

10 years of Frontex and its way forward - partners perspective

The participants of the final panel of the European Day for Border Guards 2015 praised Frontex for, as Oldřich Martinů put it, “delivering excellent work” during its ten years of existence. Martinů, Europol’s Deputy Director, said the anniversary and a new Executive Director provide Frontex with an opportunity for reflection. “The new director can now take on new challenges with the existing structures,” he said.

Martinů said one place where there was room for improvement was the exchange of information between all EU agencies within the Justice and Home Affairs area. Each has to consider whether it has gathered information that could be used by others in their work. This, he said, would not only help to improve investigations of crimes, but also prevent them from happening in the first place. “This applies in all areas, including facilitation of human trafficking”.

The new “hotspot” concept proposed by the European Commission should facilitate the exchange of information as it will bring Europol closer to Frontex and EASO in the field, Martinů said. This will allow all of the agencies to receive information about events closer to when they happen, as usually such information arrives late and does not give any real added value to Europol.

With the growing emphasis on cooperation with third countries to help stem the flow of migrants, Martinů pointed out that while such exchange is taking place with Balkan countries, he was pessimistic over the ability to receive data from northern Africa because of data protection requirements.

Adriano Silvestri, the Head of Sector Asylum, Migration and Borders at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) told the audience that his agency was open to helping Frontex face new challenges in its second decade. “We, as a sister agency, want to use our expertise to help manage and minimise the risk of violation of fundamental rights,” he said. “We go out to Member States, border guards, other stakeholders, migrants in places like Sicily and Malta. Out of this we produce reports where we suggest possible steps Frontex and officials at policy level in Brussels could take.”

Krum Garkov, the Executive Director, European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA) said a closer cooperation between agencies could help make EU borders both more secure and more open: “One of the challenges we all together have to address today is the make Europe secure, but also more easily accessible for people who come with good intentions”. Garkov emphasised that the EU agencies should tap the existing knowledge and information instead of “reinventing the wheel again and again” by creating new projects that duplicate at least some parts of existing ones.

Aija Kalnaja, the Head of Training and Research Unit at European Police College (CEPOL) emphasised that training across EU borders was one of the factors that could go a long way toward facilitating such cooperation. “In the military, the lack of training is apparent. You lose battles. In law enforcement, it is less apparent,” she said.

Kalnaja praised Frontex for its efforts to harmonise training for border guards, which serve as an example for other law enforcement groups. “In police, we’re not there because we are so diverse. It is high time for common training at the European level”. She also pointed to the external dimension to internal security, saying there should be more emphasis on capacity building in the countries in the European Union’s neighbourhood.

