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Subject: Final report on Joint Police Operation Aphrodite

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Delegations will find in the annex the final report on Joint Police Operation Aphrodite, prepared on the basis of the guidelines set out in the Guide for Joint Police Operations (JPOs) (doc. 16825/10 ENFOPOL 343 JAI 995 COSI 76).

The LEWP is invited to approve the recommendations contained in this final report.

## **Final report on Joint Police Operation Aphrodite**

### **1. Background of the JPO, general description and operational methodology**

JPO Aphrodite is aimed at combating illegal immigration, with the focus being on illegal border-crossing, the secondary movements of irregular migrants who enter EU Member States illegally, the routes used and other information regarding smuggling of migrants. JPO Aphrodite is a follow-up to a series of operations initiated by Member States (MS) during their presidency.

The Operation lasted for two consecutive weeks from 22 October to 4 November 2012 with the participation of 26 MS and 2 Schengen Associated Countries (SAC). It involved interceptions of irregular immigrants (illegal entry in the EU, not including overstayers) during the above-mentioned period only.

The method of gathering the information during the operation was through a report template in the form of an Excel spreadsheet which was completed and sent electronically by the participant countries to the Cyprus authorities for every incident involving the interception of an irregular immigrant. It should be noted that the report template did not include any personal data of the intercepted irregular immigrants.

The responsible authority for conducting this JPO was the Statistical Office of the Cyprus Police Aliens and Immigration Unit, where all report templates from all participant countries were gathered, processed, elaborated and analysed.

### **2. Lead Member State for the operation and coordination structure**

JPO Aphrodite was initiated and coordinated by the Cyprus Police (Aliens and Immigration Unit) in cooperation with the Frontex Agency. The operation was conducted on the basis of the operational plan sent out to participants via LEWP before implementation. The operational plan was approved by each Member State.

In accordance with the guidelines laid down in the operational plan, each participant country was requested to appoint a national contact point which was responsible for the coordination of the operation in their respective country as well as for gathering and forwarding the operational data to the Cyprus Presidency project contact point at the Statistical Office of the Aliens and Immigration Unit where all report templates were gathered, processed, elaborated and analysed.

### **3. Participant countries, authorities and/or organisations**

The level of participation was massive, with 26 MS and 2 SAC taking part in the operation (Germany, United Kingdom, Spain, Austria, Poland, Switzerland, Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria, Belgium, Cyprus, Slovenia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Ireland, Romania, Slovakia, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, Estonia, Portugal, Denmark, Finland, Malta, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Latvia).

The Frontex Agency contributed to the operation by supporting the Cyprus National Coordination Office in collecting operational data and by making its Risk Analysis Unit available to prepare the chapter of the report concerning the illegal border-crossing of migrants at the EU's external borders.

### **4. Objectives of the operation**

The objective of JPO APHRODITE was to collect information from all participant countries concerning illegal migration, in particular the following data:

#### **(a) Interception details:**

- Case reference number – each case is to be given a unique number, so that FRONTEX can request further information on any specific case from the Member State's contact person;
- Date and time of detection;
- Location of interception of illegal immigrants;
- Nearest city or town;
- Means of transportation used by illegal immigrants during detection;

- Means of transportation used by illegal immigrants to enter the country:  
car/bus/lorry (on the road);  
train;  
ship (at the seaport/river port);  
plane (at the airport);  
in the street (or another public/private place);

**(b) Intercepted illegal migrants:**

- Illegal immigrants' nationality;
- Gender, age;
- First point of entry into the EU;
- First date of entry into the EU;

**(c) Routes:**

- Main routes followed by illegal immigrants from third countries for entering the EU and Schengen Associated Countries or using the EU or Schengen Associated Countries as transit countries;
- Illegal immigrants' intended final destination;

**(d) Modus Operandi:**

- False/falsified travel documents used (including nationality of passport);
- Asylum application after or during detection;
- Indications of smuggling of illegal immigrants;
- Facilitator's nationality;
- Modus operandi comment box with free text (some description of modus operandi and facilitation).

## 5. Summary of the operational results

On the basis of the operational data provided by the participant Member States, the following results were achieved:

### Chapter I

#### 1. General description of the results

##### 1.1. Participant countries in JPO Aphrodite

The Operation lasted for two weeks, with a major input from 28 countries resulting in valuable analysis and conclusions.

##### 1.2. Results for each participant country

Overall, during the operational period, 3 692 report templates were received by the Cyprus National Coordinators from all participant countries, reporting 5 298 interceptions of irregular immigrants.

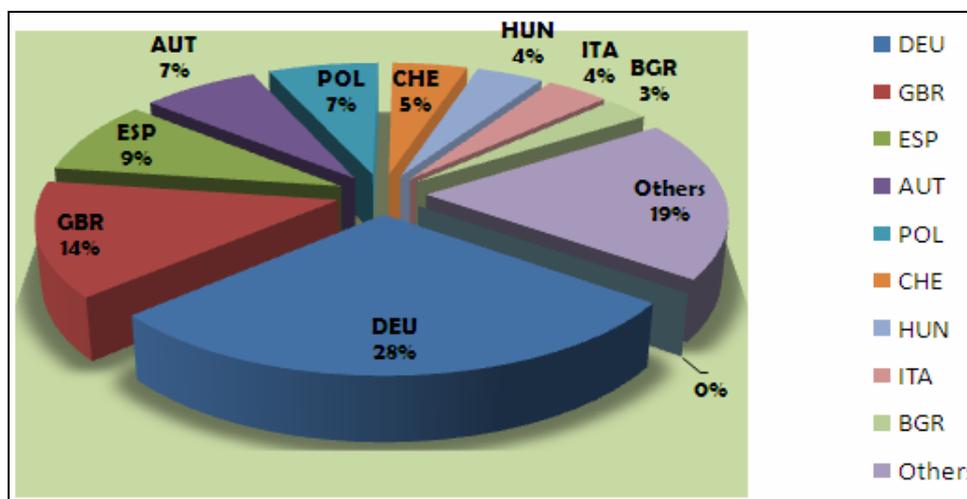
*Figure 1: Results of participant countries*

<b>Germany</b>	<b>1510</b>	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Unit. Kingdom</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>Romania</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>Slovak Rep.</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>Norway</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Poland</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Hungary</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>Estonia</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Italy</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>Denmark</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>Finland</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Cyprus</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>Malta</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>Liechtenstein</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>Luxembourg</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Czech Rep.</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>Latvia</b>	<b>0</b>

The largest number of interceptions was reported by Germany, with 1 510 intercepted irregular immigrants, almost 29 % of the total. A considerable number of interceptions took place in the United Kingdom (728 – 13.74 %), Spain (468 – 8.83 %), Austria (387 – 7.30 %) and Poland (365 – 6.89 %).

It is also worth mentioning that, in contrast to the large numbers reported above, some countries such as Luxemburg and Latvia did not report any interceptions for the operational period, while Liechtenstein reported 1 and Malta 2.

*Figure 2: Top 10 EU/SAC of Interceptions*



### 1.3. Interceptions of illegal immigrants, broken down by gender

Of the overall number of interceptions (5 298), the data received from the participant countries indicated the gender of 3 792 illegal immigrants, of whom 3 096 (71.57 %) were male, 436 (11.50 %) female and 260 (6.86 %) minors under the age of 18.

The numbers broken down by gender for those who were intercepted were as follows:

- **at border-crossing points:** 1 157 males, 232 females, 82 minors;
- **inland:** 1 327 males, 177 females, 110 minors;
- **outside border-crossing points:** 612 males, 27 females and 68 minors.

## **2. Participant countries with the largest number of interceptions**

The findings of the operation showed that some participant countries are more affected than others by illegal migratory trends. These countries are either used as a final destination or as a stepping stone to the desired destination.

### **2.1. Germany**

The top-ranking country was Germany, with a grand total of 1 510 interceptions, involving 122 Turkish nationals, 101 Afghans, 91 Syrians and 86 Russians, as well as nationals of other countries.

*Figure 3: Countries of origin of intercepted illegal immigrants in Germany*  
(see ADD 1 to this document)

### **2.2. United Kingdom**

The second most affected country is the United Kingdom, with a grand total of 728 interceptions involving 186 Iranians, 158 Albanians, 98 Eritreans and 90 Afghans, as well as nationals of other countries.

*Figure 4: Countries of origin of intercepted illegal immigrants in the United Kingdom*  
(see ADD 1 to this document)

### **2.3. Spain**

Spain was the third-ranking country, with a grand total of 468 interceptions involving 67 Moroccans, 45 Algerians, 44 Bolivians and 34 Columbians, as well as nationals of other countries.

*Figure 5: Countries of origin of intercepted illegal immigrants in Spain*  
(see ADD 1 to this document)

## **2.4. Austria**

Austria reported 387 interceptions, involving 122 Pakistanis, 82 Afghans, 21 Moroccans and 15 Bangladeshis, as well as nationals of other countries.

*Figure 6: Countries of origin of intercepted illegal immigrants in Austria*  
(see ADD 1 to this document)

## **2.5. Poland**

Poland reported 365 interceptions, involving 204 Ukrainians, 39 Russians, 33 Belarusians and 23 Vietnamese, as well as nationals of other countries. The majority of those intercepted in Poland appeared to come from the countries of the former Eastern Bloc.

*Figure 7: Countries of origin of intercepted illegal immigrants in Poland*  
(see ADD 1 to this document)

## **2.6. Cyprus**

Cyprus reported a total of 117 interceptions, involving 53 Syrians, 9 Iranians, 8 Georgians and 7 Pakistanis.

*Figure 8: Countries of origin of intercepted illegal immigrants in Cyprus*  
(see ADD 1 to this document)



## 1.1. Final target destinations

An analysis of the data derived from the debriefing process of the intercepted illegal immigrants concerning their target country indicates that the most popular final target destination is the United Kingdom. Germany is also a favoured destination, followed by Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, France, Ireland, Sweden and Cyprus.

*Figure 10: Final target destinations*

<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>872</b>
<b>Germany</b>	<b>672</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>440</b>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Italy</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Cyprus</b>	<b>83</b>

### 1.1.1. Irregular immigrants from Afghanistan and routes followed

450 irregular immigrants from Afghanistan were intercepted during the operation. The debriefing results indicated that the intended final destination for 346 Afghans was mostly Germany (111), followed by the United Kingdom (98), Austria (36), Sweden (30), Italy (20) and Denmark (14).

The main routes followed by illegal immigrants coming from Afghanistan to the EU are via the land borders of Afghanistan to Pakistan and then by plane to Turkey. Turkey gives them easy access by sea to Greece, and then they travel from the Western Balkans to Italy or Austria, with their final destination being Germany, the United Kingdom and Sweden.

*Figure 11: Routes from Afghanistan*

(see ADD 1 to this document)

### **1.1.2. Irregular immigrants from Syria and routes followed**

354 irregular immigrants from Syria were intercepted and during their interview 281 claimed that they were heading for the following countries as their final destination: Germany (86), Cyprus (47), the United Kingdom (39), France (30), Italy (21) and Sweden (21).

The main routes followed by Syrian illegal immigrants are from Syria by boat directly to the areas not under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, or from Syria to Turkey by vehicle. From Turkey they travel mostly by sea to Greece and then to Italy and France. Most of the time they manage to get into Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Sweden, which are believed to be their intended destinations.

*Figure 12: Routes from Syria*

(see ADD 1 to this document)

### **1.1.3. Irregular immigrants from Ukraine and routes followed**

When intercepted, a considerable number of illegal immigrants from Ukraine – 172 out of the total of 312 – wished to return to Ukraine. Another 83 Ukrainians claimed that they were aiming to get to Germany (19), Switzerland (18), Poland (11) and Spain (10) as their final destination.

Illegal immigrants from Ukraine travel mainly through land borders to Poland, and from there they go on to Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and even Spain.

*Figure 13: Routes from Ukraine*

(see ADD 1 to this document)

#### **1.1.4. Irregular immigrants from Pakistan and routes followed**

The total number of illegal immigrants from Pakistan was 306, of whom 164 said that they were heading for the following countries as their final destination: Austria (37), Italy (37), Germany (23), the United Kingdom (22) and Spain (20).

Pakistani illegal immigrants travel by plane, mostly to Turkey. Some of them travel by boat or plane to the areas not under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. Others travel from Turkey mainly through the sea borders to Greece, from where they go on to Austria, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and Spain through the land borders.

#### *Figure 14: Routes from Pakistan*

(see ADD 1 to this document)

#### **1.1.5. Irregular immigrants from Iran and routes followed**

Of the 287 intercepted illegal immigrants from Iran, 272 said that the most popular countries for final destination were: the United Kingdom (196), Germany (22), Cyprus (6) and Austria (5). It is also noticeable that 18 Iranians, upon being intercepted, expressed their wish to return to Iran.

The main routes followed by Iranian illegal immigrants are via land borders to Turkey and then to the areas not under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus or Greece via sea borders. From Greece they go on to Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom and Norway.

#### *Figure 15: Routes from Iran*

(see ADD 1 to this document)

## Chapter III

*The following analytical report has been prepared by the Frontex Agency's Risk Analysis Unit, and covers its contribution to the Operation regarding the illegal border-crossing of migrants at the EU's external borders.*

### 1. Introduction

Joint Police Operation (JPO) Aphrodite was organised under the auspices of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union, focusing on illegal border-crossings and secondary movements of irregular migrants after they had entered European Union Member States and Schengen Associated Countries. All EU Member States and SAC except France and Greece took part in the Operation and reported their data. The Cyprus Presidency shared the data gathered during JPO Aphrodite with the Frontex Risk Analysis Unit.

The aim of this report is to present the situation concerning irregular migration at the EU's external borders before and during JPO Aphrodite. For the purposes of this report (January – September), FRAN data from January to September 2012 was taken into account in conjunction with data from the Poseidon Land, Poseidon Sea, Aeneas, Hermes, Indalo and Focal Points Land JOs for the month of October and the first four days of November 2012. In addition to this data, data from the European Union Document-Fraud Network (EDF) and PULSAR were also used to compile this report.

The time needed to reach destination countries after illegally crossing the EU's external borders is estimated to be from a few weeks up to one year or even longer. Therefore, the number of illegal border-crossings from the beginning of 2012 or from the start of Frontex-coordinated JOs in 2012 were taken into account.

## 2. Irregular migration

### 2.1 Highlights

- The Eastern Mediterranean route continues to be the main route of irregular migration towards the European Union.
- The measures introduced in August 2012 by the Greek authorities at the Greek–Turkish land border and in Athens have had a significant impact with regard to the decrease in illegal border-crossings in the European Union.
- Illegal border-crossings at the Greek–Turkish sea border and at the Bulgarian–Turkish land border increased after the above-mentioned measures in Greece; however the overall number of illegal border-crossings was not as high as before.
- The route via the countries of the Western Balkans is increasingly used for secondary migration from Greece towards the main destination countries in the European Union.

### 2.2 Irregular migration routes

#### Eastern Mediterranean Route

In 2010, 2011 and the first seven months of 2012, the Greek-Turkish land border section was the most affected border section along the Eastern Mediterranean route.

On 30 July 2012, the Hellenic Police Headquarters announced the temporary deployment of 1 881 additional police officers and technical equipment to the Evros region, in the framework of Operation "Aspida", the use of new tactics for border surveillance and improved cooperation with the Turkish authorities at the border. In parallel, Operation "Xenios Zeus" provided for a significant increase in capacity for hosting irregular migrants in detention centres in order to be able to identify and return irregular migrants and a reduction from 30 to 7 days of the period within which irregular migrants have to leave Greece if not held in detention centres, as well as inland activities for the detection of irregular migrants on Greek territory. This brought about a substantial decrease in the number of illegal border-crossings at the Greek-Turkish land border and a partial displacement of the illegal migration flow originating from and transiting via Turkey to adjacent EU external borders.

*Figure 16: The map illustrates the total number of arrests in the Eastern Mediterranean from 1 January to 4 November 2012 and 2011. In order to read the statistics properly, the information for the Poseidon Sea JO has been divided into Areas Alpha and Bravo.*  
(see ADD 2 to this document)

- **Greek-Turkish land border (Poseidon Land JO)**

From 1 January 2012 to 4 November 2012, a total of 30 019 irregular migrants were apprehended in the operational area of the 2012 Poseidon Land Joint Operation with respect to the Greek-Turkish land border section. In 2012, the five most common nationalities apprehended at the Greek-Turkish land border were Afghani (7 722 or 26% of the total), Syrian (5 112 or 17%), Bangladeshi (4 542 or 15%), Pakistani (2 381 or 8%), and Algerian (2 219 or 7%).

Since 5 August 2012, the enhanced surveillance and patrolling activities at the Greek-Turkish land border has resulted in a drastic drop in the number of detections of illegal border-crossing, down from approximately 2 000 in the first week of August to below 10 in each of the final weeks of October. This reduction in the number of irregular migrants occurred even though it was particularly easy to cross the river Evros as the water level was low during the summer months.

The response of the Turkish authorities to the request for assistance by the Greek, and subsequently the Bulgarian, authorities has also been instrumental in the decrease in the number of detections since August 2012. The Turkish authorities have intensified their patrols along the border and have also shown an increased response rate to alerts received from Greek patrols about groups of would-be migrants observed on Turkish soil. Detections of all nationalities decreased as a consequence of Operation "Aspida".

- **Bulgarian-Turkish land border**

From 1 January until 4 November 2012, a total of 1 166 persons were apprehended for illegal green border-crossing; this is an increase of approximately 164% compared to the same period in 2011 (441). Thus far, the main nationalities apprehended during 2012 are Syrian (397 or 36% of the total), Iraqi (206 or 18%), Palestinian (140 or 13%), Algerian (61 or 5%) and Turkish (39 or 4%).

Moreover, during the first seven months of 2012, the rate of irregular migrant detections and arrests along this border section followed the same fluctuations as in 2011 and 2010. Since the beginning of Operation "Aspida" (the first week of August 2012), crossing the border in the Evros region has become more difficult, thereby causing a displacement of migrants towards the Bulgarian-Turkish border. The number of migrants detected in Bulgaria since August has risen compared to previous months and varies between 40 and 80 a week.

- **Greek-Turkish maritime border (Poseidon Sea JO)**

During the period referred to above, a total of 3 170 persons were apprehended for illegal border-crossing in the Aegean Sea. Following the mass deployment of police officers to the Greek-Turkish land border, the number of incidents reported in the Aegean Sea sharply increased in August due to the partial displacement of illegal migrants from Istanbul to the western coast of Turkey (Izmir) and to the arrival of Syrian nationals travelling directly from the Syrian-Turkish border to Izmir. The main nationalities detected at the Greek-Turkish maritime border were Afghani (1 702), Syrian (788), Pakistani (442) and Iraqi (254).

Prior to the beginning of Operation "Aspida", the number of migrants crossing the Aegean Sea was below 200 per month; however, during the months of August, September and October, the number of incidents stabilised to a level of 700 migrants.

On 2 October 2012, the Greek authorities extended Operation "Xenios Zeus" to the city of Patras. The extension of that operation could trigger the departure towards Italy or other EU Member States of those illegal migrants who have settled in Patras.

The Hellenic Coast Guard and the Hellenic Police facilities on the Aegean Islands are overcrowded with illegal migrants, while the detention centres on the Aegean Islands remain closed. Moreover, illegal migrants are being released from those facilities as new migrants are arrested in the operational area.

The situation in the above-mentioned facilities is well known to the would-be migrants waiting in Turkey; therefore, once illegal migrants arrive on the Aegean Islands, they turn themselves in to the local authorities in order to obtain the administrative order to leave within 30 days that allows them to travel by ferry to Athens. Once in Athens these migrants contact criminal networks that enable them to travel to their next destination using different routes and *modus operandi* depending on the financial capacity of the illegal migrants.

- **EPN-Aeneas JO**

The 2012 EPN-Aeneas JO started on 2 July and was scheduled to run until 31 October 2012, but it was extended until 15 December 2012.

In the first nine months of 2012, 4 120 irregular migrants were reported in the framework of FRAN. During the first four months of 2012, a lower number of arrivals was recorded in Apulia and Calabria compared to the same period in 2011. In May, following seasonal trends consistent with previous years, the figure rose rapidly and sharply, and remained high until August. At that time, it was assumed that the sharp increase in detections in the Ionian Sea was linked to the increase in the number of illegal migrants apprehended at the Greek-Turkish land border (Poseidon Land JO).

At the beginning of August the exponential increase which had begun in May slowed down. This decrease in the number of arrivals can be linked to the decrease in the number of irregular migrants apprehended at the Greek-Turkish land border.

Since August, the strong presence of Greek police officers at the land border with Turkey has caused a partial displacement of migrants towards the west coast of Turkey and thereafter to Greece and to Italy's sea border. In the area of Aeneas, the total number of migrants apprehended was lower than expected taking into account historical data. Although the figures have been lower than expected, the annual trend until the end of October shows a slight increase (+9%) in the total number of migrants apprehended in Aeneas, compared to the same period in 2011. The main nationalities of the irregular migrants apprehended in the area of the EPN-Aeneas JO correspond to those recorded in the Poseidon Land and Sea JO. In other words, nationals from Afghanistan (645) top the list, followed by nationals from Pakistan (576), Bangladesh (422) and Syria (357).

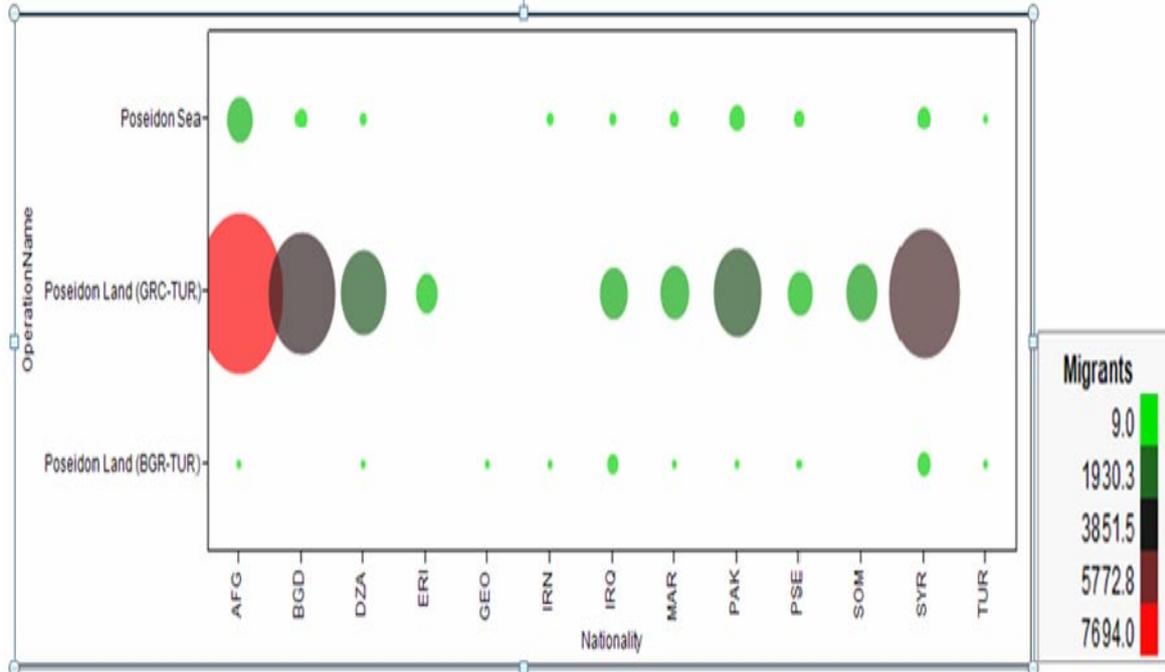
Since August 2012, a new profile was identified for Afghan and Pakistan nationals travelling from Greece towards Italy. According to their statements, they had been living and working in Greece, in particular in Athens and surrounding areas, for several years, but were forced to move from Greece due to the economic crisis, the lack of job opportunities and the increase in violence against illegal migrants. In July and August there was an increase in detections of illegal migrants from Syria (Syrians and Syrian Kurds) compared to previous months and a later slowdown at the end of September. A significant number of detected Syrians were family units and young males who had fled from Syria to avoid being forced to join the army. A large number of Syrians claimed to be Kurds.

### **Nationalities of apprehended migrants**

Nearly 34 000 arrests for illegal border-crossing were recorded in the framework of all the joint operations coordinated by Frontex in the Eastern Mediterranean during the first nine months of 2012.

Afghan nationals continued to rank first, representing approximately 27% of all those apprehended. They were followed by Syrians (17%), Bangladeshis (14%), Pakistanis (9%) and Algerians (7%). See the chart below on the breakdown by nationality per joint operation; the reference period is from January to August 2012.

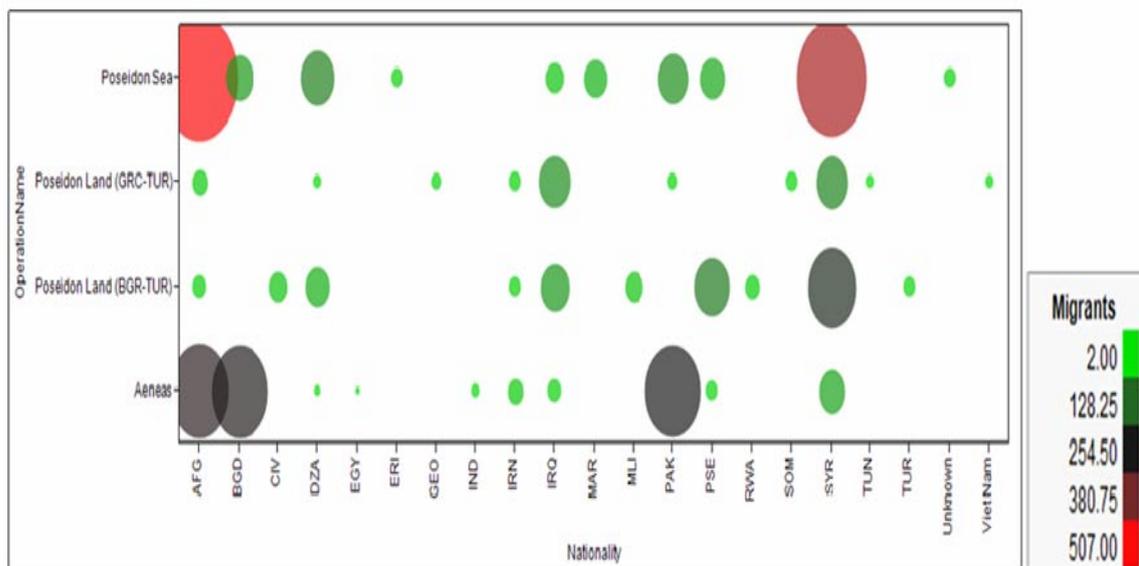
Figure 17: Detections of illegal border-crossings, by nationality, from January to August 2012



In September and October 2012, 3 680 irregular migrants were apprehended along the Eastern Mediterranean route. As was the case for the previous reference period, Afghan nationals ranked first, accounting for around 29% of all those apprehended. However, the proportion of Syrian nationals rose to 23% of the total, followed by Pakistanis (11%), Bangladeshis (10%) and Iraqis (6%).

The main "pull factors" inducing different nationalities to choose different EU countries can be linked to the existence of immigrant communities, the presence of relatives and whether it is possible to benefit from the welfare system. For example, the majority of Syrian nationals claimed Sweden, Germany and Finland as their final destination owing to such pull factors.

*Figure 18: Detections of illegal border-crossings, by nationality, from 1 September to 4 November 2012*



In general the most commonly claimed final destinations were: Italy, Finland, Germany, France and the United Kingdom. For many migrants, Greece is only a stop-over country before they move further to other EU countries either by land, sea or air.

In the event that the Hellenic Authorities continue to conduct operations against illegal migration not only directly at the border in the Evros region but also inland, this might trigger the intensive use of the Balkan route as well as the sea routes from the west coast of Greece towards Italy.

### **Central Mediterranean route**

The EPN-Hermes operation targets the Central Mediterranean route, covering the areas of Sicily, Pantelleria and the Pelagic Islands (Lampedusa, Linosa, Lampione). Moreover, it focuses on migrant boats which have departed from Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. During the period from 2 July to 4 November 2012, migrant arrests totalled 4 296, while the main detected nationalities were Tunisian (1 094), Somali (840), Eritrean (806) and Egyptian (353).

The migrants either used the services of facilitation networks, or they organised the sea crossing by themselves, using rubber dinghies and wooden fishing boats.

Departures from the Libyan coast mainly took place from Tripoli and, to a lesser extent, Benghazi. The migrants detected on these boats were mainly from the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan) and the sub-Saharan region (Nigeria, Gambia or Mali). It is worth noting that no Libyans were detected on this route.

Egyptian nationals (young males carrying no documents, so as to avoid repatriation) were mainly fleeing from Egypt to Italy, using fishing boats and targeting the coast of Sicily.

As regards departures from the Tunisian coast, the boats were almost exclusively populated by Tunisian migrants. A change in the area of departure was noticed in October 2012, compared with previous months. The majority of departures moved from the south Tunisian coast to the northern coast of Sicily, probably due to the weather conditions at sea. Following bilateral talks between Italy and Tunisia and the signing of an agreement which came into force in September 2012 concerning the repatriation of 100 Tunisian nationals per week from Italy, the number of Tunisian nationals dropped significantly. A total of 242 Tunisians were apprehended during the month of September; this figure decreased to 76 during the month of October.

### **Western Mediterranean Route**

The Indalo JO monitors illegal migratory flows mainly originating from North African and sub-Saharan countries towards the southern coast of Spain. The operation took place from 16 May to 31 October and was launched in the Spanish coastal areas of the provinces of Cadiz, Malaga, Granada, Almeria and Murcia.

During the operational phase 169 incidents were reported in the operational area, involving 2 260 illegal migrants. The main nationalities of those apprehended were: Algerian (32%), Moroccan (10%) and Chadian (5%). It is worth noting that a significant share of apprehended irregular migrants (23%) refused to cooperate with the Spanish authorities; their identity, and consequently their nationality, therefore remains unknown. Irregular migrants departed from both Morocco and Algeria towards Spain.

The main place of departure from Morocco was the area between Tangiers and Ceuta. The reason for this is the narrowness of the Strait of Gibraltar which attracts illegal migration as well as smuggling activities. Although Spain is close to the departure area, the Strait of Gibraltar, together with the non-stop traffic of large ships through the Strait and the strong sea current, represents a real danger in terms of the risk to migrants' lives. Despite that risk and frequent reports concerning migrant fatalities in the Strait of Gibraltar, migrants continue to use rubber dinghies, toy rubber boats and jet skis to cross the Strait. Jet skis are mainly used in smuggling activities, and the smugglers drop the smuggled goods into the sea when spotted by the Spanish authorities.

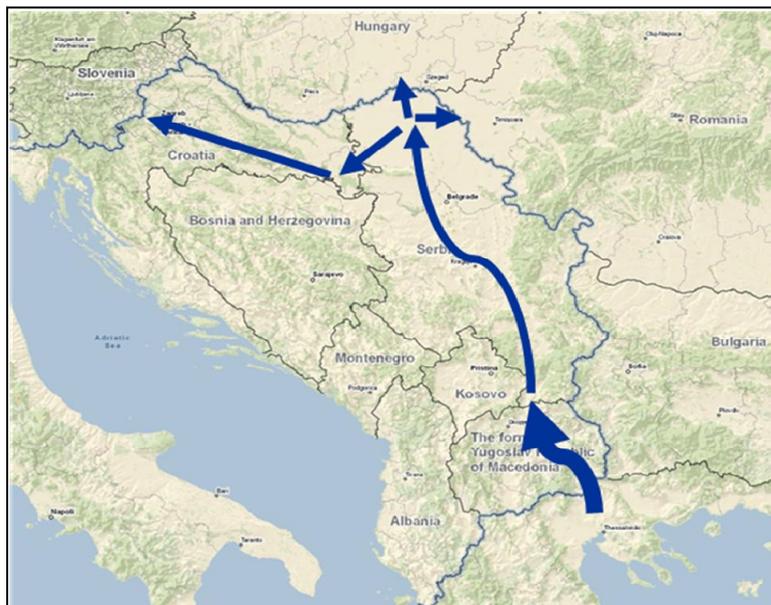
Algerians use departure points from Algeria, Ghazouet, Oran and Mostaganem targeting the areas of Almeria and Murcia in Spain. Fibreglass boats and rubber dinghies are used as means of transportation.

### **Western Balkans route**

Almost 24 000 illegal border-crossings between border-crossing points (BCPs) were reported at the borders of Western Balkan countries during the first three quarters of 2012. This figure is 36% higher than for the same period the previous year. For the second consecutive year, the border between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia reported the highest number of illegal border-crossings (5 935). The number of apprehended migrants at this border section increased by approximately 33% compared to the previous year. The increasing trend at the Slovenian–Croatian border, with 858 illegal border crossings (+138% compared with the previous quarter) and at the Croatian–Serbian border, with 1 654 (+54%) in the third quarter of 2012 is a sign of continuous changes in irregular migration routes through the Western Balkans area.

In terms of nationalities, two-thirds of all detections in the Western Balkan countries were linked to migrants who entered the Western Balkans en route from Greece (i.e. Afghans, Pakistanis, Somalis, Moroccans, Syrians and Bangladeshis). In this connection, Afghanistan accounts for the highest number of nationals (5 653), followed by Pakistan (3 425) in second place, Algeria (2 535) in third place, Morocco (1 177) in fourth place and Somalia (1 046) in fifth place.

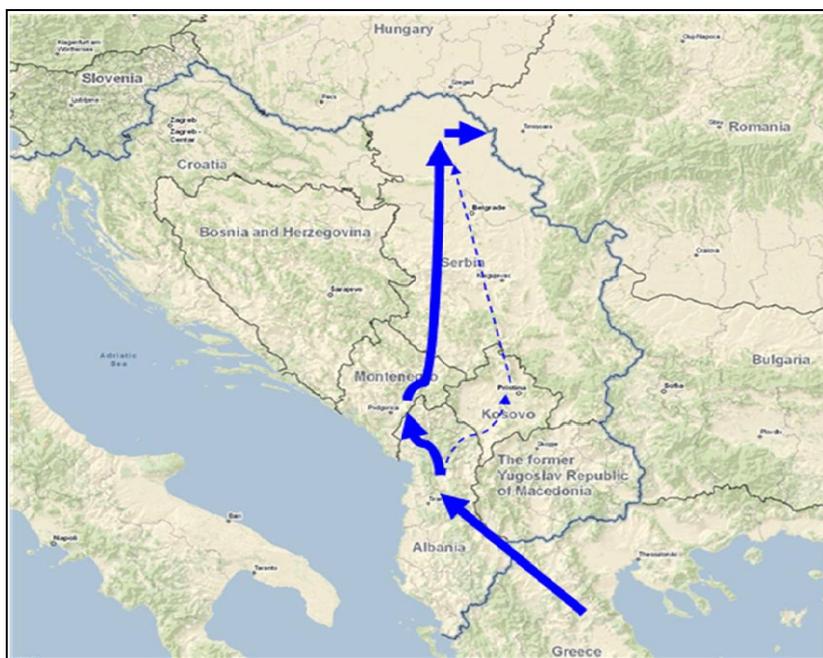
With regard to secondary migration from Greece via Western Balkan countries, there are two main routes which migrants use and both of them start in Athens.



*Figure 19: Route used by Afghan and Pakistani migrants from Greece across the Western Balkan countries in 2012*

Migrants from Afghanistan and Pakistan use the route through Thessaloniki, Gevgelija (in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and Lojane (close to the Serbian border) where they stay in a ‘safe house’ for a couple of days. After entering Serbia on foot, they are transported in vans or buses to Belgrade and then to Subotica, which is close to the border with Hungary. In Subotica, illegal migrants stay in forest camps and decide on which route to take to continue their journey: via Croatia, Hungary or Romania. These routes are controlled by a facilitation network composed of Afghan and Pakistani facilitators as the main ‘players’ and locals, from all of the countries on the route, as transport providers.

Migrants from Arab countries use the route through Albania; they enter from Greece on foot and use buses to reach Tirana and Shkoder on the border with Montenegro. After entering Montenegro on foot, buses are used to reach Podgorica and Rožaje and from there they cross the border to Serbia on foot. The first major city the migrants reach in Serbia is Novi Pazar; here they use public transportation to reach either Belgrade or Subotica, or alternatively they travel directly to Kikinda at the border with Romania. It appears that the migrants use this route without the help of organised facilitation networks. In fact, it appears that mosques are being used, as well as information accessible on social networks on the internet.



*Figure 20: route used by migrants from Arab countries from Greece across the Western Balkan countries in 2012*

The decision on which country to choose after reaching Serbia is mainly taken after reaching the city of Subotica at the Hungarian–Serbian border and depends on the possibilities offered by facilitation networks, the effectiveness of border authorities and the implementation of bilateral agreements. According to the information received during interviews with the migrants apprehended at the Romanian–Serbian border, the facilitators offer illegal migrants all three possibilities: Croatia, Hungary and Romania.

## **Eastern border Route**

The eastern land border route is, in effect, a combination of detections of illegal border-crossing reported by Lithuania, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, Finland and Latvia. Despite the total length of all the border sections, detections of illegal migrants tend to be lower than on other routes, possibly due to the long distances between major hubs (Moscow, Kiev and Minsk) and the many different countries of origin. In the first three quarters of 2012, 1 873 detections of illegal border-crossing were reported at the EU's eastern land border, which is almost equal to the previous year when 1 895 detections were reported.

During the first three quarters of 2012 the Slovak-Ukrainian border was the most affected by illegal border-crossings at the EU's eastern land border, with 583 reported illegal border-crossings. The Romanian–Moldovan border ranked second among European Union eastern land border sections, with 263 migrants apprehended, and the Lithuanian-Belarusian border ranked third in terms of arrests, with 260 illegal border-crossings reported. In terms of nationalities of illegal migrants, Georgian nationals (299) were the most reported nationality, followed by Ukrainian (288), Somali (273), Moldovan (256) and Afghan (206) respectively. A comparison of the overall numbers by the top five nationalities does not show any significant change compared to the previous year. The exception is migrants of Somali nationality, where a 90% increase was noted in the first three quarters of 2012 compared to 2011. Analysing the different land border sections and comparing the detection of Georgian, Moldovan, Ukrainian and Somali migrants, no significant change can be noted on the main routes used. In the case of Afghan nationals, this has changed.

For the first time in five years, Afghan nationals have been detected at the Polish-Belarusian and Romanian-Ukrainian borders and in increasing numbers at the Romanian-Moldovan border. If the measures taken by Greece against illegal migration continue, it is possible that this new route will be affected by a significant flow in the future.

The phenomenon of irregular migration combined with the use of falsified documents of migrants from West and Central African countries (Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Guinea and Angola) continued during 2012; these migrants travelled via Russia to Finland and the Baltic countries. Following the discovery of false documents the migrants usually ask for asylum during the interview. According to information from the Russian Border Guard Service, the Russian authorities are also active in detecting falsified documents and were able to stop several attempts by migrants from the above- mentioned Central African countries to exit from Russia towards Finland and the Baltic countries.

### **Air borders**

For the purpose of this report the number of identified falsified documents at the EU's air borders in the first three quarters of 2012 was taken into account. During the first three quarters of 2012, a total of 3 035 falsified documents were reported to the EDF from the EU's air borders.

Italy reported a total of 591 persons using false documents on entry at their air borders in 2012 and the top three claimed nationalities were Nigerian, Sri Lankan and Moroccan. In Germany, 351 persons were detected and in most cases they claimed to be Afghans, Iranians and Syrians. Spain ranked third, with 418 persons reported for using false documents, the top two nationalities being Nigerian and Albanian.

### *Top nationalities*

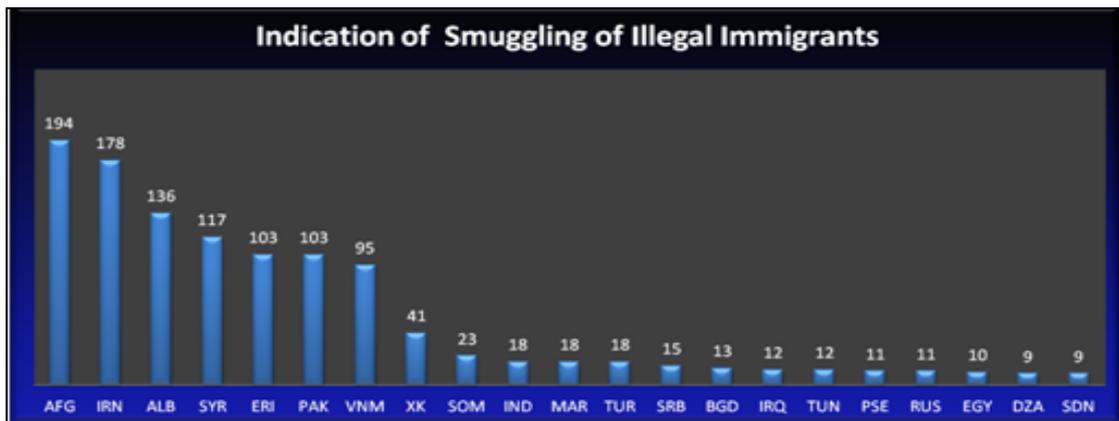
In the first nine months of 2012, Nigerians (201) and Pakistanis (200) were the top two nationalities of persons detected using falsified documents at the EU's external air border. Nigerian nationals were mainly detected at Italian (66), British (41) and Spanish (38) airports. Passports (95) were the main identified falsified document used by Nigerians followed by visas (51) and residence permits (44). It is worth noting that false visas and residence permits were used in genuine passports as well as in false passports and, conversely, genuine visas and residence permits were used in false passports. The main departing airports of Nigerians using false documents were Lagos, Bissau and Casablanca. With regard to Pakistani nationals, Greece (70), Poland (34) and the United Kingdom (25) reported the highest number of false documents. Residence permits (97) were detected to be false in almost half of the reported false documents used by Pakistanis. And the most used *modus operandi* was the use of stolen blank residence permits. The main departure points for Pakistanis were the three largest airports in Pakistan; Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore.

## Chapter IV

### 1. Indications of smuggling of illegal immigrants

Throughout the operation the total of 194 Afghans, 178 Iranians, 136 Albanians, 117 Syrians, 103 Eritreans and 103 Pakistanis and other nationalities, as indicated in Figure 22, reported during their interview that they were facilitated or smuggled during their routes to Europe.

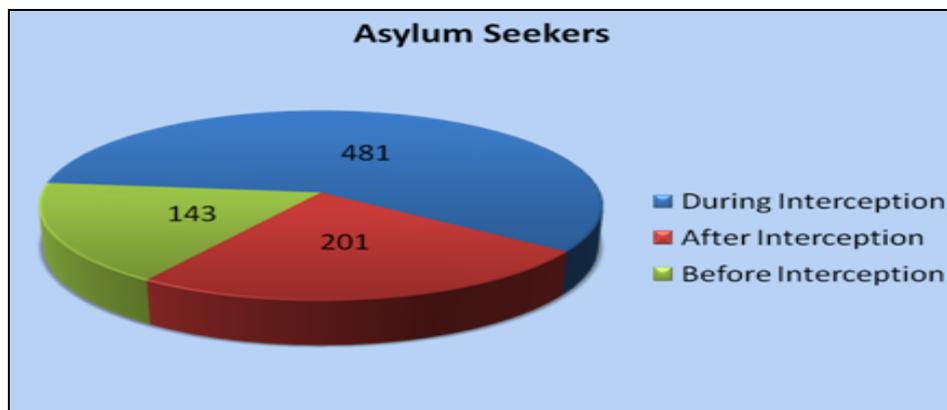
Figure 21: Indication of smuggling of illegal immigrants



### 2. Asylum seekers

Out of the total of 5,298 interceptions, 481 people applied for international protection upon being intercepted, and 201 applied after being intercepted. It should be noted that 143 of these had applied in the past for international protection in an EU or SAC Member State before their interception.

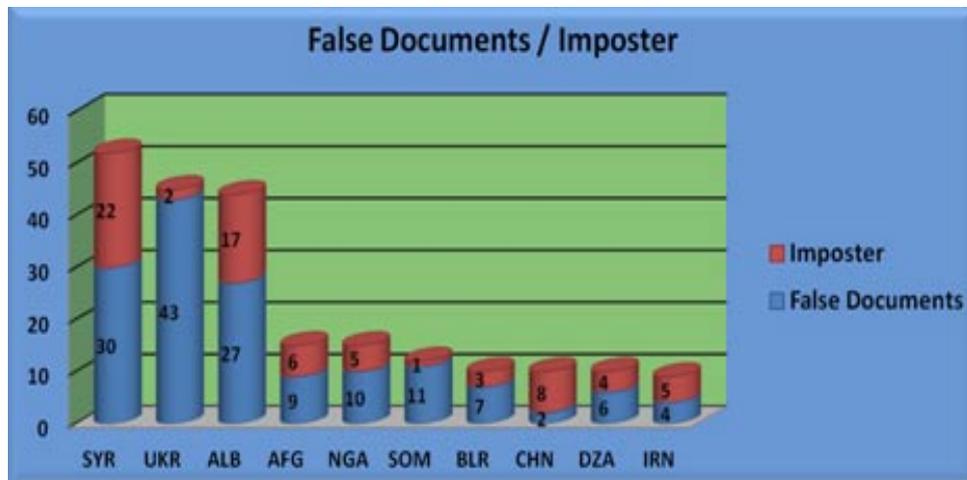
Figure 22: Asylum seekers



### 3. False documents

The total number of illegal immigrants who used false travel documents or were involved in imposture cases was 339. The top 10 nationalities of intercepted illegal immigrants using false documents or apprehended because of involvement in cases of imposture were: Syrians (55), Ukrainians (45), Albanians (44), Afghans (15), Nigerians (15), Somalis (12), Belarusians (10), Chinese (10), Algerians (10) and Iranians (9).

Figure 23: False documents/Imposture cases involving third-country nationals



Furthermore, it should be noted that different types of false documents were used, such as passports, ID cards, visas, stamps and other documents. The following figure illustrates the top 10 nationalities of false or falsified travel documents used. It is clearly pointed out that Italian false or falsified travel documents are the most widely used.

Figure 24: Top 10 nationalities of false travel documents

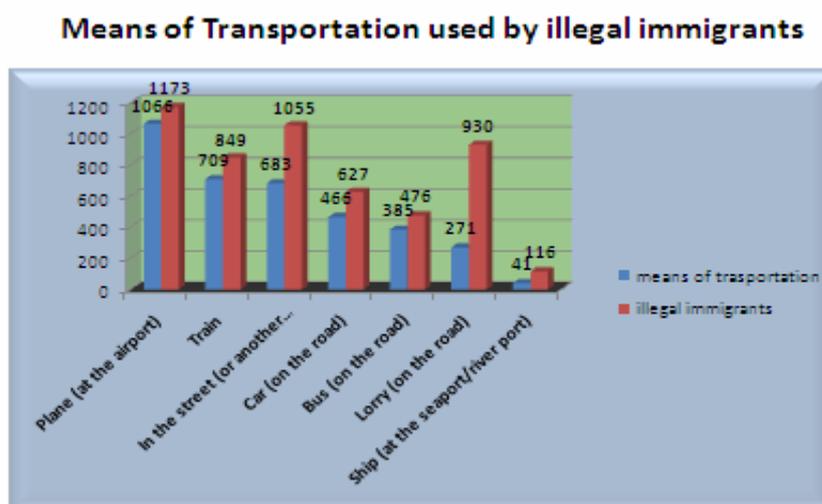


#### 4. Means of transportation

- Type of transportation

Different types of transportation were used by illegal immigrants to effect their entry into the EU. Specifically, 1,173 were detected at the air borders (aeroplane), 930 in lorries, 849 in trains, 627 in cars, 476 in buses and 116 in ships. Furthermore, 1,055 interceptions of illegal immigrants took place in the street.

Figure 25



- **Illegal immigrants intercepted at air borders (aeroplane)**

The top five nationalities intercepted at the air borders were mostly Turkish (79), Russian (74), Syrian (64), Chinese (61) and Albanian (55).

- **Illegal immigrants intercepted in public places**

Concerning interceptions in public places, the top five nationalities are: Afghan (112), Syrian (90), Pakistani (83), Algerian (65) and Ukrainian (56).

- **Illegal immigrants intercepted in lorries**

The top five nationalities of intercepted illegal immigrants who used lorries for transportation purposes were mainly Iranian (171), Afghan (144), Albanian (136), Pakistani (123) and Eritrean (97).

- **Illegal immigrants intercepted in trains**

The top five nationalities of intercepted illegal immigrants who used trains for transportation purposes were mainly Afghan (116), Nigerian (76), Syrian (61), Algerian (59) and Tunisian (53).

- **Illegal immigrants intercepted in cars**

The top five nationalities of intercepted illegal immigrants who used cars for transportation purposes were Russian (50), Kosovan [under UNSCR 1244](50), Ukrainian (48), Georgian (47) and Syrian (44).

- **Illegal immigrants intercepted in buses**

The top five nationalities of intercepted illegal immigrants who used buses for transportation purposes were Ukrainian (163), Pakistani (25), Syrian (22), Russian (20) and Serbian (19).

## **5. Costs**

The operation was carried out using the available capacity of the Member States and the Frontex Agency, with no additional costs.

## **6. Evaluation of the operation**

### **6.1 Degree to which the aims and objectives of the JPO were attained**

It can be concluded that the aims and objectives of the operation were very largely achieved. The level of participation was massive, involving 26 Member States and 2 SAC. The preparation phase was carried out smoothly with no particular difficulties.

During the operational period the following (minor) issues were raised:

- There were delays in sending daily reports
- A small number of Member States faced problems in sending operational data via the JPO Template and used their own methods. As a result difficulties occurred during the data analysis.
- Although the guidelines provided that the operation would focus only on the detection of immigrants who managed to enter the EU and SAC area illegally, a small number of Member States included operational data concerning the detention of overstayers.
- Although the guidelines of the operational template stressed the need to complete necessary information such as the gender of the detected migrants, some Member States sent data without including information on gender.

### **6.2 General assessment, including the analytical results, the added value and usefulness of the operation (including its cost efficiency), as well as difficulties encountered and lessons learned**

- Currently the Eastern Mediterranean route is the most important route for illegal border-crossing at the European Union's external borders. Any changes in terms of increase and decrease have a significant impact on the overall picture of irregular migration towards European Union Member States. Consequently, any activities targeting illegal border-crossings and focused only in this area have an important influence on the overall number of irregular migrants illegally entering the European Union.

- Based on the reports sent by the participant Member States, the Eastern Mediterranean route is mainly used by illegal immigrants from Asian as well as Middle East countries. In particular, nationals from Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan and Iran travel mainly by air towards Turkey and then illegally cross the external borders (sea, land) and manage to enter Greece illegally.
- The measures undertaken to target irregular migration at a specific border section usually push the irregular migrants to use other routes and/or postpone the illegal border-crossing until a time that is more convenient for the irregular migrants. Irregular migrants using the Greek-Turkish land border for illegal border-crossings started to use the routes next to it, namely the Greek-Turkish sea border and the Bulgarian-Turkish land border (although the numbers of such migrants were considerably lower). The increased activities of the Greek police at the Greek-Turkish land border will have an effect on irregular migration at that border as long as they continue their efforts. At the same time, similar measures could be implemented covering the whole Eastern Mediterranean route.
- Once they manage to enter the EU in the Eastern Mediterranean area, migrants continue their journey in order to reach their final destination, attempting to avoid detection. Based on the results of the operation, many of them manage to reach the desired final destination. It can be safely concluded that efforts at combating illegal immigration might be assisted by enhancing police operations in Member States where migrants achieve illegal entry, or in neighbouring Member States.
- Secondary migration of irregular migrants has an important impact on the number of illegal border-crossings at the European Union's external borders with Western Balkan countries as well as on the movement of irregular migrants across the internal borders of European Union Member States. The top ten nationalities of irregular migrants apprehended at the European Union's external borders and the top ten nationalities of migrants reported during JPO Aphrodite can be considered similar.
- We can only speculate about the reasons why they are not exactly the same. However, the patterns of secondary migration are influenced by factors such as the destination country of irregular migrants, facilitation possibilities and diasporas or family members already residing in the European Union.

### **6.3 Recommendation for possible future improvements or best practices and/or further action**

- Such an operation should be continued by other Member States running the Presidency or the European Council.
- Extending the operation from one to two weeks led to safer and more reliable results.
- The target of the operation was the mapping of routes followed within the EU MS and SAC area as well as the points of entry of the external borders. It is important to combine the points of entry at the EU's external borders and the routes followed within the EU MS and SAC area in order to have a global picture of the modus operandi.
- Cooperation between law enforcement agencies of the Member States and border guard authorities should be enhanced.
- Law enforcement operational activities of EU Member States and SAC should be stepped up as regards the detention of illegal immigrants moving within the EU area. In this way, illegal immigrants could be detected either at the first Member State they enter illegally or in a neighbouring Member State, and could be prevented from reaching the final destination.
- Law enforcement agencies should be able to use debriefing methods on a daily basis in order to extract information from illegal immigrants regarding modus operandi and routes followed in order to enter the EU and Schengen area.
- It should be possible to analyse operational data sent to Frontex and compare it with operational activities coordinated by Frontex at the EU's external borders for evaluation purposes.
- The involvement of Frontex Agency is very valuable in the whole process of the operation as well as during the procedure for evaluating of the results.