

FRONTEX EVALUATION REPORT 2018

Focal Points Concept

Joint Operation

Coordination Points Air 2018

Operational Response Division

Field Deployment Unit

Operational Planning and Evaluation Sector

Approved at Warsaw
02/04/2019

[signed]
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1. Background information

1.1. Brief risk assessment

The Joint Operation Coordination Points Air 2018 deployments had to respond to two specific aims within the framework of the Frontex air borders operational model. The first aim of the Joint Operation (JO) was to provide operational support to airports from Third Countries (TC) which have expressed their specific needs or a desire to increase the operational knowledge of their officers. The second aim of the JO was to provide Frontex with an awareness of matters related to irregular migration and cross border crime at distinct TC border crossing points which have a direct link to or influence on Schengen area border crossing points and to deepen understanding with regard to new and emerging irregular migration trends for the benefit of Frontex, Member States (MS)¹ and TC.

In order to achieve these two aims, Frontex Risk Analysis Unit (RAU) undertook an assessment to identify those TC airports that present the highest risk to the Schengen air borders in terms of irregular migration.

1.2. Operational aim

JO Coordination Points Air 2018 acted as a permanent platform for providing a sustained operational presence and information exchange/gathering system at air borders by deploying Regular Officers and Intermediate Managers as EU Advisers/Observers at TC airports to activated Coordination Point airports.

The operational aim was implemented in full compliance with the relevant EU and international law, guaranteeing the protection of the fundamental rights in particular the access to international protection and the compliance with the principle of non-refoulement and taking into account the recommendations of the Frontex Consultative Forum and the reports and observations of the Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO).

1.3. Period of implementation and operational areas

The JO Coordination Points Air 2018 was implemented from 5 February 2018 to 31 December 2018.

During the planning phase there were proposed 15 Coordination Point Airports; 14 airports were activated by hosting deployed officers as EU Advisers/Observers.

1.4. Participants

A total of 14 MS and 10 TC participated in the JO.

In total, 45 officers were deployed in different locations, encompassing 1,771 deployment-days. The deployments were covered by Team Members, seconded Team Members as well as Intermediate Managers who were considered as EU Advisers/Observers.

1.5. Financial information

The cost of JO Coordination Points Air 2018 totals to 368,850 EUR.

2. Achievement of objectives

The objectives of the activity were, as follow:

- **To enhance operational cooperation (Frontex & MS & TC)**

The objective has been achieved based on the development of Coordination Points network/platform and arranged deployments.

- **Enhance border security**

The objective has been achieved due to the high number of activation of Coordination Point airports with EU Advisers/Observers deployed having different profiles, which provided reports on case of interest in order to gain better understanding on modus-operandi affecting the external air borders.

¹ For the purposes of the present document, the term "Member State" also includes the States participating in the relevant development of the Schengen Acquis in the meaning of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and its Protocol (No 19) on the Schengen Acquis integrated into the framework of the European Union, namely Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Iceland.

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- **To support establishment of permanent structures**

The objective has been achieved due to the fact that all the Permanent Coordination Point TC Airports were activated.

- **To identify possible risks and threats**

The objective has been achieved by the incident reports provided/sent to Frontex which allowed identifying some risks and threats.

- **Enhance exchange of best practices at managerial level**

The objective has been achieved due to the positive remarks in final reports received from deployed EU Advisers/Observers.

3. Link to other Frontex activities and best practices

All the activities within JO Coordination Points Air 2018 were designed to allow parallel or complementary operational actions and to take advantage of other Frontex projects, especially the ones implemented by Field Deployment Unit.

4. Assessment of the joint operational activities

4.1. Operational Concept

The Coordination Point concept ensures the smooth implementation of operational activities at TC air borders in a long-term perspective, allowing deployed EU Advisers/Observers to take an advantage of being deployed at TC airports and sharing their expertise with counterparts while working together. The JO Coordination Points Air 2018 was the great platform to strengthen contacts with TC and to continue improving operational cooperation by the deployment of officers to TC airports for long-term deployments which enhanced the performance of the reporting as well as quality and quantity of obtained information.

4.2. Operational Results

Statistical operational results for the full JO

Total number of incidents:	440
Total number of persons:	773
Number of asylum seekers:	17
Number of refusals:	532
Number of irregular migrants:	572
Number of irregular migrants facilitated (included in the 1.4.2.1 above):	13
Number of overstayers:	4
Number of facilitators:	13
Number of smugglers of goods:	1

4.3. Situational Awareness

Threats and Risks, modus operandi and trends identified

The JO increased knowledge in some areas concerning threats. However, the JO was only partially able to provide situational awareness and identify general trends given the limited time frame of all deployments as well as the ad hoc nature of the type, connectivity and size of airports activated.

The JO identified large numbers of Iranian migrants seeking to travel to or via a number of airports where deployments took place and where they were not subject to a visa requirement. It was clear that some sought to travel onwards by land particularly - from Belgrade to cross the EU's external land borders which are close by. Other sought to obtain fraudulent documentation to fly onwards to the EU or to fly onwards in transit to the EU with such documents.

It was clear that this activity was largely supported by organized criminal smuggling networks. It was also clear that a number of other nationalities sought to undertake similar activities at a number of other airports where they did not require visas or could obtain them easily.

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The operation also identified the ongoing trend of Albanian, Georgian and Ukrainian economic migrants seeking to enter the EU.

4.4. Supporting Response

The JO Coordination Points Air 2018 was implemented as an annual activity with considerable involvement of MS and TC authorities. As reflected by the growing number of deployments, MS and TC appreciated the JO and there is expected a similar trend in the upcoming years.

Different type of EU Advisers/Observers covering a large range of profiles and skills were individually chosen and deployed to 14 locations in TC. It created a commensurate workload in terms of financial and logistics management, engaging staff and budget resources of Field Deployments Unit.

According to the Operational Plan, deployed EU Advisers/Observers were requested to provide Frontex with data and information/intelligence related to incidents of interest detected at the respective Coordination Point airport in agreement with the hosting TC authorities. The main focus was on gathering qualitative information rather than on receiving a high number of incident reports.

4.5. Resources deployed

Deployed EU Advisers/Observers constantly exchanged information based on their own experiences and will remain in contact after the implementation of the activity, what will be extending the benefit of their deployments. Following up the outcomes of previous years, the JO strengthened solidarity and cooperation among border guards at MS and TC airports, leading directly to an improved European reaction capacity against several irregular migration phenomena and modi operandi.

5. The main benefits of the operational activity

JO Coordination Points Air 2018 delivered the following main benefits:

- Positive impact on the operational cooperation among EU and TC airports based on the exchanged experiences and established contacts.
- Increased knowledge regarding operational practices in MS and TC.
- Increased knowledge in MS and TC about Frontex operational activities and its values.
- Increased response capacity of Frontex, having permanent Coordination Point structure established.
- Increased knowledge in MS and TC as regards the best practices at managerial level.