



Press Release
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Frontex's support for EU's external borders management not sufficiently effective

The EU's border agency Frontex has not been sufficiently effective in helping Member States and Schengen associated countries in managing the EU's external frontiers, according to a special report published by the European Court of Auditors (ECA). Frontex's support is not adequate to combat illegal immigration and cross-border crime, say the auditors. As well as concluding that Frontex has not fully implemented the mandate it received in 2016, the auditors also cast doubt on its capacity to effectively implement the new operational role that has been assigned to it.

Frontex was created in 2004 to address the EU's border concerns – terrorism, trafficking, and migrant smuggling, for example – together with national authorities. Frontex's mandate has gradually expanded since its creation, as has its budget (from €19 million in 2006 to €460 million last year). Nevertheless, EU auditors have found that Frontex is still not satisfactorily supporting Member States in managing the EU's external borders.

"Frontex's tasks at the EU's external borders are essential for the fight against cross-border crime and illegal immigration", said Leo Brincat, the member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report. "Nevertheless, Frontex is currently not discharging that duty effectively. This is especially worrying at a time when Frontex is being given added responsibilities."

In 2016, Frontex received a clear mandate to support Member States in combating illegal immigration and cross-border crime. However, the auditors found gaps and inconsistencies in the information exchange framework, which hinders the capacity of Frontex and the Member States to monitor external borders and to respond when necessary. Moreover, risk analysis and vulnerability assessment activities are not always supported by complete and good-quality data. Finally, the joint operations in the framework of the cross-border crime are not yet sufficiently developed in Frontex's day-to-day activities.

The auditors also point out an absence of reporting on Frontex's efficiency and costs. Although it communicates extensively about its activities, Frontex rarely analyses its performance or the impact of its activities. Nor does it provide information about the real cost of its joint operations.

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' special report. The full report is available at eca.europa.eu.

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The auditors found that the last external evaluation of Frontex was published in July 2015. In addition, when the new regulation governing Frontex's work was approved in 2019, no prior assessment had fed into it. But it brought about a fundamental shift in Frontex's activity, transforming its role from that of a support and coordination function into that of an operational service. To fulfil its new mandate, Frontex will have up to 10 000 operational staff at its disposal by 2027 (workforce of 750 in 2019), though it is not yet clear that they will be able to function as intended. Its budget is due to double to around €900 million yearly – a large figure which was decided without any attempt to determine what Frontex will need to carry out its new mandate, and without any assessment of its impact on Member States. As a result of all this, given that Frontex has not yet adapted to the requirements of its 2016 mandate, the auditors consider that it is not yet ready to implement its 2019 mandate effectively.

Background information

In 2019, EU auditors examined Frontex's return operations in [special report on migration management](#) in Greece and Italy. The performance audit published today focuses on Frontex's four other primary activities: situation monitoring, risk analysis, vulnerability assessment and operational response. Together, these activities represented almost two thirds of Frontex's operational costs in 2019.

Special report 08/2021: "Frontex's support to external border management: not sufficiently effective to date" is available on the ECA website (eca.europa.eu) in 23 EU languages.

Later this year, the ECA will also issue audit reports on [EU's migrant return policy](#) and on combating migrant smuggling.

The ECA presents its special reports to the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, as well as to other interested parties such as national parliaments, industry stakeholders and representatives of civil society. The vast majority of the recommendations made in the reports are put into practice.

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