



The role of the European Border and Coast Guard in the security of the European Union

Úloha Európskej pohraničnej a pobrežnej stráže v bezpečnosti Európskej únie

František KAŠICKÝ¹

¹Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

The manuscript was received on 15. 10. 2020 and was accepted after revision for publication on 20. 11. 2020

Abstract:

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency plays an important role in the protection of the external borders and the security of the Member States of the European Union and the countries associated with the Schengen free trade area. The Schengen area without internal borders is only sustainable if the external borders are effectively secured and protected. The threat of uncontrolled movement and illegal migration, and the associated dangers, is one of the current security threats and new challenges for the Member States of the European Union. Frontex, as an Agency of the European Union, is financed from the Union budget, including contributions from individual countries, and has the ambition to employ almost 1000 people in 2021. The article provides an insight, including a short historical excursion, on the role of the European Border and Coast Guard in the security of the European Union nowadays.

Keywords: migration, security threat, border protection, Frontex

Abstrakt:

Európska agentúra pre pohraničnú a pobrežnú stráž plní dôležitú úlohu v ochrane vonkajších hraníc a bezpečnosti členských krajín Európskej únie a krajín pridruženým k schengenskému priestoru voľného obchodu. Schengenský priestor bez vnútorných hraníc je udržateľný, len ak sú vonkajšie hranice účinne zabezpečené a chránené. Hrozba nekontrolovateľného pohybu a nelegálnej migrácie a s tým súvisiace nebezpečenstvá, predstavuje jednu z aktuálnych bezpečnostných hrozieb a nových výziev pre členské krajiny Európskej únie. Frontex ako agentúra Európskej únie je financovaná z rozpočtu únie, vrátane príspevkov jednotlivých krajín, má ambíciu v roku 2021 zamestnávať takmer 1000 osôb. Príspevok prináša pohľad, zahrňujúc



krátky historický exkurz, na úlohu Európskej pohraničnej a pobrežnej stráže v bezpečnosti Európskej únie v súčasnosti.

Kľúčové slová: migrácia, bezpečnostná hrozba, ochrana hraníc, Frontex

Introduction

Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, supports EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries in managing the EU's external borders and fighting cross-border crime. [1] According to official documents, today, one of every 10 people returned from the EU, are processed with Frontex support. [2] Frontex is a key partner for EU Members States in returns of people deemed by national authorities to be staying illegally in Europe. These are people who received a return decision from courts or national authorities after exhausting all legal avenues to remain in the EU, or who have committed criminal offences or overstayed their visas. Main tasks of Frontex officers including border checks, border surveillance, returns, coast guard functions including search a rescue, fighting cross-border crime and collecting and sharing information. Every year, around 700 million people cross Europe's external borders. [4] Border control is a key aspect of European Integrated Border Management and Frontex together with national authorities of the Members States, it responsible for implementing it.

1. The role of the Frontex

The European Border and Coast Guard has been established to ensure integrated border management of the external borders to enable a single area without border checks – the Schengen Area. Member States and Schengen Associated Countries have the main responsibility for the management of their sections of the external borders. [1]

1.1. From the history

Establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard, announced by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, in his State of the Union Address on September, 9, 2015, [5] is part of the measures set out in the European Migration Agenda to strengthen the management and security of the EU's external borders. European Commission, on December 15, 2015, presented a legislative proposal to create a European Border and Coast Guard, building on Frontex's existing structures, to respond to the new challenges and political realities facing the EU in the areas of migration as well as internal security. [6] On September 14, 2016, the Council finally approved the proposal for a European Border and Coast Guard. [8] By signing the European Parliament in Strasbourg, the Slovak Republic confirmed the adoption of the regulation, thus fulfilling one of the priorities of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU - a sustainable EU migration and asylum policy. The ceremonial launch of the guard took place on 6 October 2016 at the Kapitan Andreevo border crossing on the Bulgarian external border with Turkey. [9] The European Border and Coast Guard will bring together a European Border and Coast Guard Agency built from Frontex and the Member States' authorities responsible for border management, who will continue to exercise the day-to-day management of the external border. According this, the new European Border and Coast Guard will have: rapid reserve pool of border guards and technical equipment, a monitoring and supervisory role, the right to intervene, Coast

Guard surveillance, a mandate to work in third countries, a stronger role in returns, Guaranteeing Internal Security.

2. Attendance and current challenges

For the first time, the European Union has its own uniformed service: European Border and Coast Guard standing corps. It is composed of Frontex and EU Member States' officers who support national authorities facing challenges at their external borders. Members of the standing corps will mainly work at the EU's borders. But if needed, they can be also deployed outside the EU to countries which request Frontex's help at their borders. Standing corps members share many of the powers of national border guards. They can verify a person's identity and nationality, allow or refuse entry into the EU and patrol between border crossing points.[2]

Frontex monitors, analyses and fuses information from variety of sources. These include images and data from planes, drones and satellites, as well as information from national open sources and open sources. Areas of key Frontex operations are Joint Operation Themis (Italy), Joint Operation Poseidon Sea (Greece), Operations Indalo and Minerva (Spain), Western Balkans (Albania, Montenegro), Bulgaria and Hungary.

Fighting cross-border crime includes detecting stolen cars and fraudulent documents, finding drugs and weapons smuggled into the European Union, gathering information on criminal networks and also detecting people smuggling and trafficking in human beings across the borders. It includes 24/7 monitoring of external borders, situation an risk analysis reports an also real-time streaming video from surveillance flights.

Frontex focuses on the application of the latest technologies and innovations including artificial intelligence, border checks on-the-go and remotely piloted aircraft. The agency shares also its findings with the national law enforcement authorities in the EU.

According Fabrice Leggeri, executive director of Frontex, in 2019, the total number of staff reached 750 at the end of the year, the agency used 100% of the EUR 333 million that were allocated by the EU budget authority and the Schengen Associated Countries and return of irregular migrants was a key area for the agency. Frontex has three strategic objectives: reduce vulnerability of the external borders based on comprehensive situational awareness; guarantee safe, secure and well-functioning EU borders, and plan and maintain European Border and Coast Guard capabilities. Also „In 2019, it became clear that the role of Frontex is not only to act as an emergency service—now, we are first and foremost the operational partner of national authorities, supporting and assisting in regular border management tasks.“ [3] Also Frontex launches first operation outside of the EU in Albania, opens Risk Analysis Cell in Senegal, welcomes new class of Joint Master's programme, begins testing use of aerostat for border surveillance in Greece and test new biometric technologies at Lisbon airport.

The available statistics [3] indicate the validity and importance of Frontex. In 2019 for example: 54 800 people rescued (number refers to all migrants rescued in Frontex operational areas and includes 28.670 people rescued by the agency's co-financed assets), 125 tonnes of drugs seized, 669 drug smugglers detected, 592 maritime aerial

The role of the European Border and Coast Guard in the Security of the EU

František KAŠICKÝ

surveillance flights, 1500 average number of Frontex officers at EU's borders, 15 850 number of people returned by Frontex, 6 900 number of falsified document detected, 7500 applications for Frontex boarder guards, 750 number of Staff and 3 675 border and coast guard officers trained.

Frontex main strategic objectives are to reduce vulnerability at the external borders based on comprehensive situational awareness; guarantee safe, secure and well-functioning EU borders and plan and maintain European Border and Coast Guard capabilities. Agency also aim to implement European integrated border management, which brings together the national authorities, EU institutions and other agencies and organisations.

Very important are benefits for Member States and the EU. Among other things, we can include: avoidance of duplication leading to cost-effectiveness, synchronization of national measures functions under the EU umbrella, real time border surveillance, comprehensive risk analysis and information exchange on threats, fostering teamwork a networking, response based on Agencies's capacity and sharing initiatives and available services. [4]

Conclusion

European external border management has become central to the EU's response to the refugee crisis and swift and decisive action is expected from the institutions. [7] Frontex has set goals for the next period as well. These include ambitions in this, for example, that starting in 2022 Frontex will run the central unit of the European Travel Information and Authorization System – ETIAS. The new system will enhance the security of the Schengen Area by carrying out early screening of people who can travel to the EU without a visa.

Frontex will play a crucial role in ETIAS by helping to verify travel authorization applications, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It also makes sure that the system spots potential threats to safety of all Europeans. [2] Setting the path for the growing agency, Frontex created a new operational concept - a road map for how Frontex will operate in the coming years. At regional conferences in 2019 with the commanders of national border and law enforcement services, Frontex developed services that the new European Border and Coast Guard standing corps will provide to EU member states. [2]

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency plays an important role in the protection of the external borders and the security of the Member States of the European Union and the countries associated with the Schengen free trade area. The Schengen area without internal borders is only sustainable if the external borders are effectively secured and protected. The threat of uncontrolled movement and illegal migration, and the associated dangers, is one of the current security threats and new challenges for the Member States of the European Union.

References

Books, Journals, Data, Reports, Thesis:

- [1] Frontex – European Border and Coast Guard Agency, 2019: *Technical and Operational Strategy for European Integrated Border Management*. Warsaw: FRONTEX, 2019, ISBN 978-92-9471-381-0
- [2] *Agency at a glance*, Luxembourg, FRONTEX, 2020, Publications Office of the European Union, ISBN 978-92-9471-786-3
- [3] *Frontex in Brief*, Warsaw: Frontex, 2020. [on line] [cit 21-7-2020] available from: https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/frontex_inbrief_website_002.pdf
- [4] *The role of Frontex in European Coast Guard functions*, Warsaw: FRONTEX, 2019, ISBN 978-92-9471-163-2
- [5] State of the Union 2015: *Time for honesty, unity and solidarity*, Strasbourg, 2015 [on line] [cit 21-7-2020] available from: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/key-quotes-soteu_en.pdf
- [6] A European Border and Coast Guard to protect Europe's External Borders, Press release, Strasbourg 2015, [on line] [cit 15-8-2020] available from: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_15_6327
- [7] RIJPM, J. 2016, *The Proposal for a European Border and Coast Guard: evolution or revolution in external border management?* Study for the LIBE Committee, European Union, Brussel 2016, ISBN 978-92-823-8934-8
- [8] *Regulation (EU) 2016/1624* of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2016 on the European Border and Coast Guard and amending Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EC) No 863/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004 and Council Decision 2005/267/EC, [on line] [cit 1-9-2020] available from: <https://apnews.com/article/3c9b86df302740bba2adccaad5bf82a1>
- [9] PETROVA, V., 2016 - *EU launches new border force in ceremony in Bulgaria*, AP News, article [on line] [cit 1-10-2020] available from: <https://apnews.com/article/3c9b86df302740bba2adccaad5bf82a1>

Autor:

¹**PhDr. Mgr. František KAŠICKÝ, MBA**, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Hlboká cesta 2, 833 36, Bratislava, Slovak Republic, frantisek.kasicky@mzv.sk