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LEGISLATIVE ACTS AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Subject: Status Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Albania
on actions carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in
the Republic of Albania

STATUS AGREEMENT
BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION
AND THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
ON ACTIONS CARRIED OUT
BY THE EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY
IN THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

THE EUROPEAN UNION,

of the one part, and

THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA,

of the other part,

hereinafter jointly referred to as "the Parties",

WHEREAS situations may arise where the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, hereinafter referred to as "the Agency", as a structure of the European Union, coordinates the operational cooperation between Member States of the European Union and the Republic of Albania, including operational actions on the territory of the Republic of Albania,

WHEREAS a legal framework in the form of a status agreement should be established for the situations where the team members of the Agency may have executive powers on the territory of the Republic of Albania,

CONSIDERING that all actions of the Agency on the territory of the Republic of Albania should fully respect fundamental rights and international acts to which the Republic of Albania is party,

HAVE DECIDED TO CONCLUDE THIS AGREEMENT:

ARTICLE 1

Scope

1. This Agreement shall cover all aspects that are necessary for carrying out actions by the Agency that may take place in the territory of the Republic of Albania whereby team members of the Agency have executive powers.
2. This Agreement shall only apply in the territory of the Republic of Albania.
3. The status and delimitation under international law of the respective territories of the Member States of the European Union and the Republic of Albania is in no way affected either by this Agreement or by any act accomplished in its implementation by the Parties or on their behalf, including the establishment of operational plans or the participation in cross-border operations.

ARTICLE 2

Definitions

For the purposes of this Agreement, the following definitions apply:

- (1) "action" means a joint operation, a rapid border intervention or a return operation;

- (2) "joint operation" means an action aimed at tackling illegal immigration or cross-border crime or aimed at providing increased technical and operational assistance at the border of the Republic of Albania neighbouring a Member State and deployed in the territory of the Republic of Albania;
- (3) "rapid border intervention" means an action aimed at rapidly responding to a situation of specific and disproportionate challenges at the borders of the Republic of Albania neighbouring a Member State and deployed in the territory of the Republic of Albania for a limited period of time;
- (4) "return operation" means an operation that is coordinated by the Agency and involves technical and operational reinforcement being provided by one or more Member States under which returnees from one or more Member States are returned either on a forced or voluntary basis to the Republic of Albania;
- (5) "border control" means the control of persons carried out at a border in response exclusively to an intention to cross or the act of crossing that border, regardless of any other consideration, consisting of border checks at border crossing points and border surveillance between border crossing points;
- (6) "member of the team" means a member either of the Agency staff or a member of a team of border guards and other relevant staff from participating Member States, including border guards and other relevant staff that are seconded by Member States to the Agency to be deployed during an action;

- (7) "Member State" means a Member State of the European Union;
- (8) "home Member State" means the Member State of which a member of the team is a border guard or other relevant staff member;
- (9) "personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person; an identifiable person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person;
- (10) "participating Member State" means a Member State which participates in an action in the Republic of Albania by providing technical equipment, border guards and other relevant staff deployed as part of the team;
- (11) "the Agency" means the European Border and Coast Guard Agency established by Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 of the European Parliament and of the Council¹;

¹ 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 (OJ EU L 251, 16.9.2016, p. 1).

- (12) "executive powers of the members of the team" means powers necessary to perform the tasks required for border control and return operations which are conducted on the territory of the Republic of Albania during a joint action as included in the operational plan;
- (13) "*force majeure*" includes, without limitation, any act of war (whether declared or not), invasion, armed conflict or foreign enemy action, blockade, riot, terrorism or exercise of military power, earthquake, flood, fire, storm or natural disaster and, whenever it happens, any event or circumstance analogous to the above.

ARTICLE 3

Operational plan

1. An operational plan, that has the agreement of the Member State or Member States bordering the operational area, shall be agreed between the Agency and the Republic of Albania for each joint operation or rapid border intervention.
2. The operational plan shall set out in detail the organisational and procedural aspects of the joint operation or rapid border intervention, including a description and an assessment of the situation, the operational aim and objectives, the operational concept, the type of technical equipment to be deployed, the implementation plan, the cooperation with other third countries, other Agencies and bodies of the European Union or international organisations, the provisions in respect of fundamental rights including personal data protection, the coordination, command, control, communication and reporting structure, the organisational arrangements and logistics, the evaluation and the financial aspects of the joint operation or rapid border intervention.

3. The evaluation of the joint operation or of the rapid border intervention shall be conducted jointly by the Republic of Albania and by the Agency.

ARTICLE 4

Tasks and powers of the members of the team

1. Members of the team shall have the authority to perform the tasks and exercise the executive powers required for border control and return operations.
2. Members of the team shall respect the laws and regulations of the Republic of Albania.
3. Members of the team may only perform tasks and exercise powers in the territory of the Republic of Albania under instructions from and, as a general rule, in the presence of border guards or other relevant staff of the Republic of Albania. The Republic of Albania shall, where appropriate, issue instructions to the team in accordance with the operational plan. The Republic of Albania may exceptionally authorise members of the team to act on its behalf.

The Agency, through its coordinating officer, may communicate its views to the Republic of Albania on the instructions given to the team. In that case, the Republic of Albania shall take those views into consideration and follow them to the extent possible.

In cases where the instructions issued to the team are not in compliance with the operational plan, the coordinating officer shall immediately report to the executive director of the Agency (hereinafter "the executive director"). The executive director may take appropriate measures, including the suspension or the termination of the action.

4. Members of the team shall wear their own uniform while performing their tasks and exercising their powers. Members of the team shall also wear on their uniforms visible personal identification and a blue armband with the insignias of the European Union and of the Agency. For the purposes of identification vis-à-vis the national authorities of the Republic of Albania, members of the team shall, at all times, carry the accreditation document referred to in Article 7.

5. While performing their tasks and exercising their powers, members of the team may carry service weapons, ammunition and equipment as authorised according to the home Member State's national law. The Republic of Albania shall, in advance of the deployment of the members of the team, inform the Agency of the permissible service weapons, ammunition and equipment and of the relevant legal framework and conditions for their use.

6. While performing their tasks and exercising their powers, members of the team shall be authorised to use force, including service weapons, ammunition and equipment, with the consent of the home Member State and the Republic of Albania, in the presence of border guards or other relevant staff of the Republic of Albania and in accordance with the national law of the Republic of Albania. The Republic of Albania may authorise members of the team to use force in the absence of border guards or other relevant staff of the Republic of Albania. The authority to grant the consent of the home Member State will be defined in the operational plan.

7. The Republic of Albania may authorise members of the team to consult its national databases if necessary for fulfilling operational aims specified in the operational plan and for return operations. The members of the team shall only consult data which is necessary for performing their tasks and exercising their powers as specified in the operational plan or as necessary for return operations. The Republic of Albania shall, in advance of the deployment of the members of the team, inform the Agency of the national databases which may be consulted. That consultation shall be carried out in accordance with the national data protection law of the Republic of Albania.

ARTICLE 5

Suspension and termination of the action

1. The executive director may suspend or terminate the action, after informing the Republic of Albania in writing, if the provisions of this Agreement or of the operational plan are not respected by the Republic of Albania. The executive director shall notify the Republic of Albania the reasons thereof.

2. The Republic of Albania may suspend or terminate the action, after informing the Agency in writing, if the provisions of this Agreement or of the operational plan are not respected by the Agency or by any participating Member State. The Republic of Albania shall notify the Agency the reasons thereof.

3. In particular, the executive director or the Republic of Albania may suspend or terminate the action in cases of breach of fundamental rights, violation of the principle of non-refoulement or of data protection rules.

4. Termination of the action shall not affect any rights or obligations arising out of the application of this Agreement or the operational plan before such termination.

ARTICLE 6

Privileges and immunities of the members of the team

1. Papers, correspondence and assets of members of the team shall be inviolable, except in case of measures of execution which are permitted pursuant to paragraph 7.

2. Members of the team shall enjoy immunity from the criminal jurisdiction of the Republic of Albania in respect of the acts performed in the exercise of their official functions in the course of the actions carried out in accordance with the operational plan.

In the event of an allegation of a criminal offence being committed by a member of the team, the executive director and the competent authority of the home Member State shall be notified immediately. Prior to the initiation of the proceeding before the court, the executive director, after careful consideration of any representation made by the competent authority of the home Member State and the competent authorities of the Republic of Albania, shall certify to the court whether the act in question was performed in the exercise of the member's official functions in the course of the actions carried out in accordance with the operational plan. Pending the certification by the executive director, the Agency and the home Member State shall refrain from taking any measure likely to jeopardise possible subsequent criminal prosecution of the member of the team by the competent authorities of the Republic of Albania.

If the act was committed in the exercise of official functions, proceedings shall not be initiated. If the act was not committed in the exercise of official functions, proceedings may continue. The certification by the executive director shall be binding upon the jurisdiction of the Republic of Albania. Privileges granted to members of the team and immunity from the criminal jurisdiction of the Republic of Albania do not exempt them from the jurisdiction of the home Member State.

3. Members of the team shall enjoy immunity from the civil and administrative jurisdiction of the Republic of Albania in respect of all acts performed by them in the exercise of their official functions in the course of the actions carried out in accordance with the operational plan. If any civil proceeding is instituted against members of the team before any court of the Republic of Albania, the executive director and the competent authority of the home Member State shall be notified immediately. Prior to the initiation of the proceeding before the court, the executive director, after careful consideration of any representation made by the competent authority of the home Member State and the competent authorities of the Republic of Albania, shall certify to the court whether the act in question was performed by members of the team in the exercise of their official functions in the course of the actions carried out in accordance with the operational plan.

If the act was performed in the exercise of official functions, the proceeding shall not be initiated. If the act was not performed in the exercise of official functions, the proceeding may continue. The certification by the executive director shall be binding upon the jurisdiction of the Republic of Albania. The initiation of proceedings by members of the team shall preclude them from invoking immunity from jurisdiction in respect of any counter-claim directly connected with the principal claim.

4. The immunity of the members of the team from the criminal, civil and administrative jurisdiction of the Republic of Albania may be waived by the home Member State as the case may be. Such a waiver shall always be an express waiver.

5. Members of the team shall not be obliged to give evidence as witnesses.

6. In case of damage caused by a member of the team in the exercise of official functions in the course of the actions carried out in accordance with the operational plan, the Republic of Albania shall be liable for any damage.

In case of damage caused by gross negligence or wilful misconduct or if the act was not committed in the exercise of official functions by a member of the team from a participating Member State, the Republic of Albania may request, via the executive director, that compensation be paid by the participating Member State concerned.

In case of damage caused by gross negligence or wilful misconduct or if the act was not committed in the exercise of official functions by a member of the team who is a staff member of the Agency, the Republic of Albania may request that compensation be paid by the Agency.

In case of damage caused in the Republic of Albania, due to *force majeure*, neither the Republic of Albania, nor the participating Member State, nor the Agency, shall hold any responsibility.

7. No measures of execution may be taken in respect of members of the team, except in the case where a civil proceeding not related to their official functions is instituted against them.

Property of members of the team, which is certified by the executive director to be necessary for the fulfilment of their official functions, shall be free from seizure for the satisfaction of a judgment, decision or order. In civil proceedings, members of the team shall not be subject to any restrictions on their personal liberty or to any other measures of constraint.

8. The immunity of members of the team from the jurisdiction of the Republic of Albania shall not exempt them from the jurisdictions of the respective home Member States.

9. Members of the team shall, with respect to services rendered for the Agency, be exempt from social security provisions which may be in force in the Republic of Albania.

10. Members of the team shall be exempt from any form of taxation in the Republic of Albania on the salary and emoluments paid to them by the Agency or the home Member States, as well as on any income received from outside the Republic of Albania.

11. The Republic of Albania shall, in accordance with its laws and regulations, allow the entry of articles for the personal use of members of the team, and shall grant exemption from all customs duties, taxes, and related charges other than charges for storage, transport and similar services, in respect of such articles. The Republic of Albania shall also allow the export of such articles.

12. The personal baggage of members of the team may be inspected only in cases of justified suspicions that it contains articles that are not for the personal use of members of the team, or articles whose import or export is prohibited by the law or subject to quarantine regulations of the Republic of Albania. Inspection of such personal baggage shall be conducted only in the presence of the member(s) of the team concerned or an authorised representative of the Agency.

ARTICLE 7

Accreditation document

1. The Agency shall, in cooperation with the Republic of Albania, issue a document in the official languages of the Republic of Albania and in an official language of the institutions of the European Union to each member of the team for the purposes of identification vis-à-vis the national authorities of the Republic of Albania and as proof of the holder's rights to perform the tasks and exercise the powers referred to in Article 4 of this Agreement and in the operational plan. The accreditation document shall include the following information on the member of the team: name and nationality; rank or job title; a recent digitised photograph and tasks authorised to be performed during the deployment.

2. The accreditation document, in combination with a valid travel document, grants the member of the team access to the Republic of Albania without the need for a visa or prior authorisation.
3. The accreditation document shall be returned to the Agency at the end of the action. The competent Albanian authorities shall be informed thereof.

ARTICLE 8

Fundamental rights

1. Members of the team shall, in the performance of their tasks and in the exercise of their powers, fully respect fundamental rights and freedoms, including as regards access to asylum procedures, human dignity and the prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, the right to liberty, the principle of non-refoulement and the prohibition of collective expulsions, the rights of the child and the right to respect for private and family life. While performing their tasks and exercising their powers, they shall not arbitrarily discriminate against persons on any grounds including sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity. Any measures interfering with fundamental rights and freedoms taken in the performance of their tasks and in the exercise of their powers shall be proportionate to the objectives pursued by such measures and respect the essence of these fundamental rights and freedoms.

2. Each Party shall have a complaint mechanism to deal with allegations of a breach of fundamental rights committed by its staff in the exercise of their official functions in the course of a joint operation, rapid border intervention or return operation performed under this Agreement.

ARTICLE 9

Processing of personal data

1. Processing of personal data by members of the team shall only take place when necessary for the performance of their tasks and the exercise of their powers for the implementation of this Agreement by the Republic of Albania, the Agency or participating Member States.

2. Processing of personal data by the Republic of Albania shall be subject to its national laws.

3. Processing of personal data for administrative purposes by the Agency and the participating Member State(s), including in case of transfer of personal data to the Republic of Albania, shall be subject to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data¹, Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation)², Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA³ and to measures adopted by the Agency for the application of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 as referred to in Article 45(2) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1624.

4. In case the processing involves the transfer of personal data, Member States and the Agency shall indicate, at the moment of transferring personal data to the Republic of Albania, any restrictions on access to it or use of it, in general or specific terms, including as regards transfer, erasure or destruction. Where the need for such restrictions becomes apparent after the transfer of personal data, they shall inform the Republic of Albania accordingly.

5. Personal data collected for administrative purposes during the action may be processed by the Agency, the participating Member States and the Republic of Albania in line with the applicable data protection law.

¹ OJ EU L 8, 12.1.2001, p.1.

² OJ EU L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1.

³ OJ EU L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 89.

6. The Agency, the participating Member States and the Republic of Albania shall draw up a common report on the application of paragraphs 1 to 5 of this Article at the end of each action. That report shall be sent to the Agency's fundamental rights officer and data protection officer. They shall report to the executive director.

ARTICLE 10

Competent authorities for the implementation of this Agreement

1. The competent authority for the implementation of this Agreement in the Republic of Albania shall be the Ministry of Interior.
2. The competent authority of the European Union for the implementation of this Agreement shall be the Agency.

ARTICLE 11

Dispute settlement

1. All issues arising in connection with the application of this Agreement shall be examined jointly by representatives of the competent authority of the Republic of Albania and by representatives of the Agency, which shall consult the Member State or Member States neighbouring the Republic of Albania.

2. Failing any prior settlement, disputes concerning the interpretation or application of this Agreement shall be settled exclusively by negotiation between the Republic of Albania and the European Commission, which shall consult any Member State neighbouring the Republic of Albania.

ARTICLE 12

Entry into force, duration and termination

1. This Agreement shall be subject to ratification, acceptance or approval by the Parties in accordance with their own internal procedures and the Parties shall notify one another of the completion of the procedures necessary for that purpose.
2. This Agreement shall enter into force on the first day of the second month following the month during which the last notification provided for in paragraph 1 has been carried out.
3. This Agreement is concluded for an indefinite period. This Agreement may be terminated or suspended by written agreement between the Parties or unilaterally by either Party. In this last case, the Party wishing to terminate or suspend it shall notify in writing the other Party thereof. The termination or suspension shall take effect on the first day of the second month following the month during which the notification was given or the written agreement between the Parties was concluded.

4. Notifications made in accordance with this Article shall be sent, in the case of the European Union, to the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union and, in the case of the Republic of Albania, to the Ministry responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania.

Done in duplicate in the Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish and Albanian languages, each of these texts being equally authentic.

For the European Union

For the Republic of Albania