developing trust and mutual understanding in the Southern Neighbourhood, West Africa and the Silk Route region.

The network of Frontex Liaison Officers (FLOs) in third countries was further developed with the deployment of two new liaison officers, to Pakistan and Morocco. As other FLOs, they have been posted in the Delegations of the European Union in Islamabad and Rabat. With this development, in 2025 the Agency had seven FLOs covering a total of 17 third countries¹.

Pre-accession partners

Among pre-accession partners, milestones were reached via new and strengthened Status Agreements, consolidating Frontex's operational footprint and boosting technical assistance. In the Western Balkans, the Agency expanded its fully fledged operational presence to Bosnia and Herzegovina following the entry into force of the EU Status Agreement, complementing ongoing fully fledged joint operations in Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Moldova.

In November, pre-accession partners hosting Frontex joint operations met with the Agency's Management Board. On the margins of the event, Memoranda of Understanding on Complaints Mechanisms were signed by the Executive Director with three partner countries: Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia.



¹ Türkiye, Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Senegal, The Gambia, Mauritania, Morocco and Pakistan.

Operational engagement in the region was reinforced through two capacity-building projects, funded by the EU Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, addressing migration management and the border security dimension

of IBM. Institutional cooperation with pre-accession partners was further consolidated through dedicated technical meetings, including the Frontex National Focal Points meeting.



Cooperation with Ukraine continued through targeted technical assistance and training on core principles of European Integrated Border Management (IBM) and relevant competences of border officers, preparing for the

launch of a new Commission-funded technical assistance project in 2026.

Working Arrangement negotiations reached an advanced stage with Moldova and Ukraine.



Overview and strategic assessment of cooperation frameworks



Middle East and North Africa

In the Southern Neighbourhood, with countries along the main migratory routes, engagements focused on capacity building and developing mutual trust and dialogue as

prerequisites for enhanced operational cooperation in the mid-term.



Frontex continued the implementation of the EU4BorderSecurity Project, which reached its final year of implementation for phase I and worked to ensure the project's continuity beyond 2025. In this context, Frontex implemented a number of workshops, trainings and capacity building through transfer of light technical equipment, supporting priority partners. At regional level, cooperation with the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC) of the League of Arab States continued within the framework of the Euro-Arab Border Security Dialogue. Workshops on document fraud and risk analysis were carried out in support of these efforts.

West Africa

Considered one of the priority regions for Frontex, cooperation with countries in West Africa has seen an increase in bilateral engagements in 2025, particularly in view of the volatile migratory trends on the Atlantic Route.

At bilateral level, Frontex intensified dialogue with the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior and supported EU re-engagement efforts with Libyan authorities. Technical equipment supporting search and rescue activities was transferred to Lebanon, alongside capacity-building and training activities implemented under the EU4BorderSecurity project.

A major highlight for bilateral relations with Morocco was the deployment of the Frontex Liaison Officer in Rabat in December, marking a new milestone towards closer and more structured cooperation with Moroccan authorities.

Among operational highlights was cooperation with Cabo Verde, which resulted in the launch of aerial surveillance to increase situational awareness over the Atlantic.

Frontex Executive Director Hans Leijten in Cabo Verde for the launch of aerial surveillance to strengthen maritime awareness and save lives at sea, November 2025





Visit of the Director General of the Gambian Immigration Department at Frontex HQ, September 2025

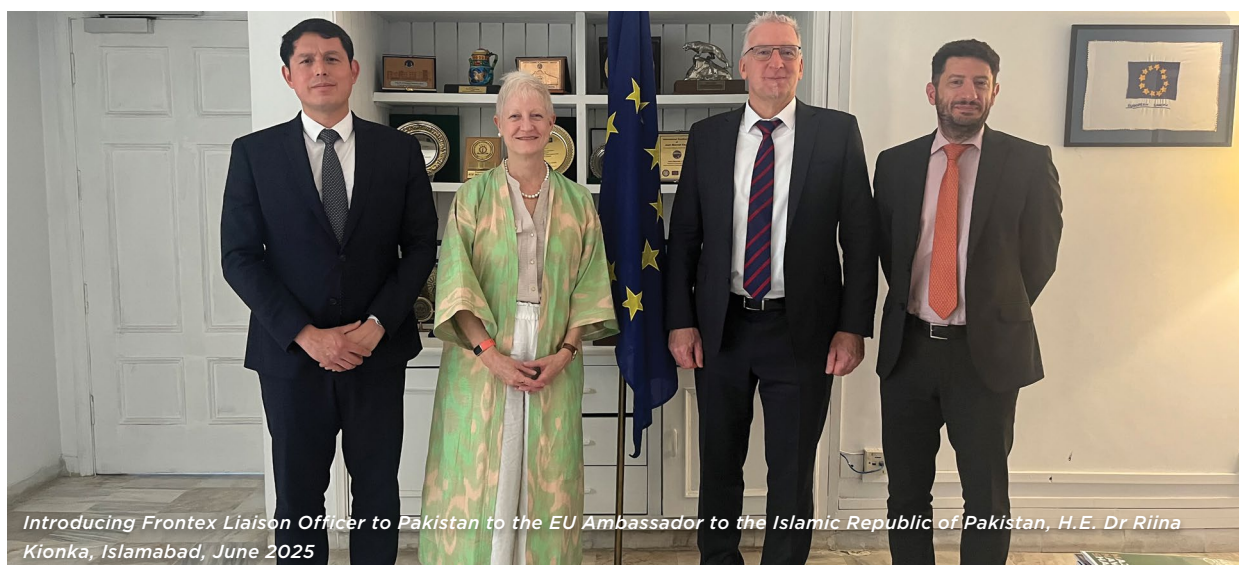
Various visits and meetings between Frontex and West African countries to strengthen structured dialogue and capacity building activities further reinforced our efforts with practical means. For example, at regional level, a

course on Human Rights in Border Management for West African partners was organised in Lisbon in May 2025, bringing together participants from Senegal, Cabo Verde, The Gambia, Mauritania and Nigeria.

Silk Route countries

Frontex also intensified its engagements with Pakistan and Bangladesh, aimed at promoting mutually beneficial exchanges on migrant smuggling, and to facilitate cooperation on return. As a result of several years of bilateral familiarisation and dialogue, in 2025 the Agency deployed its first Frontex Liaison Officer in Pakistan.

Negotiations were launched with Armenia to renew the Working Arrangement concluded in 2012. Concluding a new working arrangement has been included as one of the benchmarks in the country's Schengen Visa Liberalisation Action Plan.



Introducing Frontex Liaison Officer to Pakistan to the EU Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Dr Riina Kionka, Islamabad, June 2025



Technical visit from Armenia, Frontex HQ, 4-5 December 2025

Coordination with EU institutions and the Member States

The Agency acted in a coordinated manner with EU institutions and the Member States, using common leverage and promoting broader interests and values

of the Union, to achieve tangible results in the external dimension.

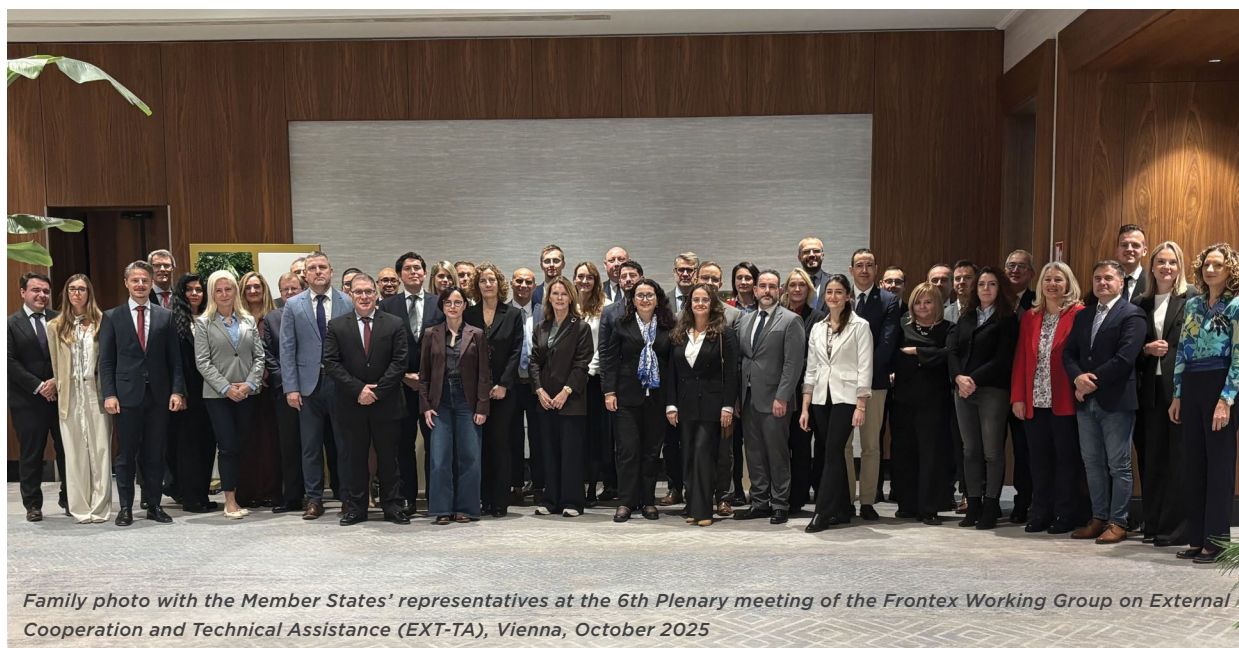


Meeting between DG HOME, Frontex and the Authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the margins of the EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs, Sarajevo, 30 October 2025

Overview and strategic assessment of cooperation frameworks

Representatives of border management authorities and national agencies specialising in international cooperation and implementation of technical assistance projects of EU Member States, Frontex and the European Commission met within the framework of the Frontex Working Group on External Cooperation and Technical Assistance (EXT-TA). During plenary meetings and technical roundtables, participants exchanged views and shared experiences on cooperation with third countries,

including lessons learnt related to technical assistance. Regional consultations/technical roundtables focused on West Africa, the Southern neighbourhood, Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine. The EXT-TA meetings fostered Member States' participation in the discussions and introduced a new co-leadership model for the EXT-TA regional discussions, partnering with Member States. In October 2025, regional meetings were co-chaired by Portugal, Austria and Germany.



Fundamental rights

In engaging with countries outside the EU, Frontex relies on its Fundamental Rights Office (FRO) to advise on implications of cooperation activities and assist in developing mitigating measures. The human rights impact assessments (38 to date) include recommendations for measures to mitigate fundamental rights risks, based on independent analysis and findings from monitoring.

In terms of Frontex's accountability for potential fundamental rights violations, the Agency has two mechanisms for reporting of incidents by operational stakeholders (Serious Incident Reporting) and by persons who believe their rights have been violated (Complaints). In 2025, the FRO exchanged information with third countries which host Frontex operations on a number of incidents of possible violations of fundamental rights. As per established practice, FRO requested feedback on a set of detailed questions from the respective national authorities as part of the investigations. Based on these

inquiries, concerns persisted in relation to collective expulsions of migrants by officers of host third states, in some cases involving violence, as well as robberies and theft of migrant property allegedly by law enforcement officials.

To ensure systemic follow up on complaints related to situations in partner countries, the FRO worked with independent human rights monitoring bodies. Building on the 2022 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) concluded between the Agency's Fundamental Rights Officer and the Ombuds institutions of Albania, Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro (2023), in 2024 a similar arrangement was negotiated with the Ombudsman of the Republic of North Macedonia and signed in early 2025. These Agreements allowed the parties to exchange information on complaints concerning fundamental rights violations related to Frontex activities in these third countries and extended equally to complaints arising in the context of

return operations. Complementing the above, the Agency also signed two new Memoranda of Understanding on

Complaints Mechanisms, with the Ministries of Interior of North Macedonia and Serbia.



2. Technical and operational cooperation

2.1 Situational awareness and monitoring

2.1.1 Strengthening cooperation in the framework of EUROSUR

The year 2025 saw further advances in the promotion and implementation of EUROSUR, the Agency's framework for the exchange of information and for operational cooperation for situational awareness, in relationships with strategic third countries. Frontex has been gradually expanding external cooperation in EUROSUR under its key instrument provided for this purpose by the EBCG Regulation: specific situational pictures (SSP). Such cooperation can be established either following Status Agreements between the EU and third countries or based on Working Arrangements that third country authorities conclude with Frontex. The overarching goal of this SSP cooperation is to collectively establish and visualise a near-to-real-time situational picture related to irregular migration and cross-border crime. Following the EU Status Agreements, in 2025, two more SSPs, with Serbia

and Bosnia and Herzegovina, were established on top of four already maintained SSPs under the respective Joint Operations (with Moldova, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania) to support operational activities and to allow sharing of information with the host third country authorities.

Within the framework of Working Arrangements negotiations, in 2025 Frontex launched a EUROSUR related process for Cabo Verde, Ukraine, Moldova and The Gambia, and at the time of writing this report, it has been advancing on requirements for anticipated establishment of the relevant SSPs. Integration with the EUROSUR framework has been further discussed for the United Kingdom, on the basis of the Working Arrangement concluded in 2024.

Aiming to ensure safe and coordinated information exchange via SSPs, the Agency invested into the capacities of third countries to establish and manage their EUROSUR coordination centres (ECC) in line with the EUROSUR framework standards and best European integrated border management practices. Capacity building and training were provided by Frontex to already operating ECCs of Moldova and the Western Balkans, and awareness sessions were delivered to future external EUROSUR stakeholders of Ukraine and Cabo Verde. In 2025, EUROSUR experts continued to support one of the components of the EU-funded project “Regional Support to Strengthen Border Security Capacities in the Western Balkans” under IPA III, where Frontex promoted European

integrated border management standards in the region. In this context, the Western Balkans beneficiaries of IPA III made a study visit to selected national coordination centres (NCCs) in Member States: NCC Czechia and NCC Finland, and together with representatives of ECC, Moldova received a tailored training on EUROSUR reporting requirements, in December in Vienna.

Additionally, in 2025 Frontex delivered awareness sessions on EUROSUR to representatives of Lebanon, Iraq, Pakistan and Armenia, as well as to CSDP missions of: EU SDI Gulf of Guinea, EUAM Iraq and to the participants of a workshop held within the framework of Euro-Arab border security dialogue.

2.1.2 Risk analysis networks and communities

At the backbone of Frontex risk analysis and intelligence cooperation, in 2025 work continued in the three well established regional groups: the Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network (WB-RAN), the Eastern Partnership Risk Analysis Network (EaP-RAN) and the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC). These fora brought together representatives of third countries for analyst-to-analyst exchanges, raised regular situational awareness and promoted joint analytical work.

The risk analysis networks in the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans continued to enable regular exchanges of data and information, interactions and meetings between analysts from the regional partner countries and those of neighbouring EU Member States. This resulted in joint dedicated regional analytical products that enhance situational awareness beyond national borders and serve strategic and operational decision-making on all sides.

The Africa-Intelligence Community (AFIC) was assessed as a mature, trusted and resilient intelligence cooperation framework with over 15 years of operation. This network continued its dynamic growth, bringing together analysts from African countries and Frontex to strengthen border security cooperation. Several meetings throughout the year provided the possibility for sharing intelligence and tackling cross-border crime, including human trafficking and irregular migration. By fostering collaboration and trust across diverse regions, AFIC has become integral to anticipating and responding to evolving security threats, enhancing the collective capacity to prevent crime and ensure safer borders. The network has delivered tangible operational value through common analytical standards, capacity building and the Risk Analysis Cells (RACs), enabling improved situational awareness, anticipatory risk analysis and concrete operational outcomes.

In the same framework, the UK Risk Analysis Network (UK-RAN) was established in late 2025 to promote analytical capacities along the Channel route and the North Sea through a cross-regional approach that brings

together EU Member States relevant to the route and the UK to share knowledge and expertise on irregular migration patterns, from initial entry points, through transit and departure locations and onwards to the UK. The establishment of this analysis network is particularly important given the increasingly dynamic, adaptive and cross-border nature of irregular migration flows, which require coordinated, intelligence-led responses and a shared analytical picture to effectively anticipate trends, mitigate risks and support evidence-based policy and operational decision-making across the region. Exchange of good practices with the UK Home Office, on travel flow analysis, including on risk analysis activities in the context of travel authorisation programmes.

In 2025, eight third countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine) provided statistical data relating to specific indicators as part of the Air Borders Risk Analysis Network (AB-RAN) - Pulsar data collection mechanism, which is conducted in collaboration with EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries. The data enabled the creation of a comprehensive situational picture of the European air borders, utilising important indicators of irregular migration, gathered weekly from all participating countries. The AB-RAN also facilitated the development of various risk analysis products including those supporting the planning and implementation of Frontex operations, by assessing the risks at airports and their prioritisation. It has also enabled the assessment of specific operational objectives for the host authorities in Member States and third countries to focus on specific airports. The AB-RAN countries convened twice in 2025, with the participation of UK authorities, providing an adequate forum for discussions, analytical exchanges and engagement among experts from EU MS/SAC and non-EU countries. The network members worked together to identify emerging trends, discuss the factors affecting irregular migration and migrant smuggling at air borders, and share best practices.

2.2 European Travel Information and Authorisation System

One of the main goals in 2025 was to enhance awareness of carriers and travellers about obligations linked to the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and the Entry-Exit System (EES) in relevant third countries.

As such, ETIAS Central Unit (ECU) supported the European Commission in campaigning efforts for EES and ETIAS including attending as speakers and exhibitors in conferences targeting carriers, tourism and travel industry in third countries and participating in webinars for target audiences worldwide.

The ECU focused also on increasing knowledge through the exchange of information, guidelines and best practices with those third countries that had already implemented similar travel authorisation systems, such as Canada and the UK.

In November 2025 Frontex conducted an in-person visit to exchange views on risk analysis, ETIAS and ETA implementation. Also, during the past year ECU held online consultations with Canada on specific topics in relation to the ETIAS forecasting activities including data protection aspects, carrier support and lessons learnt from Canada's ETA Programme. In November

2025, the Deputy Executive Director for Information Management visited Canadian authorities to exchange views on travel authorisation processes, staffing, training and new technologies; he also used the opportunity to familiarise himself with the border management processes at Montreal airport.

The ECU met twice with the UK Home Office to exchange best practices on the operationalisation of the UK Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA). These sessions covered various implementation work streams and explored how insights from UK experience could enhance ongoing projects within the ECU.

On outreach activities to travellers, ECU cooperated also with the Home Office's Marketing Team at the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) & Entry Exit System (EES), Communications Directorate. In November 2025, UK counterparts participated in the ETIAS Press Officers' meeting and shared their experience and lessons learnt from running ETA communication campaign.

Throughout the year, contributions from existing passenger travel authorisation systems were received, notably from the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.



Frontex Deputy Executive Director for Administration and Information Management intervening at the 5th Tokyo Immigration Forum, Tokyo, December 2025

2.3 Operational cooperation



Operational cooperation with third countries continued encompassing fully-fledged operational activities under EU Status Agreements in five third countries, multilateral

activities against cross-border crime as well as coast guard exercises and exchange of observers.

2.3.1 Operations with executive powers on the territory of a third country

JO Albania 2025 - Based on the Status Agreements concluded in 2019, Frontex effectively supported the land, sea and air border control activities in Albania with reinforced engagement and expansion of the operational areas. The activities fostered synergies between the maritime Joint Operations implemented in Albania, Greece, Italy and Montenegro, resulting in strengthened regional cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas.

Following the entry into force of the Frontex second-generation Status Agreement, operational engagement has been further expanded, including reinforced activities at the border with Montenegro, with a forward-looking perspective regarding potential development along the border sector with Kosovo*. The maritime component remained supportive in nature, complementing land and air operational activities. To assure effective surveillance of maritime areas, Frontex committed 1 surveillance aircraft to support the JO.

JO Moldova 2025 - Cooperation with the Republic of Moldova was conducted under the Status Agreement in force since 2022. Since 2024 Moldova is the only third country which provides direct access to the national

databases to the deployed Standing Corps officers in the first line border check. Thus, the Standing Corps officers made a significant contribution to document checks, the detection of forged documents and stolen vehicles, as well as to smuggling cases, refusals of entry or exit and database hits. Standing Corps officers carried out first-line border checks with access to national databases, allowing them to work independently within the agreed legal framework. In addition, officers supported second-line border control activities, depending on operational needs, including deployments under ALDO, MVCDO and CBCDO profiles, which strengthened the detection of document fraud, vehicle-related offences and other cross-border criminal activities, in close cooperation with Moldovan authorities.

Overall, cooperation with Moldova represented a mature and well-functioning model, combining executive powers, database access and multi-domain engagement, and delivering tangible operational results under challenging external conditions.

JO Montenegro 2025 - Frontex continued the successful implementation of this JO, following the developments

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

in 2023 where the land, air and sea border control and migration management as well as the EUROSUR component were integrated into one fully-fledged operational activity. The JO continued under the second-generation Status Agreement, enabling Standing Corps officers to exercise executive powers in both first/second line border control activities in line with national legislation and EU standards. The joint operation covers land and air domains and was further expanded in 2025 to include border checks and surveillance activities at the border section with Serbia. To assure effective surveillance of maritime areas Frontex committed 1 surveillance aircraft to support the JO. The Montenegrin authorities have been working towards further access to national databases to Standing Corps officers.

JO North Macedonia 2025 - The operational aim of Joint Operation (JO) North Macedonia 2025 was to continue the implementation of coordinated operational activities at the land and air borders under the applicable Status Agreement, enabling Standing Corps officers to exercise executive powers in both first/second line border control activities in the land and air domains, in line with national and EU standards. In 2025, operational support was further stabilised through the reinforcement of selected locations, which are now ensured on a more permanent basis. The Joint Operation remained focused on addressing migration flows and cross-border crime along the Western Balkans route, where North Macedonia continued to represent an important entry point. Frontex and the national authorities maintained close coordination in planning and operational management to ensure an adequate and proportionate response to evolving operational needs.

JO Serbia 2025 - The Agency supported Serbia by implementing operational activities at air borders and

the land borders with Bulgaria and with Hungary. The second generation of Status Agreement signed between Serbia and the EU provided the opportunity to include new border sections especially with other third countries bordering with Serbia and enhance the scope and intensity of support to Serbia, notably by deploying additional human and technical resources, including Category 1 Standing Corps Officers. Following entry into force of the Status Agreement 2.0., the amendment of the Specific Activity Plan of JO Serbia 2025 significantly expanded operational areas and operational structures at the border sections towards Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. This amendment enabled Frontex to support Serbia with increased border surveillance activities especially at the Serbia - Bosnia and Herzegovina border section.

JO Bosnia and Herzegovina 2025 - Following the entry into force of the second-generation Status Agreement signed in June 2025, the Joint Operation transitioned from non-executive to executive operational support in the land and air domains. The operational area was expanded to include border checks and border surveillance activities across additional locations. The deployment was reinforced with more than 100 Standing Corps officers and technical equipment across 12 newly opened locations (7 BCU and 5 BCPs), covering border sections throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The reinforcement and increased presence of Standing Corps Officers and technical equipment contributed to enhanced border surveillance coverage, and more effective detection and prevention of irregular border crossings and cross border crime. The strengthened deployments also facilitated closer coordination with national authorities and supported the overall stability of external border management in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Technical and operational cooperation

Evaluations of the Joint Operations in third countries with executive powers outlined several key areas for improvement such as more active involvement of the Standing Corps and effective use of technical equipment in border control activities, consistent reporting of

incidents, advanced information exchange solutions via EUROSUR, developed tactical communication (English speaking skills of the host country officers) and where relevant, addressing proactively the emerging safety concerns.

Joint Operation	Human Resources and Technical Equipment	Officer -days and asset-days
JO Albania 2025	377 HR 307 units of TE	46 653 officer-days 75 780 asset-days
JO Moldova 2025	209 HR 506 units of TE	29 380 officer-days 152 391 asset-days
JO Montenegro 2025	205 HR 211 units of TE	27 938 officer-days 53 618 asset-days
JO North Macedonia 2025	110 HR3 TE units 3 TE units	45 399 officer-days 76 706 asset-days
JO Serbia 2025	420 HR 372 units of TE	47 564 officer -days 91 634 asset-days
JO Bosnia and Herzegovina 2025	118 HR 124 units of TE	9 746 officer -days 5 131 asset-days

2.3.2 Operations without executive powers in third countries

JO Georgia 2025 - In Georgia, Frontex cooperation was carried out without a Status Agreement and was therefore based on a Working Arrangement. This means that Frontex officers did not have executive powers and worked in a supportive role alongside the Georgian authorities. In practical terms, Frontex activities were mainly focused on the air domain but also covered land and sea BCPs. Standing Corps officers assisted host country officers at three international airports (Tbilisi, Kutaisi and seasonally in Batumi). Their role was to support pre-exit checks for passengers travelling on flights with final destinations in EU Member States. Outside airports, Frontex presence was very limited as in the land and sea domains, only Sarpi land BCP and Batumi and Poti Seaports were operationally active.

JO Kosovo 2025 - the Agency implemented the JO without executive powers by deploying Standing Corps officers as EU experts, on the basis of Working Arrangements between Kosovo* and Frontex. The operational activities under the JO Kosovo were limited to providing support and advice to the hosting third country authorities responsible for border control. The concept was created with the aim of providing the Agency with awareness of matters related to irregular migration and cross-border crime activities at the nominated air and land BCPs in the host third country, having a direct link to or influence on the Schengen area BCPs.

Joint Operation	Human Resources and Technical Equipment	Officer -days and asset-days
JO Georgia 2025	38 HR 15 units of TE	2 938 officer-days 3 737 asset-days
JO Kosovo 2025	27 HR 4 units of TE	5 096 officer-days 721 asset-days

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

2.3.3 Tackling cross-border crime

In the course of 2025, the Agency cooperated widely with third countries, in particular within the EMPACT framework. The cooperation took place within dedicated

Operational Actions involving Frontex as well as third countries within respective priorities.



Joint Action Days (JAD) remained among the key operational activities enhancing cooperation between EU Agencies, EU Member States, third countries and international organisations. Frontex in coordination with its partners successfully implemented 6 Joint Action Days targeting multiple cross border criminal areas to disrupt serious and organised crime.

JAD Mobile 8 took place from 20-31 October 2025, in EU Member States and neighbouring countries. The

operation targeted various crimes, including vehicle theft, smuggling and human trafficking. It improved cooperation and information exchange between border guards, police and customs, with collaboration from INTERPOL and Europol. It resulted in the seizure of 694 stolen vehicles, 445 stolen vehicle parts, 32 stolen boats, 87 stolen boat engines, more than 12 tonnes of drugs and over 9 tonnes of tobacco.



JAD Stopover 4 was a joint operation led by Frontex, co-led by Spain and the Netherlands, from 27 January to 2 February 2025. The operation focused on combating cross-border crime, particularly synthetic drug detection, and targeting organised crime groups involved in smuggling and fraud at EU air borders. It resulted in over 90 kilograms of drugs seized, 63 document fraud cases and 14 impostors identified as well as 2 trafficking in human beings (THB) cases.

JAD Finestra 5 led by Romania and Lithuania targeted cross-border smuggling of excise products and migrant smuggling. The operation aimed to outmanoeuvre sophisticated criminal networks using innovative strategies and coordination. The JAD resulted in 143 smuggled irregular migrants intercepted; 594 kg of drugs seized, mainly heroin and synthetics; 15,000 pieces of e-cigarettes seized; 654,644 pieces of drug and fake medicine tablets; 8,67 kg of gold; 31,123 litres of alcohol; 12 firearms; and 220 pieces of ammunition seized.

JAD Danube 10 took place from June 13-23, 2025, and brought together 13 EU Member States and international partners like Europol, Interpol and Eurojust. With regard to the third countries engaged in this JAD, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia and Serbia were fully engaged in the action, and in terms of operational results contributed greatly. The operation targeted migrant smuggling, human trafficking and document fraud in Central and South-Eastern Europe, aiming to improve inter-agency cooperation and intelligence sharing. The joint effort

yielded significant results: 70 smugglers, 97 document fraud cases, 3 traffickers, 7 firearms as well as 39 stolen vehicles seized, demonstrating the importance of international collaboration in tackling complex security challenges.

JAD Pirates 3 took place from 6-17 October 2025, and targeted intellectual property crime, counterfeit goods and currency counterfeiting. The operation involved 13 countries and strengthened cooperation with Europol and EUIPO. It provided valuable insights into the scope of counterfeit products entering the EU and the challenges faced by authorities in combating them. Additionally, 17,533,000 pieces of cigarettes, 1,698 kg of marihuana, 1.2 kg of methamphetamine as well as 148 pistols and 122 pieces of ammunition were seized.

JAD Global Chain 3 was held from June 1-6, 2025, bringing together 43 countries and international agencies, such as Frontex, Europol and Interpol, to combat human trafficking, specifically targeting sexual exploitation, forced labour and child trafficking. It resulted in 520 arrested persons, 158 human trafficking cases and 65 document fraud cases. With regard to the third countries engaged in this JAD, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine were fully engaged in the action and greatly contributed in terms of operational results. The same level of operational engagement was recorded from non-European third countries, which participated in this global action from Latin America, Asia and Africa, such as Colombia, Brazil, Thailand, Vietnam and Nigeria.

Within EMPACT Firearms, Frontex in cooperation with the Belgian Federal Police implemented two Advanced Vehicle Concealments Workshops in which third countries from the Western Balkans, Ukraine and UK took part. The activities increased and strengthened capabilities to detect and access sophisticated concealments in vehicles used in the trafficking of illicit goods (weapons/drugs/money) creating an additional barrier against drug, firearms and cash smuggling networks and organised criminal groups.

Moreover, as part of tailored, intelligence driven operational support, tailored to specific needs and cross border crime areas, Cross Border Crime Action Days were implemented in Moldova in July and in Italy in October 2025. These types of activities were aimed at enhancing strategic and operational cooperation between national authorities, EU Agencies and international organisations in order to offer a constructive model for law enforcement in cross border crime (CBC) and terrorist

threat counteraction. Numerous authorities from Moldova as well as the Western Balkan jurisdictions, UK NCA and Ukrainian authorities took part in those actions.

Also under EMPACT Firearms, in June 2026 with support of OSCE and EU Member States' canine experts, Frontex implemented Canine tactical pilot workshop on conventional firearms detection for dog handlers, in the Estonian Police and Border Guard College Service Dog Training Centre in Meriküla, Estonia. The overall aim of the course was to increase expertise of canine teams on detection of conventional firearms on the tactical level in vehicles, buildings and open areas and increase operational response against firearms trafficking and related crimes. Secondly, the activity will facilitate exchange of operational expertise between EU Member States, Moldovan and Ukrainian K9 teams including on safety and security as well as factors influencing the search, weapons trafficking trends and modalities of smuggling.



Technical and operational cooperation

On 7-9 October 2025, Frontex, CEPOL and EMPACT Firearms organised Industry Days on Technological Solutions in Cross-Border Crime, hosted by the Croatian Police Academy in Zagreb. This event involved numerous authorities from the Western Balkan countries, Moldova and Ukraine, and provided a valuable opportunity to explore innovative solutions aimed at enhancing Europe's capacity to address cross-border crime, with particular emphasis on firearms, drug trafficking and migrant smuggling. Such initiatives served as vital platforms for dialogue and collaboration among law enforcement agencies, international partners and technology providers. They facilitated the understanding and examination of cutting-edge solutions that support border management and law enforcement in detecting a wide range of cross-border crimes, such as illicit arms trade, narcotics trafficking and the use of hidden compartments. Additionally, the event showcased new tools for combating migrant smuggling, advanced data analysis systems, secure communication technologies and innovative training methods.

Furthermore, in 2025 Central Asian translations of the handbook on firearms (into Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Uzbek, Tajik languages) were finalised with support of OSCE and UNODC supporting Central Asian authorities in their fight against firearms crime.

Frontex actively cooperated with the Ukrainian and the Moldovan police, border and customs authorities in relation to the handbook addendum implementation related to the impact of Russian aggression on Ukraine.

This concerned firearm trafficking through numerous dedicated activities exemplified by quarterly firearms expert meetings regarding the trafficking modalities and criminal trends in the region, enhanced awareness, networking and information exchange.

Frontex supported INTERPOL led Mediterranean counter-terrorism Operation Neptune VII, implemented across 20 countries and 70 locations between July and September 2025, targeting terrorists and other individuals posing threats to internal security or linked with organised crime. The operation resulted in 153 arrests and 57 persons identified with terrorism ties.

In 2025, the Agency released the Updated Frontex Common Risk Indicators (CRIs) for the Western Balkan countries to promote the common EU/WB border guard efforts in relation to the threat posed by individuals linked to terrorism, fostering shared understanding, best practices and especially the sharing of knowledge. The document was translated into Albanian, Bosnian, Macedonian, Montenegrin and Serbian.

In alignment with the Agency's mandate, the CRIs served as a key operational tool to prevent terrorists' mobility and address evolving threats in a coordinated and intelligence-led manner. Their implementation aimed at supporting national authorities in making informed decisions at their external borders and ultimately enhanced their internal security.



2.3.4 Coast guard functions cooperation

Frontex is part of several international networks with third countries, such as the Mediterranean Coast Guard Functions Forum (MCGFF), the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum (NACGF) and the Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS) as well as other fora promoting maritime cooperation, such as the Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation (BSRBCC). In 2025, together with partners from outside the EU, the Agency exploited synergies across a variety of coast guards, strengthening border control, search and rescue as well as maritime safety and security. Within the framework of the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum (NACGF), where Frontex participated as an observer, the Agency contributed to four out of seven working groups, covering maritime security, search and rescue, illegal migration and drug trafficking. The forum served as a platform to develop and foster cooperation between several EU Member States, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Since 2018, under the Japanese chairmanship of the Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS) and in cooperation with the Japanese Coast Guard and the rotating authorities holding the Forum presidency, Frontex, as one of the Core Group Members, is in charge of developing the Summit's activities in support of the Japanese Coast Guard. In 2025, Frontex participated in Coast Guard Global Summit under the Italian and Japanese Coast Guard Chairmanship, on 10-12 September, in Rome. In the framework of the Coast Guard Fora week, organised on the occasion of the 160th anniversary of the Italian Coast Guard, Frontex also participated in the Mediterranean Coast Guard Functions

Forum on 9-10 September and in the ECGFF (European Coast Guard Functions Forum) on 8-9 September. The chairmanship of the latter was taken over by Spain, and of the former is continued by the Italian Coast Guard for the second consecutive year.

The Pact for the Mediterranean, adopted on 16 October 2025, emphasises regional security, sustainable development and inclusive partnerships, elevating Frontex's role within the Mediterranean Coast Guard Functions Forum (MCGFF). Under the Pact, the EU is looking to develop projects in 10 Mediterranean countries – Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. Frontex could support, within its mandate and on the EU cooperation on coast guard function, in particular on migration management initiatives focusing on migratory routes leading to and across the Mediterranean, and on securing borders in an integrated manner via study visits and capacity building.

In the field of cooperation with third countries, Frontex conducted a visit to **Mauritania** on 14-18 April 2025. The visit aimed at organising the first technical meeting on coast guard functions in Nouadhibou, a key departure point for migrants on the Atlantic route, and to make progress on Working Arrangement negotiation with Mauritanian authorities. The visit furthermore enabled talks on Mauritanian authorities' participation in Search and Rescue (SAR) exercises in the context of ongoing operations in European Sea Basins and on the possibility of organising a joint SAR workshop on the Atlantic Route.



Technical and operational cooperation

During 2025, a number of SAR/boarding drills, Multipurpose Maritime Exercises, in the framework of JO/ MMO, and conferences were conducted in which a number of non-EU member states participated as observers: Albania, Jordan, Mauritania, Montenegro, Morocco, Qatar, Tunisia, Türkiye, UK, Ukraine and the USA.

The objective of these field visits/ meetings was to prepare the ground for implementation in the future of

CG drill(s) with assets from EU and non-EU MS ideally in their area of their responsibility under the aegis of Frontex with possible involvement of EFCA and EMSA.

More generally, the implementation of JO Albania and Montenegro contributed to the enhancement of EU cooperation on coast guard functions.

2.3.5 Combatting document fraud

In the domain of document security and the fight against document, identity and related frauds, the Agency's cooperation with non-EU partner countries is structured under an engagement with INTERPOL in the context of FIELDS. The Frontex-INTERPOL Electronic Library Document System (FIELDS) aims to support border guards and other law enforcement officers in authenticating travel and identity documents. It does so by giving them access to visual decision-aids (ref. to the Quick Check Cards) on the key detection points of inspected documents, all accessible directly via their national systems and applications used during border and police checks. The system is co-built, co-owned and co-managed with INTERPOL.

FIELDS is made available through I-24/7, the INTERPOL Global Police Communication Network and is designed to be integrated into the national law enforcement

applications of partner countries. Upon automated search requests, the system will provide tailor-made decision aids in the form of Quick Check Cards (QCCs) that are pre-selected authentic images of inspected documents highlighting their key detection points, directly in the national applications. The system supports front-line law enforcement officers when assessing the authenticity of inspected travel and identity documents. The system is available to all 196 INTERPOL Member Countries, including all European Union / Schengen Associated Countries as well as non-EU partners important for successful migration management and fighting transnational organised crime. Frontex contributes to the system with its QCCs, which for the time being remains restricted to non-EU countries that are not part of FIELDS initiative.

FIELDS is managed by an Interagency team (FIELDS Central Unit) based on an 8-year Technical Agreement,



implemented by a two-year Rolling Plan of Activities. Strategic decisions are taken by an Interagency (Frontex and INTERPOL) Steering Committee.

Designed as a global system to enhance document checks and reduce fraud in source, transit, and destination countries, the FIELDS Central Unit is exploring partnerships with non-EU countries and international organisations who might promote the establishment and lead of FIELDS regional groups.

Cooperation with third countries is conducted in line with the FIELDS Outreach Strategy, which focuses primarily on global expansion through the onboarding of document experts from various national agencies. Increasing the presence of FIELDS in the global border security architecture will have major benefits for the system's sustainability, quality and continuous improvement.

All EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries have access to the QCCs available in FIELDS. Additionally, they are available to third countries that are actively participating in FIELDS activities and contributing to the development of the Quick Check Cards, as per the Mutual Benefit Collaboration approach that is driving the Outreach Strategy.

Mutual benefit cooperation means that Frontex, INTERPOL and the participating countries work together and jointly use their capacities in an effective and efficient manner.

The first Frontex INTERPOL Electronic Library Document System (FIELDS) regional group was established in the Western Balkans and Moldova in September 2022. Since then, document experts from Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Serbia and Moldova have been involved in FIELDS activities.

Throughout 2025, 10 non-EU member countries – Australia, Canada, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Serbia, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and United Kingdom – were actively involved in the sustainable development of FIELDS, by sending their document experts to attend the FIELDS workshops for production and validation of Frontex Quick Check Cards, thus opening the path for these countries to integrate the system into their national border management applications.

Following their active contribution and understanding of the added value that FIELDS is bringing during border checks in authenticating travel and identity documents, Bosnia & Herzegovina (with financial support from the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) and Serbia decided to start the FIELDS integration process into the national border management applications.

In line with the FIELDS Outreach Strategy, INTERPOL and Frontex aim to engage with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to establish a FIELDS Regional Group in Asia Pacific Region, targeting the Asian Network for Document Examination (ANDEX) Member Countries. In this regard, the ANDEX Engagement Symposium was organised by INTERPOL and IOM and co-hosted by Frontex in Bangkok, Thailand on 2-4 December 2025.

The primary goal of this event was to provide participants from the Asia Pacific region with a thorough understanding of the FIELDS system and the tangible benefits it offered to frontline officers. It also delivered a comprehensive overview of the Quick Check Cards creation/validation process and the requirements necessary to access the system. All 24 ANDEX member and observer countries had been officially invited, out of which 19 participated (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam) together with the Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) who also attended the event. By bringing together leading document experts and senior law enforcement officials, the event fostered collaboration, knowledge-sharing and innovation in the examination of travel and identity documents and in strengthening global border security.

Looking forward, the FIELDS Central Unit seeks to capitalise on these outreach efforts by expanding the number of countries that are contributing to the development of QCCs. Not only will this strengthen the library of information available in FIELDS today, but it will also expand the number of frontline officers globally with access to the QCCs that support the important task of authenticating travel and identity documents during border checks and other inspections.

2.4 Returns

2.4.1 Pre-return assistance

During 2025, the Agency carried out various activities to enhance the operational and technical cooperation with countries of return including supporting the organisation of identification missions, deployment of European Return Liaison Officers (EURLOs) and Standing Corps with Return

Specialist (RS) profile, organisation of technical events related to cooperation on return and readmission with third countries as well as technical assistance activities for third country authorities.

Identification Missions

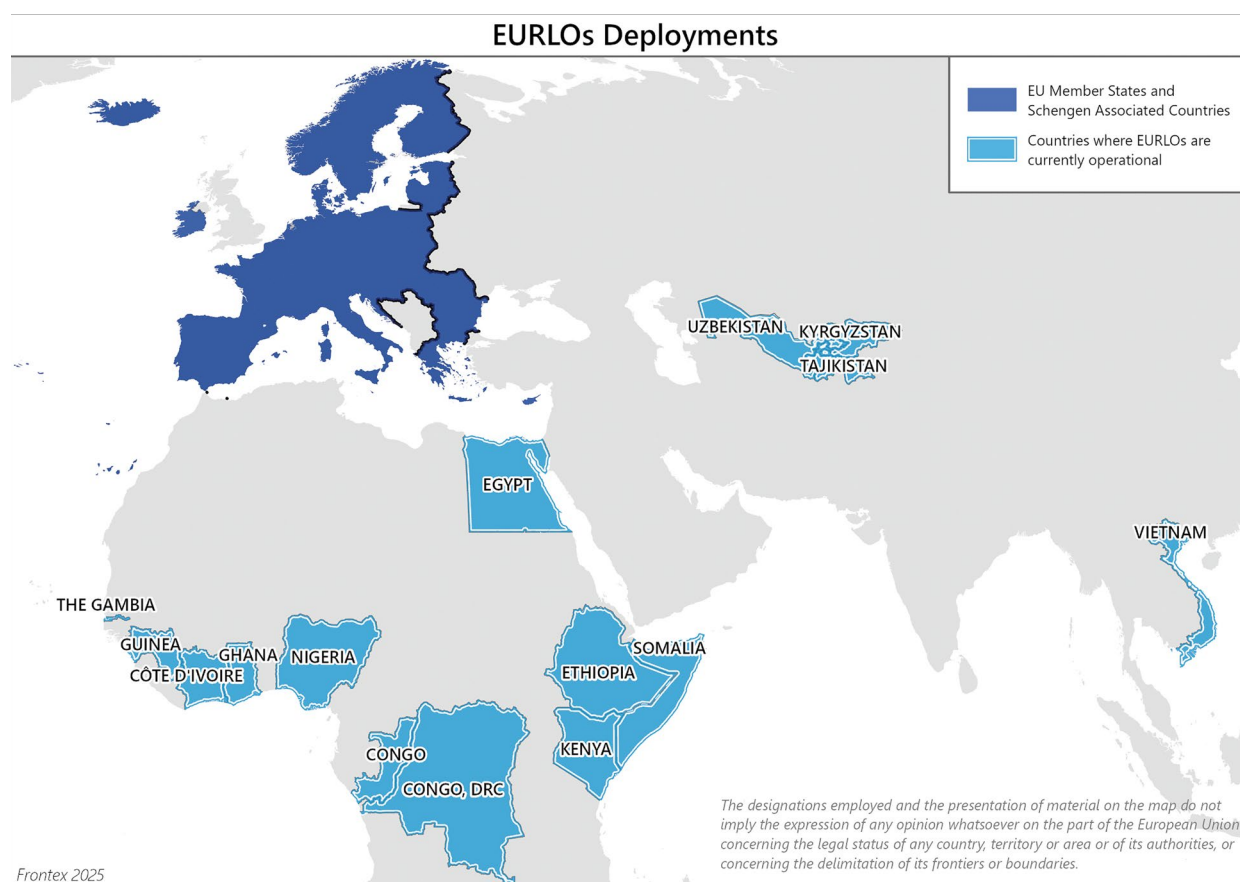
There were 14 identification missions organised in 2025 (2 long-term and 12 short-term) to 7 Member States. As

a result, 1,402 third country nationals were interviewed, of which 854 were identified.

European Return Liaison Officers

At the end of 2025, Frontex coordinated the deployment of 10 European Return Liaison Officers (EURLOs) covering 15 third countries. EURLOs support Member States and Frontex in enhancing cooperation on return-related

activities at all phases of the return process, including pre-return, return operations and voluntary returns, post-arrival and reintegration.



Return Specialists

During 2025, Return Specialists were deployed to 10 Member States for supporting third country cooperation. Their main tasks are identification, acquisition of travel documents in cooperation with third country diplomatic

or consular representations accredited to host Member States or through Readmission Case Management Systems (RCMS) of third countries.

Events on return and readmission cooperation with third countries

Country Working Groups

Frontex manages third country-specific networks called Country Working Groups (CWG) involving Member States' experts focused on return and readmission cooperation with third countries. In 2025, seven Country Working Group meetings were organised, and, where relevant, third country observers from the Western Balkans

were invited. Meetings allowed for exchange of good practices between Member States on cooperation with third countries and contributed to the monitoring of the implementation of EU readmission cooperation agreements and arrangements with third countries.

Technical workshops

Frontex regularly organises technical workshops on specific aspects of return and readmission cooperation for Member States and third countries based on identified needs and interests. Among others, Frontex organised a consular workshop on readmission cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire in April 2025, a workshop for EU return case

handlers on the use of the readmission case management system with Armenia in March 2025 and contributed, in December 2025, to a workshop on identification techniques for Ethiopia organised by the European Commission and the IOM.

Technical assistance activities

The cycle of the Technical Assistance Projects for Third Countries on Return, Readmission and Reintegration (TAP4RRR) Strategic Programme has been ongoing since 2024 and aimed at providing support to Member States for strengthening third country capacities in the

area of return, readmission and reintegration. However, no project proposals were received in 2025 under this framework, and no activities were implemented. Frontex will consider restructuring and simplifying the framework.

2.4.2 Return operations

In 2025, Frontex provided technical and operational support to the Member States in carrying out the return of **63,493 individuals² to 127 third countries of destination**; 85% of returns were implemented by scheduled flights, and 65% of all returns were voluntary.

Frontex also supported the implementation of Collecting Return Operations (CROs) based on Article 50(3) of the EBCG Regulation. In these operations, the means of transport and return escorts were provided by the countries of return. In 2025, 36 CROs were implemented (1,539 third country nationals returned). The partner/destination countries were Georgia, Moldova, Serbia and Albania.

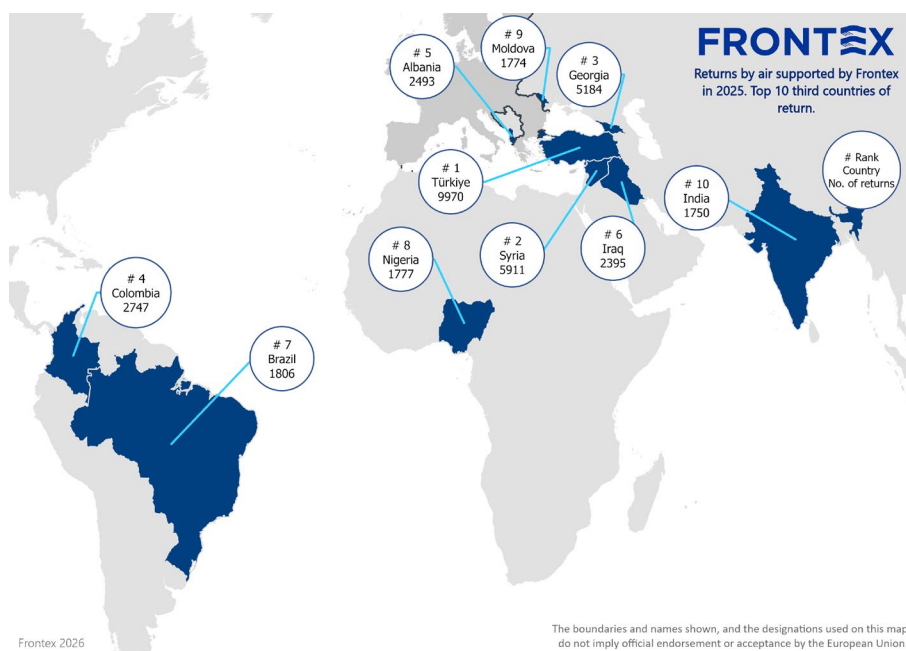
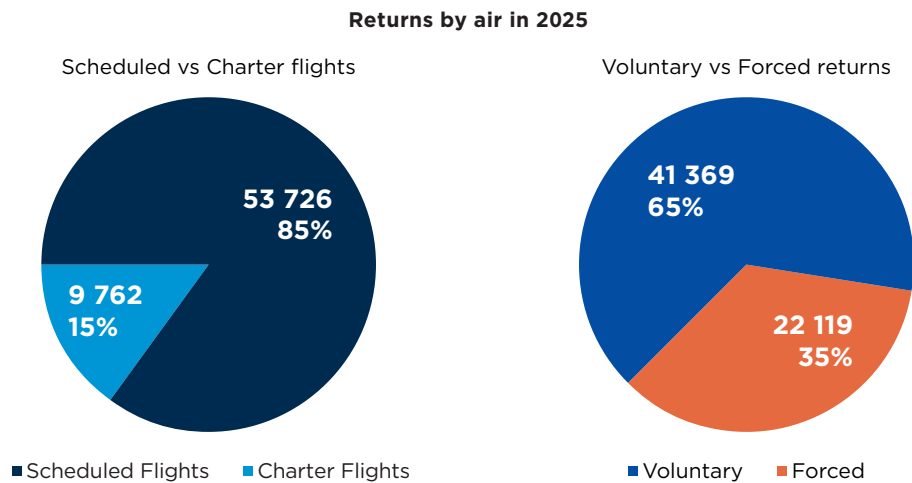
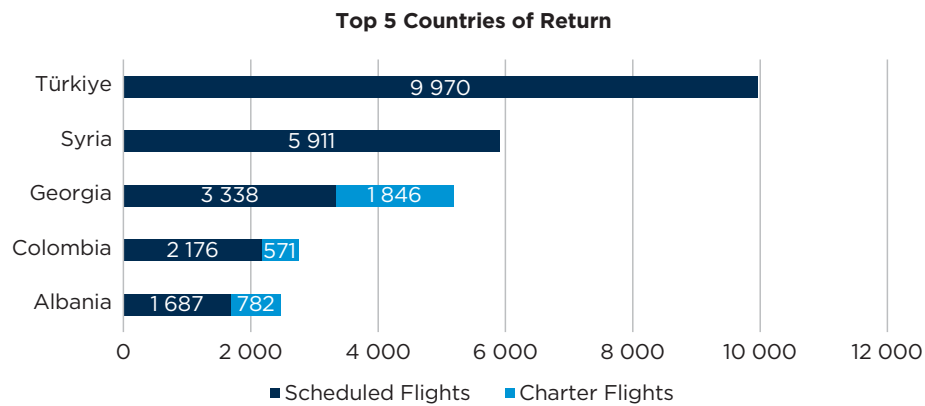
To ensure that respect for fundamental rights, the proportionate use of means of constraints and the dignity

of the returnee were guaranteed during the entire return operation, Frontex provided training in advance to escorts from partner countries involved in return operations, in accordance with EU standards. In 2025, two Collecting Return Operation (CRO) training sessions were organised: one in Moldova for 20 Moldovan officers and one in Georgia for 20 Georgian officers. These trainings aimed to strengthen operational cooperation between Moldova, Georgia, and Frontex in the organisation of CROs.

To further strengthen cooperation with Georgia and Moldova, following the successful Frontex training provided to Georgian and Moldovan officers, Frontex supported the participation of five Georgian observers in five charter return operations to Georgia and one to Moldova. In 2025 alone, Member States organised 27 CROs to Georgia and six CROs to Moldova.

² In 2025, 5 third-country nationals were returned by land, by bus, and 63,488 third-country nationals were returned by air.

Technical and operational cooperation

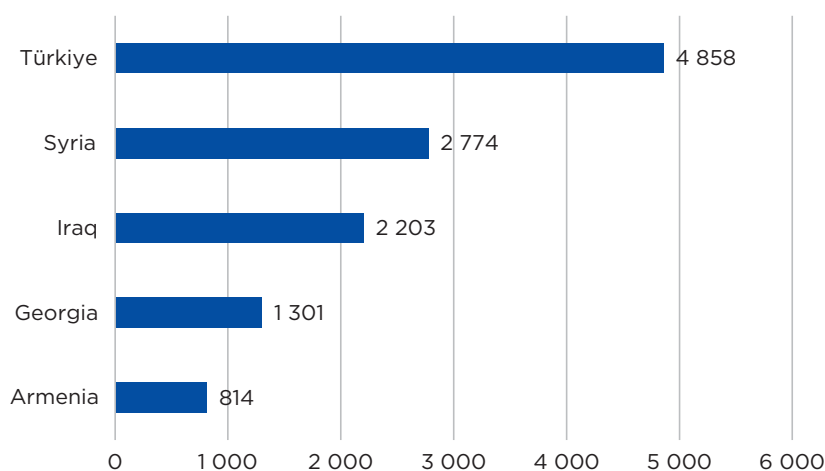


2.4.3 Post-return assistance

In 2025, Frontex expanded the geographical scope of the EU Reintegration Programme (EURP), its flagship activity on post-arrival and post-return assistance in 40 third countries. This year alone, over 19,000 eligible returnees were registered for the EURP by the relevant authorities of

the Member States and Schengen Associated Countries. Assistance is provided in partnership with Reintegration Partners, non-profit organisations with field presence in the countries of return.

Top 5 Third countries by number of individuals registered for EURP support in 2025



3. Capacity building

3.1 Training

In 2025, the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) Academy continued to actively support cooperation with third countries by organising a wide range of training activities tailored to current operational and strategic needs. These activities (over 20 activities with participants from third countries) covered diverse thematic areas, including capacity building, institutional development, exchange of best practices and strengthening professional competencies. The EBCG Academy, through such training activities as Roadshow on Falsified Document Detection, Collecting Return Operations Course and Training Workshop on the EUROSUR situational picture reporting, contributed to enhancing mutual

understanding, strengthening sustainable professional networks and promoting high standards in line with European and international frameworks. The training portfolio was designed to respond to partners' priorities and support long-term collaboration and knowledge transfer. Non-EU operational partners from Serbia, Moldova, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina joined several Modules of the Operational Training Programme for the statutory staff of the EBCG under a pilot activity which has been successfully implemented and proved to facilitate common understanding, promoting high professional standards.

Firearms Detection Course for Ukrainian law enforcement officers

A firearms detection course was conducted in the Polish Police Training Centre in Legionowo, Poland. The course was delivered by instructors from the Ukrainian Customs, Police and State Border Guard Service to a group of eighteen officers of the same services. In the light of the

capacity-building exercise, Frontex Firearms Detection Course instructors supervised the process and coached the Ukrainian instructors throughout the preparation and delivery phase, marking an important milestone in strengthening professional competencies.

European Course for Canine Teams - Scent detection

The EBCG Academy ensured the participation of non-EU operational partners in two iterations of the European Course for Canine teams. Six participants from non-EU operational partners – Moldova (1), Ukraine (1), Serbia (1) and Türkiye (3) – were enrolled in the 2024/25 iteration dedicated to weapons detection, organised from September 2024 to April 2025. In addition, it is worth mentioning a great achievement of two Turkish participants who, following the examination conducted on 24/2/2016, fulfilled all assessment requirements and were granted a certificate of Weapons Detection Canine Team. One participant represented Turkish National Police, the second one was from Turkish Customs. A separate

iteration 2025/26, focused on narcotics detection, was organised from April 2025 to February 2026, and was attended by two Turkish participants, one of whom passed the final assessment and received an official certification “Narcotic detection canine teams” on 25 February.

The involvement of non-EU experts in the European Course for Canine Teams was highly appreciated and proved to be mutually beneficial. Participants particularly highlighted the high quality, practical relevance and professional standard of the training programme, emphasising the mutual added value in terms of operational readiness and knowledge transfer.

EIBM Training

In March 2025, a group of participants from various Ukrainian authorities (MoFA, MoI, MoF, State Border Guard Service, State Customs Service and the State Migration Service) together with a representative of EUAM attended the Course for EIBM strategy advisers. This flagship training offered by Frontex enabled members of the Ukrainian EIBM Working Group to learn about the

EU IBM concept and how to align their national strategy on IBM with EU policy documents including the Frontex Technical and Operational EIBM strategy for 2023-2027. This training functioned as a follow up to two iterations from 2024, and in total 23 participants from the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia were trained on the EIBM concept by Frontex.

Migration Management

Two iterations of the course Collecting Return Operations were organised in 2025, aiming to enhance participants’ knowledge and skills with a view of their future involvement in collecting return operations, organised under Frontex standards. For the first one, 22 Georgian escort leaders

were invited to a training session held in Tbilisi, from 17 to 21 March 2025. The second iteration was organised for participants from Moldova, who attended the training in Chisinau on 3-7 November 2025.

Partnership Academies Network

The Partnership Academies Network remained a central pillar of international cooperation in 2025. Two dedicated network meetings were successfully organised during the year, providing a platform for strategic dialogue among partner institutions, exchange of experience and identification of future joint initiatives. These meetings revived cooperation among partners and facilitated partner alignment, promoting excellence in training, maintaining regular communication and continuity of cooperation.

One milestone was the signing of a Partnership Academies agreement with the Academy in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. This agreement marks an important step in expanding the geographical reach and strengthening the inclusiveness of the Network by welcoming new members. The growth of the Network demonstrates its importance and its role as a sustainable framework for long-term cooperation with third countries.

3.2 Technical assistance projects

EU Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management Systems in the Western Balkans – Phase III

Frontex coordinates the regional programme and ensures cooperation and alignment among the other three implementing partners - EUAA, IOM, UNHCR. The DG ENEST³-funded programme has four outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Improved standardised and regionally operable statistics and mechanisms for identification, registration and referral of mixed migration movements;
- Outcome 2: Improved implementation of international protection measures, including for vulnerable persons;
- Outcome 3: Improved management of returns and alternatives to detention;
- Outcome 4: Improved contingency planning and crisis response capacities according to EU best practices, including at regional level.

In the framework of the regional programme, the Frontex-led project (Contract 1) contributes to Outcomes 1, 3, and 4 of the regional programme. Activities are grouped in three thematic portfolios (components):

Eurodac-related Masterplans: Western Balkan partners implement EU-compatible systems to identify and register people crossing their borders in the form of a Masterplan, which is a country-specific blueprint in which Frontex assesses where a country currently stands with its IT and biometric infrastructure, identifies the gaps and produces detailed, step-by-step reports of what that country needs to implement to align with EU-compatible systems. In 2025 Frontex continued to support the Masterplan development process in Albania and Serbia under Phase III of the project. The Agency also provided assistance to Montenegro and North Macedonia related to the operationalisation of the previously developed Masterplans. Similar assistance was provided to Albania in anticipation of future operationalisation which is pending on finalisation of its Masterplan.

Return management systems: Western Balkan partners strengthen their return management systems through targeted gap assessments, capacity-building and the progressive alignment of national frameworks with EU standards and practices, including through the introduction of the RECAMAS (return case management) model. In 2025 Frontex focused on improving coordination between return-related initiatives in the regions.

The purpose of the above exercise is to support the Western Balkan partners in the further development of integrated, effective and rights-based return management systems aligned with the EU acquis, in particular under Chapter 24 on Justice, Freedom and Security. These efforts culminated in the establishment of Joint Action “Strengthening Return Management Systems in the Western Balkans” (overseen by DG ENEST and DG HOME), a milestone for Frontex technical assistance to the region. Responding to requests from Western Balkan partners for better coordination to avoid overlaps and reduce administrative burden, the mechanism strengthens Frontex’s role as a standard-setter and supports more effective implementation of its 2019 regulation mandate in returns. Apart from Frontex, this Coordination Mechanism currently aligns four projects (partners), with potential for future inclusion of additional initiatives.

Contingency planning and crisis response: Western Balkan partners are operationally ready to manage situations of disproportionate migratory pressure in a coordinated and protection-sensitive manner. Frontex supports them with targeted workshops, advice on the establishment of appropriate governance structures and coordination mechanisms, as well as simulation exercises. Under this joint Frontex-EUAA component, Albania officially adopted a contingency plan in December 2025 while Montenegro formally initiated its national contingency planning process in September 2025. Frontex and EUAA subsequently supported the establishment of a national working group in December 2025, providing methodological guidance for plan development. With Serbia, Frontex managed to hold an in-person workshop in Belgrade focused on developing early warning indicators for border crises and introducing a standardised four-level escalation model based on impact assessment. As part of the regional approach, Frontex’s Contingency Planning Handbook was translated into all Western Balkan languages and officially shared with all beneficiaries to ensure a uniform adoption of EU-aligned best practices.

The Western Balkans beneficiaries of IPA III together with representatives of Republic of Moldova received a tailored training workshop on the Fundamentals of EIBM Intelligence in December 2025 in Vienna.

³ As of February 1, 2025, the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) was reorganised into two new units: DG ENEST (Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood) and DG MENA (Middle East, North Africa and Gulf).

EU Regional Support to Strengthen Border Security Capacities in the Western Balkans

Operationalisation of Status Agreements and Working Arrangements was enhanced through capacity-building initiatives, in which 159 officers were trained in the Western Balkans in 2025. The trainings focused on border

checks, border surveillance and fundamental rights; procured equipment included 300 tactical flashlights, 64 hand magnifiers and planned IT systems and drones for 2026.



Workshop on gender mainstreaming, mediation negotiation and conflict resolution with women in border police from the Western Balkans, part of IPA III project: EU Regional Support to strengthen border security capacities in the Western Balkans, Vienna, 30 May 2025

Efforts to join the Frontex-INTERPOL electronic library document system (FIELDS) culminated in a grant for Bosnia and Herzegovina. 181 border guards started in-person English training, in addition to the complemented online ad-hoc module for Bosnia and Herzegovina in view of the newly established joint operation between Frontex and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The establishment of EUROSUR Coordination Centres in the Western Balkans included regional meetings, trainings and study visits to guide EUROSUR alignment and technical requirements, followed by workshops on intelligence awareness and EUROSUR situational reporting in December 2025. A regional Working Group convened bi-annually to harmonise border management practices and address legal and operational challenges.

EU4BorderSecurity Project

In the framework of the EU4BorderSecurity project, funded by European Commission's Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA) and implemented by Frontex, the Agency continued in

2025 to step up efforts in seeking to enhance border security in North Africa and the Levant by fostering bilateral and regional cooperation, through capacity building activities and technical exchanges in the

Integrated Border Management (IBM) domain while upholding fundamental rights. It contributed to building trust, mutual understanding and structured partnerships across the Mediterranean at large.

During 2025, the last year of implementation of the EU4BorderSecurity project's first phase (2019-2025), a

major achievement was the implementation of two regional workshops conducted jointly with the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC), which brought together representatives across the EU and Arab League Member States' border management authorities in Tunis and Warsaw, on the topics of countering document fraud and on risk analysis, respectively.



Euro-Arab regional workshop on reinforcing risk analysis in border management, Warsaw, November 2025

These endeavours ensured credibility to the whole process of consolidating the Euro-Arab Border Security Dialogue championed by Frontex and AIMC into a sustainable framework recognised by the Member States part of the Euro-Arab Working Group on Steering Cooperation in Border Management and Security, generating follow-up commitments and regular structures for engagement.

In 2025, the Frontex Executive Director also took part in high-level events of key relevance for the region, such as the second EU-MENA States Ministerial Conference in Lisbon and the 49th Arab Conference of Chiefs of Police and Security Agencies in Tunis.

On the bilateral level, the EU4BorderSecurity project continued to support the implementation of capacity building activities with partner countries. Cooperation with Egypt reached an important milestone: after several years of limited engagement, the Agency successfully implemented two bilateral activities on combatting document fraud and detection of trafficking in human beings at the borders. The positive outcomes created strong momentum, paving the way for more regular and structured cooperation.

Cooperation with Lebanon and Jordan continued with a number of capacity-building activities implemented especially during the first half of the year. With Lebanon,

Capacity building

the focus was on the provision of equipment and related training in the maritime domain, such as on the protection of human rights at sea, thus boosting the capacities of

Lebanese authorities to carry out search and rescue activities, as well as first aid material for immediate assistance of rescued migrants upon disembarkation.

Handover of SAR equipment to Lebanese authorities (presence of Lebanese Navy Commander, EU Ambassador to Lebanon, Frontex Head of International Cooperation Unit, and the Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer, Beirut, Lebanon, 29 April 2025)



All the above was conducted while laying the foundations for the second phase of the EU4BorderSecurity project, starting from January 2026 back-to-back with the first phase.



FRONT_{EX}



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COAST GUARD AGENCY

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