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Delegations will find attached document COM(2023) 146 final - ANNEXES 1 to 2.

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ANNEXES 1 to 2

ANNEXES

to the

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

establishing the multiannual strategic policy for European integrated border management

ANNEX I
EIBM COMPONENTS

POLICY PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPONENTS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATED BORDER MANAGEMENT

Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 lists 15 components[1] for establishing European integrated border management (EIBM). In accordance with Article 8(2) of the Regulation, taking into account the 2022 Strategic Risk Analyis and building on the results of the thematic evaluation of the national strategies for integrated border management in 2019 and 2020[2], and after having consulted the European Parliament and the Council, the Commission identified the following policy priorities and strategic guidelines in relation to those 15 components[3].

Component 1: "*Border control, including measures to facilitate legitimate border crossings and, where appropriate, measures related to the prevention and detection of cross-border crime at the external borders, in particular migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings, and terrorism; and mechanisms and procedures for the identification of vulnerable persons and unaccompanied minors, and for the identification of persons who are in need of international protection, or wish to apply for such protection, the provision of information to such persons, and the referral of such persons*[4]."

Policy priorities

Border control (border checks at border crossing points and border surveillance in between border crossing points) driven by risk analysis is at the core of European integrated border management. Frontex and the border management authorities of the Member States, together forming the European Border and Coast Guard, should have the legal, institutional, administrative and operational capacity, as well as the necessary resources to conduct effective and efficient border control in all circumstances[5].

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[1] 12 of these are thematic components: 1) border control, including countering cross-border crime, 2) search and rescue in situations that may arise during maritime border surveillance operations, 3) risk analysis, 4) information exchange between Member States and between Member States and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), 5) inter-agency cooperation at national level, 6) cooperation among the relevant Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies 7) cooperation with third countries, 8) measures within the Schengen area, 9) return of third-country nationals with no right to stay, 10) use of state-of-the-art technology, 11) a Schengen quality control mechanism and 12) solidarity mechanisms, in particular EU funding instruments. In addition, three overarching components are identified: 13) fundamental rights; 14) research and innovation; and 15) education and training.

[2] Evaluation carried out by the Commission, Member States and supported by Frontex and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

[3] Where relevant for the implementation of the components, technical support may be requested under the Technical Support Instrument established by Regulation (EU) 2021/240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 February 2021 establishing a Technical Support Instrument, OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 1.

[4] Article 3(1)(a) of the Regulation (EU) 2019/1896.

[5] Article 15 of the Schengen Borders Code stipulates that *Member States shall deploy appropriate staff and resources in sufficient numbers to carry out border control at the external borders […] in such a way as to ensure an efficient, high and uniform level of control at their external borders.*

Border control has multiple objectives. Firstly, border checks at designated border crossing points facilitate legitimate border crossings of people and cross-border traffic. At the same time, border surveillance carried out in the border areas between border crossing points prevents unauthorised crossing of external borders. It strengthens the internal security of the EU, by contributing to the prevention, detection and countering of various forms of cross-border crime, such as terrorism, firearms trafficking or trafficking in human beings, and enables measures to be taken in respect of persons who have crossed the border illegally.

In the future, the Screening Regulation[6], once adopted, should ensure that border control also covers the pre-screening applicable to all third-country nationals who are present at the external borders without fulfilling the entry conditions or who have been disembarked following a search and rescue operation. Accordingly, all the persons crossing the external borders without fulfilling the entry conditions will be subject to referral mechanisms (ie. screening and debriefing measures, identification, fingerprinting).

Member States, in performing their tasks according to the needs of the European Border and Coast Guard, should be supported by Frontex, as agreed individually with Member States.

Union law requires border control to be carried out in a manner that respects the fundamental rights of all people, regardless of whether they seek international protection. Individuals who seek international protection must be provided with an effective access to the procedures for granting such protection, including at the external border or in transit zones of Member States. Individuals who do not seek protection fall nevertheless under the protection of the applicable EU and international law, including the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Strategic guidelines

1. As a starting point, Member States must have the legal, structural, administrative and technical capacity to conduct **border checks** in line with the Schengen Borders Code (SBC)[7] and to facilitate legitimate border crossings of people and vehicles. The number of border crossing points at the external borders should take into account capacities (resources and infrastructure), types of border (land, sea and air) and horizontal challenges (such as passenger flow, cross-border crime, or the instrumentalisation of migration).
2. Member States should guarantee secure and seamless border crossings of passengers and vehicles at border crossing points.
3. The advance collection of information for the border check function (pre-arrival information as a core element of the border check function) should be systematically used and further developed by the effective use of the Advance Passenger Information (API) system.

[6] COM/2020/612 final.
[7] Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code).

4. **The border check procedure** should be efficiently carried out in accordance with the Schengen Borders Code ; improved and optimised by a comprehensive implementation of the EU information systems for migration, borders and security (EES, ETIAS, VIS, Eurodac, Schengen Information System and ECRIS-TCN) and of their interoperability. This will increase the amount and quality of information available for border check purposes. Furthermore, with the possible future digitalisation of travel documents, the process for external border crossings will be further improved. Member States should ensure that the new and renewed information systems are timely and properly implemented at their borders. Standing Corps staff should have access to the Schengen Information System while they are operationally deployed.
5. Reliable and comprehensive **situational awareness** at the borders should be maintained at all levels to guarantee a high degree of capability to take the necessary measures at EU and at national level. Comprehensive near-to-real-time national and **European situational pictures** should be maintained, shared and further developed at the national and EU level, in line with the legal framework and with the operational needs.
6. Continuous (24/7) situational awareness should be the basis of an appropriate **reaction capability** to allow an effective response to all border incidents, including unforeseen changes at the external borders and large-scale irregular immigration situations. This capability should be ensured in all circumstances at EU and at national level. National and EU capacity should be developed to quickly strengthen border control, where there is a need, at any border crossing point and at any section of the external borders. Reaction capability and **contingency planning** should be regularly tested and further adapted to the situation, in particular in the case of instrumentalisation of migrants. Frontex presence and deployment at external borders should be continuously reviewed accordingly.
7. Frontex should ensure in the near future a smooth takeover of the False and Authentic Documents Online Repository (FADO) from the General Secretariat of the Council. Member States' competent authorities, as part of the EBCG, should fully support Frontex in this endeavour and contribute to the further development of the system and the Centre of Excellence for Combatting Document Fraud, by exchanging more actively information on detected counterfeits and forged documents with the Centre. Frontex should also operationalise its full mandate in the document security space by boosting its capabilities to support the Commission and Member States in carrying out assessments and compliance tests of travel documents issued by the Member States.
8. National integrated **border surveillance systems** driven by risk analysis should have a stable capacity (organisational, administrative and technical) and in a continuous state of alert. This is necessary to prevent and detect unauthorised border crossings, to apprehend persons who have crossed the border illegally and to ensure that such persons are subject to coherent and comprehensive referral procedures (ie. screening procedures) that respect their fundamental rights, to intercept transportation means, such as vessels, used for illegal border crossing, to counter cross-border crime, such as smuggling, trafficking in human beings and terrorism, as well as to respond to threats of a hybrid nature.
9. Enhanced surveillance activities at each external land and sea border section, including the pre-frontier areas, should correspond to the impact level allocated to it, using integrated surveillance systems, mobile equipment and mobile patrols (units) and building on the

results of risk analysis. Impact levels should be identified in a harmonised manner throughout the EU.

10. The external border should be monitored constantly (24/7). Surveillance activities at borders and in pre-frontier areas should be conducted, making use of various tools, with the aim of establishing an early-warning mechanism, sharing actionable information, improving reaction capability, including by a scalable alocation of resources.
11. **National integrated surveillance systems should be supported by common and interoperable European surveillance capabilities**. Border surveillance, including in pre-frontier areas, should be organised in line with the EBCG Regulation and the Schengen Borders Code. Where more than one authority is involved in border surveillance at national level, the Member State concerned should identify the competent national authority in charge of the general oversight and of the necessary commanding, cooperation and coordination mechanisms, and ensure that the responsibilities of the different bodies and agencies are regulated by legislation or in cooperation agreements. National surveillance capabilities owned by different authorities should be operating in line with the EBCG Regulation and with the updated EUROSUR Handbook.
12. At EU and at national level, data collected by different authorities, if it is necessary for the authorities of other Member States, should be shared through the national coordination centres.
13. **The sea border surveillance system** must be able to detect, identify and, if necessary, trace and intercept all vessels coming into territorial waters and contribute to ensuring the protection and saving of lives at sea in all weather conditions and to reducing irregular arrivals to the EU. Member States should use surveillance capabilities offered by Frontex to increase national capacities and overall situational awareness. Close inter-agency cooperation between competent national EBCG authorities, Frontex, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), as well as cooperation with Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres, is key to ensuring enhanced coordination in this regard.
14. **The land border surveillance system** must be able to reveal all unauthorised border crossings and intercept persons crossing the border illegally in high-risk areas under any circumstances. Land border surveillance systems could include mobile or stationary capabilities and infrastructure, and specialised trained staff. State-of the art technologies and various technical equipment and solutions should be favoured (i.e. use of drones). The collection and other processing of personal data by means of such technologies needs to be provided for by law, and exercised in accordance with EU and national law, including on the protection of personal data.
15. **Screening** of those who have crossed the external border without having been subject to border checks should be systematically carried out. The objectives of screening are i.a. to identify persons, carry out security and health checks and refer screened persons to the appropriate procedures.
16. The capacity to **detect or prevent cross-border crime and terrorism** at the external borders should be strengthened at EU and at national level. The competent border control authorities, in cooperation with other relevant law enforcement authorities and EU agencies, like Europol and Frontex, can contribute to detecting and preventing cross-

border crime at the external borders, in particular to detecting foreign terrorist fighters or perpetrators of cross-border crime, such as smugglers and traffickers of firearms.

17. The Frontex handbook on firearms detection is a key tool to train border guards and customs authorities, not only in the EU but also in neighbouring countries.
18. Border guards should also be prepared to identify and provide first assistance to victims of crime, in particular victims of human trafficking, and refer them to appropriate services.
19. Border guards should have sufficient capacity, training, as well as mechanisms and procedures in place for the identification of vulnerable persons and unaccompanied minors, as well as for the identification of persons who are in need of international protection or wish to apply for such protection, so that these persons can be referred to the relevant procedures and authorities.
20. In the event of a serious threat to public policy or internal security in a Member State, the Schengen Borders Code allows for the Member State concerned to temporarily reintroduce controls at the internal borders, as a measure of last resort. However, Member States are first required to ensure the necessity and proportionality of such measures, including, in the first instance, by examining alternative measures that could be taken, such as the carrying out of police checks in compliance with the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union. Where the temporary reintroduction of border control is necessary, Member States should take mitigation measures in order to minimise adverse effects on travel within the Schengen area.

Component 2: "*Search and rescue operations for persons in distress at sea launched and carried out in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 656/2014 and with international law, taking place in situations which may arise during border surveillance operations at sea*[8]."

Policy priorities

The protection and saving of lives at external borders is a key priority of European integrated border management. The capacity and operational readiness to conduct search and rescue operations, and cooperation among all those involved, should be an important and integral part of sea border surveillance operations at external sea borders, in order to fullfil the search and rescue obligations of Member States stemming from EU and international law[9].

Strategic guidelines

1. Cooperation among the search and rescue authorities of the Member States, and with other authorities possibly involved in search and rescue activities, should be enhanced, including by fostering dialogue with all relevant actors in the field. This is with a view to reducing fatalities at sea, maintaining safety of navigation and ensuring effective migration management, in compliance with relevant legal obligations and in accordance with Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1365[10].

[8] Article 3(1)(b) of the EBCG Regulation.
[9] International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR), 1979.
[10] Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1365 on cooperation among Member States concerning operations carried out by vessels owned or operated by private entities for the purpose of search and rescue activities.

2. Search and rescue should be approached in a more coordinated manner, whereby the European Contact Group on Search and Rescue should improve means of cooperation and coordination between the flag and coastal States and develop best practices on timely and full sharing of information[11].
3. The EU and Member States' authorities should strengthen their cooperation with priority third countries and international organisations, including by enhancing operational cooperation of third country authorities with EU agencies.
4. The search and rescue responsibility of Member States should be fully taken into account in all phases of operational planning and implementation of sea border surveillance operations by the Agency and Member States. Standardised arrangements and standard operating procedures with Member State search and rescue authorities (Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre), the National Coordination Centre (NCC) and the International Coordination Centre should be established and regularly tested. Options to establish similar coordination mechanisms between Member States and partner countries should also be explored. Moreover, all patrols and technical assets participating in maritime border surveillance, including joint operations or rapid border interventions at sea coordinated by Frontex, should be properly trained, including on fundamental rights, and properly equipped for possible search and rescue interventions, including the capacity to act as on-scene coordinators, if necessary.
5. Capacity to support search and rescue interventions should be further enhanced by providing the necessary training for the personnel participating in sea border surveillance operations at EU and at national level. The Agency should carry out needs assessment and provide increased operational and technical support, in line with its mandate, to Member States, including the deployment of assets, to improve their capabilities and thus contribute to saving lives at sea.
6. The capacity of EUROSUR to support search and rescue operations and the saving of lives at sea in situations that may arise during border surveillance operations at sea should be fully implemented and applied in accordance with the EBCG Regulation and with Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/581[12].

Component 3: "*Analysis of the risks for internal security and analysis of the threats that may affect the functioning or security of the external borders*[13]."

Policy priorities

European integrated border management should be driven by risk analysis. Reliable, comprehensive and integrated risk analyses should be available at EU and at national level and should be used for political, strategic and operational planning and decision-making. Risk analysis should provide analytical findings and recommendations for concepts and concrete actions (legal, technical and operational) to mitigate in good time current and potential risks

[11] EU Action Plan for the Central Mediterranean, Commission proposal of 21 November 2022.
[12] Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/581 of 9 April 2021 on the situational pictures of the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR).
[13] Article 3(1)(c) of the EBCG Regulation.

and vulnerabilities covering the whole scope of European integrated border management at EU and at national level.

Strategic guidelines

1. The European **common integrated risk analysis model**, as adopted by the Frontex Management Board[14], must be regularly updated and applied by all Member States and at EU and at national level.
2. To support concerted EU action to improve the management of external borders and maintain internal security, Member States should set up the required national capacity (organisational, administrative and technical) to conduct unified risk analyses, contingency planning and vulnerability assessments. The risk analysis products and procedures provided by Frontex should be integrated in the national process to compile risk analysis for integrated border management, covering all tiers of the four-tier access control model.
3. Specialised risk analysis structures, empowered to collect, process and compile relevant data from all national authorities involved in integrated border management, should be set up and operated by a sufficient number of specialised and trained staff.
4. While risk assessments should always be conducted before and during joint operational activities coordinated by Frontex, the Agency should further develop its capacity for issuing *ad hoc* risk analysis products, covering emerging threats and supporting crisis management processes.
5. Cooperation between relevant EU and national bodies, such as customs authorities, especially with and between Frontex, Europol, the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA), the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the EU Agency for Asylum and the Commission (including OLAF, where appropriate), should be further strengthened in the field of risk analysis. This is to guarantee a more comprehensive analysis related to risks for the integrity of the external borders, and for internal security, including the proper functioning of the Schengen area. Closer cooperation between Europol and Frontex should be put in place when preparing the European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU SOCTA)[15] and other reports, given the added value that Frontex risk analysis can provide with regard to identifying and investigating cross-border crime at the external borders. The 2020-2025 EU Action Plan on firearms trafficking announced the revision of the Regulation (EU) 258/2012[16]. In October 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for the recast of this Regulation to better address the import, export and transit of civilian firearms. The recast proposal focuses, among other things, on a

[14] Frontex Management Board Decision 50/2021 of 21 September 2021 adopting the Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model.

[15] Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) | Europol (europa.eu)

[16] Regulation (EU) No 258/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2012 implementing Article 10 of the United Nations' Protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UN Firearms Protocol), and establishing export authorisation, and import and transit measures for firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, OJ L 94, 30.3.2012, p. 1

better risk analysis through exchange of information among different authorities involved in the import, export and transit of civilian firearms, essential components and ammunition. The EU Drugs Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025 takes an evidence-based, integrated, balanced and multidisciplinary approach to the drugs phenomenon at national, EU and international level, and puts forward strong supply reduction measures, including to increase the detection of illicit wholesale trafficking of drugs and drug precursors at EU points of entry and exit, and to address links with other security threats.

6. The Agency should further strengthen its forecasting capability by using the widest possible sources of necessary reliable and relevant information.
7. In a more strategic context, the biennial **strategic risk analysis** is an essential tool that should allow the Agency to develop a long-term understanding of migratory flows towards and within the EU in terms of migratory trends, volume and routes. It will also help to identify challenges, including the use of fraudulent and counterfeit travel documents, at the external borders and within the Schengen area, and in the area of returns, and therefore support political decision-making and the development of long-term capabilities. The identified challenges should also focus on low-probability, but high-impact phenomena, such as pandemics and the resulting health threats. The latest available analysis should always be reflected in the implementation of the multiannual strategic policy cycle for European integrated border management, to be taken into account by the Agency in the EIBM Technical and Operational Strategy and by Member States in their national strategies.
8. After the publication of each strategic risk analysis, the Agency should engage in a discussion with the Member States and Commission, on how to improve the quality and functionality of this biennial analysis.
9. A formal mechanism for exchanging information and intelligence with third countries, in particular with potential countries of origin and relevant countries of transit, should be established in accordance with the EBCG Regulation and in full respect of the requirements of EU law on personal data protection. It should be maintained and further developed by Member States and Frontex to improve risk analysis and more targeted operational actions.

Component 4 "*Information exchange and cooperation between Member States in the areas covered by the EBCG Regulation, as well as information exchange and cooperation between Member States and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, including the support coordinated by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency*[17]."

Policy priorities

European and national capabilities should be established, used and developed in a coordinated and integrated way to guarantee the effective and unified implementation of all aspects of European integrated border management in all circumstances and on all tiers of the four-tier access control model. The European Border and Coast Guard, composed of the Agency and of

[17] Article 3(1)(d) of the EBCG Regulation.

the border guard and return authorities of the Member States, should have constant and tested readiness to respond to all possible incidents at the external borders and to any new phenomena that affect the functioning of border control and return. There should be a rapid reaction capacity and necessary capabilities to effectively conduct various types of joint operations at all sections of the external borders. The exchange of information, as meant under this component, should take place in a timely manner.

Strategic guidelines

1. Member States should establish an effective **national coordination mechanism** and working processes for all functions and activities of the European Border and Coast Guard, in order to ensure efficiency at the national level as well as of the cooperation with Frontex. Member States should have a responsible **national contact point** (24/7) for all matters pertaining to the activities of the Agency, as stipulated in Article 13(1) of the EBCG Regulation. The national contact point should represent all national authorities involved in border management and return. The national contact point should be separate from the National Coordination Centre responsible for the exchange of information in EUROSUR.
2. Situational awareness, reaction capability and the role of the **national coordination centre** (NCC) should be further strengthened and integrated in line with the EBCG Regulation and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/581. Each Member State must have a fully functioning NCC in place, in line with Article 21 of the EBCG Regulation.
3. The information collected by surveillance tools, fused together and further distributed by the NCCs, should be used both to bolster real-time reaction capability (e.g. interceptions) and for risk analysis purposes.
4. Full use should be made of existing and future **information exchange tools**, especially EUROSUR. In this context, effective cooperation and coordination should be ensured between the national authorities participating in the activities of the European Border and Coast Guard and with Frontex itself. Such cooperation and coordination should be carried out in the framework of EUROSUR, in particular by each NCC.
5. Member States should regularly share with the Agency all necessary information regarding the situation, trends and possible threats at the external borders and in the field of return. This information should not be duplicated. Therefore, there should be a mechanism in place ensuring the interoperability of various information channels in order to facilitate information exchange and to improve the situation awareness.
6. Member States should allocate the necessary human and financial resources and have continuous operational readiness to fulfil their legal obligation to provide the mandatory contributions, as well as to provide voluntary contributions to the **collective European capabilities** coordinated by Frontex, in particular to the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps and to the technical equipment pool.
7. Member States and the Agency should ensure a gradual growth of the standing corps to reach its full capacity of 10 000 officers by 2027. Adequate staffing and reaction capacity are essential factors in effectively addressing irregular migration and border security

threats, in order to allow for a quick response and additional capacity at the impacted border sections.

8. The Agency should develop a **comprehensive operational concept** that should at least include the concept of deployment of the standing corps, its operative performance and capability requirements vis-à-vis different threats and operational environments, clear command and management structures, logistical support and internal quality control mechanism in line with Article 62(10) of the EBCG Regulation.
9. To ensure the Agency's greater efficiency, the Frontex Management Board should adopt and regularly review the **operational concept for the standing corps**. This will allow to better direct the implementation of the Agency's operational and technical tasks, in particular for the launch of rapid border interventions in specific crises situations, including in cases of instrumentalisation, and to ensure that deployments of the standing corps and equipment occur in good time whenever any such crisis occurs.
10. Member States should have a tested **hosting capacity** to receive support through the deployment of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps, if needed.
11. Member States and the Agency should have effective planning, coordination and implementation capacity to organise operations, driven by risk analysis, at the external borders and/or in third countries, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the EBCG Regulation. The intelligence-based planning process should be coordinated and synchronised between the Agency and Member States, ensuring an effective use of resources.
12. The Agency should further develop the concept of joint operations, ensuring sufficient flexibility and the capacity to apply different models, depending on the specific operational scenario.
13. Frontex should further improve the integration of **vulnerability assessment** results in the preparedness, contingency planning and needs assessment. This will ensure that Member States have the capacity not only to secure their external borders but also to contribute their share to the standing corps, including contributions for rapid interventions and the technical equipment pool. In this process, the Agency also should take into account the synergies between the Schengen evaluation mechanism and vulnerability assessment.
14. Exchange of information is one of the key components of operational cooperation among Member States and between Member States and Frontex. It must be carried out in a secure manner via **the dedicated communication network**, in particular when this exchange covers classified information up to CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL level Member States and Frontex must at all times fully comply with requirements of EU data protection legislation and information security in accordance with security rules set by the Agency.
15. The Agency is required to ensure constant **monitoring and situational awareness** and share that information with NCCs using EUROSUR, in particular to provide real-time reporting on the border area and the corresponding pre-frontier area related to the crisis situation.
16. The **multiannual strategy for the development and acquisition of the Agency's technical capabilities** and the associated implementation plan must serve as a flexible tool to provide long-term solutions for equipping the standing corps with technical assets,

including the possibility to activate alternative options for the most critical needs (i.e. aerial surveillance).

17. The concept of focal points should be further developed by focusing on ensuring an effective operational response, especially in hotspot areas at the external borders and border crossing points, including a capacity-building element.
18. The Agency's **technical standards** for equipment and for information exchange, including for the interconnection of systems and networks, should be applied by the entire EBCG community in a uniform way. The EBCG should work together on a **standardisation process** to ensure interoperability and compatibility of the equipment used with the relevant information and communication systems, and EUROSUR.
19. Within their respective competences, Frontex and Member States, assisted by eu-LISA, should develop appropriate methods (statistics, profiles, exchange of modus operandi) to prevent the misuse of legal channels and monitor post visa liberalisation, including by making effective use of relevant tools in the new information systems (VIS, ETIAS, EES etc.).

Component 5: "*Inter-agency cooperation among the national authorities in each Member State which are responsible for border control or for other tasks carried out at the border, as well as between authorities responsible for return in each Member State, including the regular exchange of information through existing information exchange tools, including, where appropriate, cooperation with national bodies in charge of protecting fundamental rights*[18]."

Policy priorities

European integrated border management should be cooperation-driven. Inter-agency cooperation should be well-established at national level to guarantee the comprehensive, cross-sectoral, joined-up and cost-effective implementation of IBM, including among national bodies in charge of protecting fundamental rights, such as National Human Rights Institutions, Ombuds institutions, National Preventive Mechanisms and, where applicable, national monitoring mechanisms. Division of work, cooperation structures, the shared use of capabilities, communication channels and synchronised working procedures should be well-defined and consolidated.

Strategic guidelines

1. **Inter-agency cooperation** between all relevant national authorities involved in border management should take place in accordance with clearly defined rules and processes. The framework governing such cooperation should take into account the institutional and administrative specificities of the respective Member States. It should be put into effect by means of cooperation agreements which lay down concrete forms of cooperation as well as concrete actions.

[18] Article 3(1)(e) of the EBCG Regulation.

2. Key areas of cooperation should include the effective exchange of information, joint risk analysis, joint operations and shared use of European and national capabilities in line with their competences, training, as well as the protection and promotion of fundamental rights across all border management activities and operations. In relation to maritime borders, the setting up of an operational CISE (Common Information Sharing Environment for the maritime domain) for 2024, is also relevant for maintaining maritime domain awareness. CISE will allow cross-sector and cross-border, secure exchange of information between various maritime surveillance authorities of the EU and EFTA Member States, such as coast guards, border guards, customs, general law enforcement, fisheries control etc.
3. Each national strategy should put in place a **centralised mechanism** to ensure an efficient coordination between the national authority in charge of general oversight of integrated border management and all national authorities with responsibilities in border management and their counterparts in other Member States.
   Bilateral regional and multilateral operational cooperation between Member States should be further developed where such cooperation is compatible with the tasks of the Agency. The support of the Agency and European common capabilities and instruments (e.g. EUROSUR) should be fully used.
4. Customs control is not part of the Schengen *acquis* and not all Schengen Associated Countries are members of the Customs Union. Therefore, customs control is not directly part of the EIBM concept. However, customs tasks in the field of internal security and other authorities working at the external borders are involved in European integrated border management through the inter-agency cooperation component. Cooperation between **border guards and customs** as strategic partners should be further developed at all levels to deliver a better integration of the control of persons and goods, to guarantee fluid and secure border crossings. In concrete terms, this means that there should be a clearly established legal framework for cooperation between border guards and customs authorities involving a well-defined division of work, functional cooperation structures and an interoperable technical environment, ensuring close and practical cooperation at all levels.
5. **Law enforcement cooperation** related to supporting border management and combating cross-border crime should be further developed at national level. This will guarantee better coordination, and effective and cost-efficient use of information, capabilities and systems. This is necessary for preventing and detecting cross-border crime, terrorism and irregular immigration and for contributing to saving migrants' lives. This cooperation should have a clear legal basis, through cooperation arrangements or agreements and standard operating procedures. Border control tasks should always be conducted by the competent national authority.
6. Cooperation should also be facilitated by and developed within the **European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT)**[19], which is a permanent instrument and a robust framework that brings together the law enforcement authorities of the Member States, the EU institutions, bodies and agencies and a wide range of multi-disciplinary partners to fight against serious and organised crime.

[19] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-fight-against-crime/

Component 6: "*Cooperation among the relevant Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies in the areas covered by the EBCG Regulation, including through regular exchange of information*[20]."

Policy priorities

European integrated border management should be cooperation-driven. Inter-agency cooperation of the European Border and Coast Guard with other European stakeholders should be well established to guarantee a comprehensive, cross-sectoral, joined-up and cost-effective implementation of European integrated border management.

Strategic guidelines

1. For a start, inter-agency cooperation at EU level is to be operationalised by **cooperation arrangements**, notably working arrangements concluded by Frontex with the relevant EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies referred to in Article 68 of the EBCG Regulation. Key areas of cooperation are related to an effective exchange of information, joint risk analysis, joint operations and shared use of European capabilities within their competence. The concept of **multipurpose operations,** based on risk analysis, at EU level should be further developed, while fully respecting core tasks and responsibilities of EU-level actors involved in such operations.
2. The full potential of existing and future information exchange tools, especially EUROSUR, should be in operational use at EU level. The collection of information by the EUROSUR fusion services should be further developed by means of applying working arrangements between Frontex and the respective EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, in order to provide Member States and Frontex with value-added information services related to European integrated border management.
3. **European cooperation on coast guard functions** should be further developed to increase maritime situational awareness and reaction capability, and to support coherent and cost-efficient action at EU and at national level. The practical handbook on European cooperation on coast guard functions should be widely applied to promote a harmonised implementation of this cooperation at EU and national levels[21].
4. **Interoperability** between relevant EU-wide information systems (EES, ETIAS, SIS, VIS, Eurodac and ECRIS-TCN), should be implemented in a timely manner and, if needed, further developed to guarantee a more effective use of various instruments. Four new interoperability components – the European Search Portal (ESP), the shred Biometric Matching Service (sBMS), the Common Identity Repository (CIR) and the Multiple-Identity Detector (MID) – will integrate the systems architecture to support their objectives while ensuring the correct identification of persons, combating identity fraud, and streamlining the conditions of access for designated authorities.

[20] Article 3(1)(f) of the EBCG Regulation.
[21] Commission Recommendation establishing a 'Practical Handbook' on European cooperation on coast guard functions, C(2021) 5310 final.

5. **The hotspot concept** including standard operating procedures should be applied when relevant. All relevant agencies (Frontex, the EU Agency for Asylum, Europol and FRA) should constantly be ready to support hotspots in line with the adopted concept[22]. Member States should have legal and operational readiness to host or to support European hotspots. Where Migration Management Support Teams can and are set up in accordance with Article 40 of the EBCG Regulation, the Commission will coordinate the teams as provided for in the Regulation.
6. Coordination and cooperation between Europol, Eurojust, Frontex, and the competent national authorities, **in the framework of EMPACT, the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats**[23], should be enhanced in all phases of the process. Cooperation between Frontex and Europol should aim to facilitate the identification of suspects of cross-border crime, in full respect of the rules defining the tasks of the two Agencies and of EU legislation on personal data protection.
7. The main focus of active participation by Frontex and national border guard authorities should be in those strategic priority areas that are directly linked to external borders and connected to border control tasks and always in compliance with their respective mandates and governing regulations.
8. Frontex should cooperate with the Commission (including OLAF), in particular to advise on the development of border management actions in third countries and, where relevant, with Member States and the European External Action Service in activities relating to the customs area (including risk management and combating fraud), where those activities complement each other.

Component 7: "*Cooperation with third countries in the areas covered by the EBCG Regulation, focusing in particular on neighbouring third countries and on those third countries which have been identified through risk analysis as being countries of origin or transit for illegal immigration*[24]."

Policy priorities

Member States and the Agency should cooperate with third countries for the purpose of European integrated border management and of EU migration policy. The practical cooperation in the field of European integrated border management with third countries at EU and at national level should be in line with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and has to comply with EU and international law, including fundamental rights and the principle of *non-refoulement*, in order to prevent and combat irregular immigration, enhance effective returns, prevent cross-border crime, and facilitate legitimate travel.

Cooperation with third countries in advancing European integrated border management serves in particular the purpose of building their strategic, operational and cooperation capacities in

[22] Commission Communication – A European Agenda on Migration, COM/2015/0240 final.
[23] Council conclusions on the permanent continuation of the EU Policy Cycle for organised and serious international crime: EMPACT 2022 +, 6481/21.
[24] Article 3(1)(g) of the EBCG Regulation.

the areas of border control, risk analysis, and return and readmission, taking into account the EU's overall relations with these countries. In this perspective, the promotion of European values and standards in third countries is key. Priority should be given to neighbourhood countries, and countries of origin and transit for irregular immigration. The ability and willingness of those countries to prevent irregular migration, maintain effective border management and control of migratory flows towards the EU is essential to address migration in an effective manner. This contributes to the development of mutual and comprehensive migration partnerhsips with countries of origin and transit.

Strategic guidelines

1. Cooperation with third countries in the field of European integrated border management should be based on **agreements and/or arrangements** and must be fully in line with Union law, including on the protection of personal data, the respect for fundamental rights, and international law, including the principle of *non-refoulement*. These agreements (including status agreements and working arrangements) should identify the competent authorities, cooperation structures, the scope of cooperation, and establish rules on the allocation of responsibilities.
2. Operational cooperation between Member States and third countries is encouraged, wherever such cooperation is compatible with the mandate and functioning of Frontex and with the attainment of its objectives, as well as with the EU's overall relations with those countries.
3. Information exchange, in particular on EUROSUR, between Member States and third countries should be provided in the framework of bilateral or multilateral agreements or arrangements. For this purpose, Member States should follow the Commission Recommendation on the model provisions for the exchange of information in the framework of EUROSUR, that has been adopted in accordance with Article 76(2) of the EBCG Regulation[25].
4. To enhance transparency, Frontex should always draw up an EU-level overview on existing operational cooperation with third countries in the field of border management and return, in line with the Agency's international cooperation strategy. This should be based on information obtained in particular from Member States, the Commission and EU agencies.
5. When establishing specific situational pictures with third parties to EUROSUR, Member States and Frontex should comply with and promote the technical and operational standards for information exchange developed by Frontex.
6. Operational activities in third countries by Frontex are to be planned and implemented in accordance with **status agreements** concluded between the EU and the relevant third country and/or in line with **working arrangements** concluded by Frontex and competent third-country authorities. Both status agreements and working arrangements should be based on the respective models adopted by the Commission[26].

[25] C(2022) 300 final.
[26] COM(2021) 829 final and COM(2021) 830 final.

7. Cooperation with third countries must comply with EU and international law, including norms and standards that form part of EU law, also when cooperation with third countries takes place outside the territory of the European Union. Exchanges of personal data with third countries must comply with the requirements of EU law on personal data protection.
8. **Multilateral and regional cooperation** with third countries should be strengthened. The national coordination centres of Member States should be used as contact points for the exchange of information with neighbouring countries and other relevant countries.
9. In line with the renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling[27], cooperation to prevent and combat migrant smuggling with key third countries should be strengthened, including through the launch of Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships[28]. This cooperation is supported by EU agencies, in particular Frontex, Europol, Eurojust and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), in line with their mandates, as well as operational cooperation supported by EU financial assistance.
10. Where **networks of liaison officers** (LOs) have an identifiable potential for contributing to different EIBM-related functions at EU and at national level, they should be coordinated effectively and receive good support from the Agency in order to maximise operational capabilities and effectiveness. Cooperation and reporting channels and forms should be clear at all levels. There should be a constant and flexible capacity to deploy liaison officers with relevant skills or expert teams to different places if there are operational needs. Frontex should have a complete situational picture of different types of European liaison officers (Frontex LOs, European Migration LOs, European Return LOs, LOs of other agencies) and national immigration LOs based on information provided by Member States and other relevant EU bodies. Collected information should enrich risk analysis and situational awareness at EU and national level including the pre-frontier intelligence picture. Frontex Liaison Officers should also exchange all relevant information with the EU Delegation in their country of deployment, in the framework of the overall coordination of EU policy in that country. Full use should be made of the Immigration Liaison Officer (ILO) network to enhance cooperation and coordination among immigration laision officers in third countires.
11. **IBM-related capacity-building,** working visits to third countries, technical advice, training or support with technical equipment, should be coordinated and monitored by the EU. Frontex should continue to implement and to inform the Commission about **EU-funded capacity-building projects and programmes related to IBM** in EU candidate countries and other priority third countries, in particular where these projects and programmes serve the purpose of building third countries' capacities in the areas of border control, risk analysis, and return[29] and readmission. Frontex should also closely cooperate with Commission implementing partners in advising throughout the implementation of border management actions in the neighbourhood and other priority third countries; and Commission implementing partners are advised to seek consultation with the Agency on

[27] COM(2021) 591 final.
[28] Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships have been launched with Morocco, Niger and the Western Balkans so far.
[29] Such as Technical Assistance Projects for Third Countries in the field of Return, Readmission, and Reintegration – TAP4RRR

these matters throught the whole project. Projects led by Member States should be implemented in close cooperation with Frontex; the Agency's expertise should be used to its full potential in all phases of the projects. The Agency should also develop a comprehensive overview of ongoing and planned IBM-related capacity-building projects and working visits in third countries.

12. Cooperation and complementarity between civilian **Common Security and Defence Policy missions** having a border management component and Frontex should be further developed to ensure situational awareness and to support risk analysis and the promotion of EIBM standards, while taking measures to avoid overlapping activities. It should also ensure regular information exchange and coordination related to the funding provided by all involved actors, such as the Commission, Frontex, the European External Actions Service and those of the civilian CSDP actors on the ground.

Component 8: "*Technical and operational measures within the Schengen area which are related to border control and designed to address irregular migration and to counter cross-border crime better*[30]."

Policy priorities

Operational continuity and interoperability between external border control and technical and operational measures within the Schengen area should be well established to guarantee effective countering of unauthorised secondary movements, irregular migration and cross-border crime related to external borders.

National capacity should be put in place (readiness) to intensify irregular migration-related police checks inside the territory, including in inland border areas, supported by other alternative measures that Member States have at their disposal, therefore limiting the need for reintroducing internal border controls to a minimum.

Strategic guidelines

1. As a starting point, at both EU and national level, there is to be a **comprehensive situational picture** and risk analysis on irregular **arrivals and secondary movements** of third-country nationals within the EU, as a basis for targeted and proportional measures to be taken. A European situational picture is prepared by Frontex, with the full support of Member States and in cooperation with other relevant EU agencies. EUROSUR should be used as a main platform for this function, together with other effective and unified data collection systems. Enhanced cooperation, such as the cooperation between Frontex, Europol and EUAA to produce regular reports, and coordination should be further developed, including joint risk analysis, operational practices and fluent exchange of information between border guards and other authorities working at the external border, in line with their respective mandates and in full respect of the data protection legaislation.

[30] Article 3(1)(h) of the EBCG Regulation.

These include the NCCs, authorities working within the Schengen area and **police and customs cooperation centres** (PCCCs) and other relevant centres. Different EU-wide information systems should be in effective use for all responsible authorities that have been legally granted access to such systems.

2. Operational cooperation between joint operations coordinated by Frontex and relevant PCCCs should be further developed and consolidated.
3. There should be a sufficient capacity at national level to intensify police checks related to irregular immigration across the entire territory and to carry out police checks and migration control on main transport roads, including border areas based on risk analysis.

Component 9: "*Return of third-country nationals who are the subject of return decisions issued by a Member State*[31]."

Policy priorities

Effectively implemented returns of third-country nationals who are the subject of a return decision should ensure that all those who do not have the right to remain in the EU actually do leave the EU. European integrated border management should also ensure that the return procedure is carried out in a humane, dignified and sustainable manner, in full compliance with the fundamental rights of returnees and in particular the principle of *non-refoulement*, in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, international and EU law, by properly trained experts.

There should be administrative, technical and operational capacity at EU and at national level to implement return processes, including forced and voluntary returns, effectively and in a unified manner contributing to a common EU system for returns as set out in the Pact on Migration and Asylum[32]. Stronger structures inside the EU are to be combined with more effective cooperation with third countries. This also includes following the direction and implementing the actions as set out in the EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration of April 2021[33] promoting voluntary return and effective reintegration as an integral part of the return system.

Member States should make full use of the operational, technical and practical support Frontex can provide in the field of return, in particular making use of the Frontex Application for Return (FAR) for scheduled and charter flights, digital tool return case management system (RECAMAS), the Frontex Joint Reintegration Services (JRS) and Frontex's support on return and reintegration counselling.

[31] Article 3(1)(i) of the EBCG Regulation.
[32] COM(20220) 609 final 23.9.2020.
[33] COM(2021) 120.

Strategic guidelines

1. **The capacity and role of Frontex**, as the operational arm to support Member States in all phases of the return process should be further strengthened in practice and the use, by Member States, of Frontex services increased.
2. The capacity of Member States to carry out unilaterally or jointly the return of illegally staying third-country nationals should be increased by developing an integrated and coordinated national digital return systems, which is based on the **return case management system model (RECAMAS)** developed by the Agency to exchange data and compatible with the European return policy. The persisting challenges of integration and interoperability due to the different technologies used by national return system should be addressed and links with EU-level digital tools enabled.
3. The **Integrated Return Management Application (IRMA)** should be further developed to improve collection of data on return operations and readmission. This will facilitate the planning, exchange of relevant operational information, organisation and implementation of return, readmission and reintegration activities by Member States. It will also allow Frontex to assume a more proactive role in supporting the planning and organisation of return operations, including pre-return assistance and reintegration.
4. The Frontex Intergrated Return Management Application (IRMA) should be further developed in order to be interoperable with Member States' IT return systems and other relevant IT tools for the implementation of return, readmission and reintegration.
5. All stakeholders (Commission, Frontex, Member States) should work on enhancing collection of data relating to return, reintegration and readmission and to develop fit-for-purpose analytics, analysis and situational awareness products on the functioning of return, to enable proactive planning of return and readmission.
6. Member States should invest in return and reintegration counselling structures, ensuring that counselling is available at all stages of the return process and that counsellors are appropriately trained. Counselling, in line with the EU framework on return counselling, should be made available during voluntary and forced return procedures (including in detention) in order to encourage and organise return. Frontex has developed a workplan to support Member States in the field of return and reintegration counselling, to be implemented in close cooperation with Member States.
7. The promotion and the increased use of voluntary return and reintegration are an integral part of a common EU system for return, in line with the EU Strategy on voluntary return and reintegration[34]. Reintegration support will encourage the cooperation of the returnees and also promote cooperation with third countries, fostering their ownership over the return, readmission and reintegration of their nationals.
8. Frontex has developed the Joint Reintegration Services (JRS) providing common return and reintegration services to Member States. The number of countries covered by the JRS should be expanded to meet the needs of the Member States and Member States should make full use of these services and make them available to both voluntary and forced returnees. Synergies and continuities should be sought between the reintegration services

[34] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, The EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration, COM(2021)120 final.

provided by Frontex' Joint Reintegration Services and relevant third countries' national structures and mechanisms, when available.

9. Member States should fully ensure their capacity to contribute to European return operations coordinated or organised by Frontex, including in the area of return monitoring. Member States and Frontex should further develop their capacity to monitor all return operations.
10. Member States must ensure sufficient capacity to collect data on the risk of absconding and to develop risk analysis to apply detention and alternatives to detention to reduce secondary movements as well as develop technical capacity for detention and alternatives to detention. Detention conditions should be in line with international and EU law. With a view to facilitating and speeding up the return process, Member States are encouraged to ensure the recognition of each other's return decisions.[35]
11. Also building on the policy document towards an operational strategy for more effective returns adopted by the Commission on 24 January 2023[36], all relevant stakeholders should make full use of the **Return Coordinator** and the **High-Level Network for Return** to foster and promote practical cooperation between Member States, the Commission and Frontex.
12. The renewed Schengen Information System will contain alerts on third-country nationals subject to return decisions, which will be an important new tool at the disposal of Member States to monitor and enforce return decisions, paving the way for further cooperation, including on the mutual recognition of return decisions, and deter irregular secondary movements within Schengen. Member State should ensure a proper implemention of this measure, in line with the Commission's Recommendation.

Component 10: "*Use of state-of-the-art technology including large-scale information systems*"[37].

Policy priorities

European integrated border management, especially border checks and border surveillance, should be supported by advanced, mobile and interoperable European technical systems and solutions that are compatible with large-scale EU IT systems. This is to guarantee more efficient and reliable border control. The European Border and Coast Guard should have the capacity to make best use of state-of-the-art technologies, including mechanisms to secure the data.

[35] Commission Recommendation on mutual recognition of return decisions and expediting returns when implementing the Directive 200/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council C(2023) 1763

[36] Policy document towards an operational strategy for more effective returns of 24 January 2023, COM(2023) 45 final.

[37] Article 3(1)(j) of the EBCG Regulation.

Strategic guidelines

1. **The quality of information** used for border checks in existing systems should be increased by taking practical measures to ensure data accuracy, including via their periodic evaluation and by implementing state-of-the-art technology.
2. As stated in strategic guideline 5 of the component on cooperation at EU-level, the **interoperability of existing and new large-scale IT systems** (EES, VIS, ETIAS, the renewed Schengen Information System) should be ensured, especially the full and comprehensive implementation of the recently renewed systems.
3. Developing, maintaining and operating the central components of large-scale information systems is the main objective of eu-LISA, the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.
4. The potential of the **new smart technical solutions** (e.g. automated border check/ABC-gates) and the interoperability of different border and security-related information systems (e.g. FADO and Frontex Interpol Electronic Library Document Systems) should be harnessed with a view to improving the security of citizens, facilitating border checks and crossings of external borders, and combatting cross-border crime and terrorism, in a manner that ensures full respect for the rights of citizens and third country nationals alike.
5. The full potential of **modern technology** should be used to heighten European surveillance and reaction capabilities at the external borders. The use of European surveillance capacities (e.g. satellite services) should be further developed to create a comprehensive situational picture.
6. The **surveillance capacity** of integrated, interoperable and adaptable technical surveillance systems (stationary and mobile) used at sea and land borders should be further developed. This should include technical solutions and working processes used in different operational centres (NCC, Rescue Coordination Centres and Local Coordination Centres) and mobile units.
7. In its contribution to a **European critical technology autonomy**[38], the European Border and Coast Guard is to ensure that its capability development planning takes into account the objective of reducing dependencies in critical technologies from third countries, including by exploiting results of European research and innovation on border management.
8. The processing of personal data by use of the new technologies must comply with the requirements of EU law on personal data protection, including with regard to the use state of the art technology, to secure personal data. The Commission, in cooperation with eu-LISA, should develop an action plan and technical solutions to provide support for the Member States to handle and process large quantities of data with the help of new and state of the art technologies.

[38] Statement of the Members of the European Council of 25-26 February 2021.

Component 11: "*A quality control mechanism, in particular the Schengen evaluation mechanism, the vulnerability assessment and possible national mechanisms, to ensure the implementation of Union legislation in the area of border management*"[39].

Policy priorities

A comprehensive European quality control system should be in place to guarantee constant awareness of the implementation and of the quality of European integrated border management at the strategic and operational levels. Results of the quality control should be used as a basis when further developing European and national systems and functions.

Strategic guidelines

1. A European quality control mechanism, consisting in particular of the **Schengen evaluation and monitoring mechanism**, the **vulnerability assessments** carried out by Frontex, and **national quality control mechanisms** should be fully operationalised. In this framework, Frontex should develop technical capabilities to carry out assessments and compliance checks of travel documents issued by the Member States, in order to ensure the compliance of the sceurity features with the standards set up at the European level.
2. Based on the regular exchange of information, **synergies between the vulnerability assessment and the Schengen evaluation mechanism** should be maximised with a view to establishing an improved situational awareness on the functioning of the Schengen area. This should avoid, to the extent possible, a duplication of efforts on the part of Member States, and ensure better-coordinated use of the relevant EU financial instruments supporting the management of external borders and returns.
3. Results of the quality control mechanism should be used when developing the national border management system and when prioritising the use of relevant EU funding instruments (e.g. the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the national programmes under the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) of the Integrated Border Management Fund, or occasionally the thematic facilities of the BMVI), especially when assessing any other funding provided by the Commission.
4. **Member States** should establish **a national quality control mechanism** (national 'Schengen evaluation'), covering all parts and functions of the national integrated border management system and including all authorities involved in integrated border management.
5. Member States must, in line with their obligations under the Schengen evaluations regulation[40] and the EBCG Regulation, respectively, participate actively in the Schengen evaluation visits coordinated by the Commission and provide timely and high-quality data to the vulnerability assessments carried out by Frontex.

[39] Article 3(1)(k) of the EBCG Regulation.

[40] Council Regulation (EU) 2022/922 of 9 June 2022 on the establishment and operation of an evaluation and monitoring mechanism to verify the application of the Schengen acquis, and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1053/2013, OJ L 160, 15.6.2022, p. 1.

6. In line with the Schengen evaluations regulation, Schengen evaluations should encompass the operational output of the whole European Border and Coast Guard thus also covering the evaluation of the Agency's operational activities within Member States.

Component 12: "*Solidarity mechanisms, in particular Union funding instruments*"[41].

Policy priorities

The effective implementation of the EIBM strategy will be achieved with the support of dedicated EU funding, especially from the Border Management and Visa Policy Instrument (BMVI) and AMIF. EU funds will support the European integrated border management actions at EU and at national level, in line with the legal provisions of the respective EU fund. Member States should aim to set their funding priorities to make sure to cover all elements of European integrated border management stemming from EU jurisdiction and defined by EU law, with a view to delivering maximum EU added value. Components of the European integrated border management regulated by national law should preferably be covered by national resources.

Frontex activities are supported by the Agency's dedicated budget stemming from the EU overall budget. The Agency can also benefit from EU funding for technical assistance projects in third countries, in accordance with its mandate and the provisions of relevant funding instruments (the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation instrument – Global Europe, NDICI-GE, and the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance, IPA III) supporting the implementation of the external dimension of the EU migration policy.

Strategic guidelines

1. The use of **EU funding instruments** (e.g. national programmes under the BMVI) should be aligned with national strategies, action plans and capability planning. There should be clear and well-detailed national priorities (e.g. EUROSUR, capability development), based on EU priorities, maximisisng complementarity and value added of EU funds.
2. Results of the Schengen evaluation mechanism and the vulnerability assessment should be taken into account to prioritise the use of EU funds at national level.
3. Close cooperation between the Commission and Frontex should ensure synergies between Frontex activities and actions funded by other EU funding instruments and avoid double financing.
4. Dedicated EU funding under BMVI specific actions should support Member States in acquiring required equipment in view of putting it at the disposal of Frontex in accordance with Article 64(14) of the EBCG Regulation. This will consolidate the Agency's capacity to support those Member States in need of assistance.

[41] Article 3(1)(l) of the EBCG Regulation.

Component 13: "*Fundamental rights*[42]".

Policy priorities

The respect for, and protection and promotion of, fundamental rights are at the heart of European integrated border management. The European Border and Coast Guard must guarantee the protection of fundamental rights in the performance of its tasks as an overarching legal obligation, in accordance with its mandate, when implementing European integrated border management.

The actions of EU and national actors within the European Border and Coast Guard should be carried out in full compliance with EU law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and relevant international law. The latter includes the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951 and its Protocol of 1967, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Obligations related to access to international protection, in particular the principle of *non-refoulement*, must also be fully respected.

In its proposal for a regulation on screening of third-country nationals[43], the Commission proposed that each Member State should establish an independent monitoring mechanism to ensure that fundamental rights are observed in relation to the screening at external borders and that any related allegations of a breach of fundamental rights are properly investigated. This monitoring mechanism would be part of the governance and monitoring of the migratory situation provided for in the Commission proposal for a new regulation on asylum and migration management[44].

Strategic guidelines

1. The **Fundamental Rights Strategy**[45] **and the accompanying Action Plan**[46] adopted by the Frontex Management Board should be strictly observed in all activities of the European Border and Coast Guard at EU and at national level. At national level, this may be achieved through the development of a tailored national fundamental rights strategy and action plan, or through their comprehensive inclusion within the national strategy for EIBM.
2. Frontex and the Member States should foster an EIBM culture characterised by its compliance with obligations under EU and international law, including the principle of *non-refoulement*, by the full respect for fundamental rights, and by its protection and promotion of the principles of equality and non-discrimination, mutual respect, transparency and good administration, and mutual cooperation. Since respect of fundamental rights is a horizontal or cross-cutting component of European integrated

[42] Article 3(2) of the EBCG Regulation.
[43] COM(2020) 612, 23.9.2020.
[44] COM(2020) 610, 23.9.2020.
[45] The European Border and Coast Guard Agency Fundamental Rights Strategy, 2021.
[46] Management Board Decision 61/2021 of 9 November 2021 adopting the Fundamental Rights Action Plan for the implementation of the Fundamental Rights Strategy.

border management, Frontex and the relevant authorities of the Member States should integrate **fundamental rights safeguards throughout all their activities**, including in operational activities, analysis and risk assessments, planning activities, return activities, trainings and development, as well as in cooperation and engagements with external partnerss. Moreover, Frontex and the Member States should act in full compliance with fundamental rights during the whole operational cycle of all border management and return activities.

3. Particular attention should be paid to the rights and needs of vulnerable persons or groups and persons in vulnerable situations, including children and unaccompanied minors. Emphasis should be paid to the development of capacity in early identification, support, cultural mediation, interpretation, and adequate referral to redress or protection mechanisms as relevant. With regard to children, Frontex and Member States should always have regard to the best interest of the child as the primary consideration in any decision-making affecting children. Member States should develop and sustain operationally a national fundamental rights monitoring mechanism in relation to border management and returns. This mechanism should be equipped with the resources and capacity to be able to provide advice on fundamental rights compliance, conduct investigations into alleged violations, deliver fundamental rights trainings, oversee or contribute to existing redress mechanisms (such as incident reporting or complaints mechanisms) and ensure the overall operational compliance of activities with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, EU and international law, including fundamental rights. Member States' competent authorities should be encouraged to appoint fundamental rights focal points within all departments to ensure good efficiency, coordination, and streamlining of fundamental rights advice, training, and oversight.
4. **Fundamental rights monitors** are to be actively involved in protecting and promoting the respect for fundamental rights as a core element of all activities of the EBCG, under every component of European integrated border management. The monitors should be granted the same access to operational areas as all deployed staff. All monitors should be available and proactive sources of advice, feedback, and support in the joint effort of the EBCG to uphold the respect for EU and international law, including fundamental rights.
5. Fundamental rights should be an essential part of the training syllabus at EU and at national level for all persons participating in border control or return activities. These training measures should have a specific focus on the protection of vulnerable persons, including children and unaccompanied minors.
6. During the evaluations carried out under the revised Schengen Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism particular attention should be paid to verifying the respect for fundamental rights in the application of the Schengen *acquis*.

Component 14: "*Education and training*[47]".

Policy priorities

Availability of a sufficient number of competent and specifically trained staff in all fields of the European integrated border management should be ensured at EU and at national level, through close cooperation among training academies in Member States and Frontex.

Education and training should be based on harmonised and high-quality common training standards for the standing corps, taking into account operational needs, tasks and legal competence and with an emphasis on a clear understanding of the values enshrined in the Treaties. It should promote the highest standards and best practices in the implementation of Union border and return laws, with a special emphasis on relevant information on international protection, the protection of vulnerable persons, including children and unaccompanied minors, and on the respect of fundamental rights, and should forge a common culture based on the respect of fundamental rights.

Strategic guidelines

1. **Common core curricula** and necessary training tools for border management and return, including on the protection of children and other persons in vulnerable situations, knowledge of border guards during border checks to detect false and falsified documents, as well as impostors and look alikes, should be further developed and be based on a common overall reference framework of qualifications developed for the sector (sectoral qualifications framework for border and coast guarding). These products should take into account the European Border and Coast Guard capability roadmap, approved annually by the Management Board. It should also offer additional training courses and seminars related to integrated border management tasks, both for the standing corps and for officers of the competent national authorities.
2. A **specific training tool for the European Border and Coast Guard** should continue to be developed and enriched by Frontex, including its Fundamental Rights Officer, in close cooperation with Member States, the Commission, FRA, other relevant EU agencies and other stakeholders, taking into account relevant research outcomes and best practices.
3. **Specialised training measures** relevant to the tasks and powers of the members of the standing corps, for forced-return monitors and fundamental rights monitors should be further developed to address operational needs. Exercises should be regularly conducted with those border guards and other members of the teams, in accordance with the specialised training schedule.
4. An equal level of border guard and return-related training should be provided at EU and at national level to all members of the standing corps to be deployed for operational activities, regardless of their category. This is to ensure that all European border and coast guards are professionals are properly trained according to their specialisation.

[47] Article 3(2) of the EBCG Regulation.

5. An **internal quality control mechanism,** in line with European standards and guidelines for education and training, should be implemented by Frontex to ensure high-level training, expertise and professionalism of statutory staff who participate in the Agency's operational activities. The state of implementation of this mechanism should be reported in the annual evaluation report and annexed to the annual activity report.
6. Acquiring knowledge or specific expertise from experience and good practices abroad during missions and return-related operations in another Member State should be encouraged. In particular, this should be provided through an exchange programme to border guards participating in return interventions by Frontex.
7. The Agency should develop a **sustainable and comprehensive training concept,** which should consider the possible establishment of a training centre within Frontex, and take duly into account and building on greater cooperation and synergies with the national training institutes of the Member States. The aim is to coordinate and streamline the development, delivery and certification of border and coast guard education and training, based on European standards for quality assurance, and to further facilitate the inclusion of a common European culture in the training provided.

Component 15: "*Research and innovation*[48]".

Policy priorities

Research and innovation (R&I) is crucial to support integrated border management with state-of-the-art solutions, technology and knowledge.

European R&I financed from the "Civil Security for Society" cluster of Horizon Europe developed, and continues to develop, capabilities supporting the twelve thematic components of European integrated border management, such as being capable to carry out identity, health and security checks at borders, safeguarding the functioning of the Schengen area while facilitating travels of bona fide travellers, respecting rights and possible vulnerabilities of individuals[49]. R&I also develops capabilities to provide border surveillance and situational awareness[50]; combat identity and document frauds[51]; support state-of-the-art solutions for the European Border and Coast Guard, interoperability and performance of EU data exchange and analysis[52]; improve risk detection, incident response and crime prevention[53]; improve European civilian capabilities for maritime security, including search and rescue.[54] It is also

[48] Article 3(2) of the EBCG Regulation.
[49] Examples including ABC4EU (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/312797), BODEGA (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/653676), D4FLY (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/833704), FASTPASS (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/312583), XP-DITE (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/285311)
[50] Examples including ALFA (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/700002), EWISA (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/608174), FOLDOUT (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/787021)
[51] Examples including FIDELITY (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/284862), iMARS (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/607379)
[52] Examples including ANDROMEDA (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/833881)
[53] Examples including TRESSPASS (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/787120)
[54] Examples including CLOSEYE (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/313184), COMPASS2020 (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/833650), EFFECTOR (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/883374),

key to counter organised crime groups and terrorists, which are often innovative and early technology adopters themselves.

R&I for border management is also relevant from the perspective of European open strategic autonomy, including in areas of critical technologies as outlined by the EU Action Plan on Synergies between Civil Security, Defence and Aerospace Industries, and assessed by the EU Observatory of Critical Technologies.

Timely and well-coordinated investment in R&I on border management should be ensured at EU and national levels. In particular, this concerns Horizon Europe; the European Regional Development Fund; research studies and pilot projects by Frontex; and national R&I programmes. Opportunities of synergies should be exploited between EU R&I on border management and other EU and national instruments suppporting European suppliers and users to take up innovative solutions for border management. That means primarily the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) but also instruments such as the Technical Support Instrument or Digital Europe.

Strategic guidelines

1. Border management operations should benefit from and engage in R&I to become more **interoperable**, **cost-effective** and **sustainable**. Member States border authorities, Frontex and eu-LISA should **monitor** R&I (conducted at national, EU and industry levels, as well that by third countries and other organisations) in the areas covered by IBM, technology developments and foreseen challenges, and exploit available innovative solutions.
2. Cooperation between EU Agencies and R&I units of Member States' border authorities should be further developed in priority areas, including through the work of the **EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security**, which is a collaborative network of innovation labs that supports the work of internal security actors in the EU and its Member States.
3. When planning R&I on border management, the Commission and Member States will take into account the **long-term components of the Capability Roadmap** of the European Border and Coast Guard.
4. Frontex should assist Member States and the Commission in drawing up and implementing the relevant Union framework programmes for R&I activities related to IBM, i.e. **"Civil Security for Society" of Horizon Europe**.
5. Frontex should assist Member States to **identify, assess and promote uptake** (validation, testing, transfer, integration and/or deployment) of innovative solutions coming from R&I, including by engaging Member States in networks on innovation.
6. The Commission will **promote the results of EU border management R&I**, including in the context of the Community of European Research and Innovation for Security (CERIS) and the annual Security Research Event (SRE).
7. The EU Observatory on Critical Technologies should provide monitoring and analysis of critical technologies for European integrated border management, their potential

EUCISE2020 (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/883374), MARISA (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/740698), SAFESHORE (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/700643)

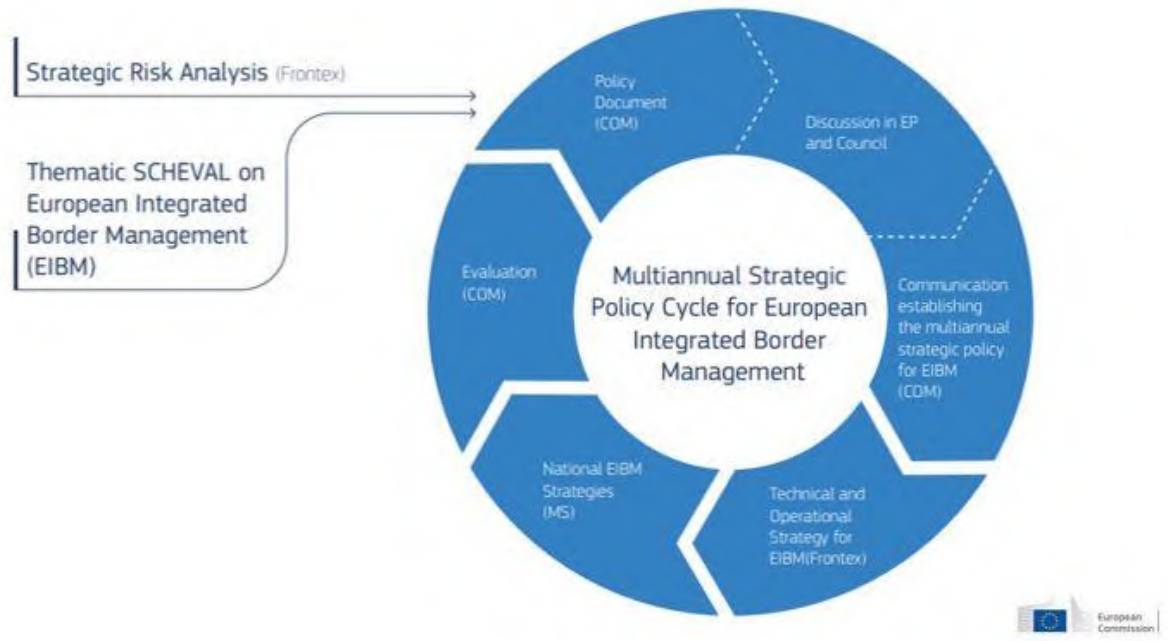
applications, value chains, needed testing infrastructure, existing gaps and dependencies, and provide inputs to technology roadmaps.

8. Innovative solutions for border management that are put in operation after R&I must comply with requirements of EU and national law; promote and respect fundamental rights of travelers (both EU citizens and third country nationals) including personal data protection, research ethics, and be understood and accepted by society.
9. Opportunities offered by **Artificial Intelligence** should be exploited, and solutions and best practices exchanged. Solutions using Artificial Intelligence can be perceived as sensitive, complex and potentially risk carrying. Ethics and the trustworthiness of Artificial Intelligence tools should have the highest priority in EU-funded R&I on border management, and solutions for border management which employ Artificial Intelligence should apply all necessary safeguards, including those mandated by the proposed Artificial Intelligence Act, once agreed by co-legislators.

ANNEX II
The implementation of the multiannual policy cycle on EIBM

The EIBM strategic policy will need to be implemented through the technical and operational strategy for EIBM adopted by the Management Board of Frontex as well as through the national strategies to be established by the Member States[55]. Figure 1 illustrates the different stages of the multiannual strategic policy cycle for EIBM.

Figure 1: The multiannual strategic policy cycle for EIBM



a) *The Frontex technical and operational strategy for EIBM*

In accordance with Article 8(5) of the EBCG Regulation, Frontex is tasked with establishing a technical and operational strategy for European integrated border management, by a decision of its Management Board and based on a proposal of the executive director of Frontex. That strategy has to be prepared in close cooperation with the Member States and the Commission and has to be in line with Article 3 of the EBCG Regulation. The Agency must take into account, where justified, the specific situation of the Member States, in particular their geographical location. The technical and operational strategy has to build on this Communication but also take into account the relevant requirements of existing Schengen legislation in force.

[55] Article 8(5)-(6) of the EBCG Regulation

Requirements for the technical and operational strategy on EIBM
• The Frontex Management Board and its dedicated working group on EIBM should guide and oversee the development of the strategy and the implementation process; • In accordance with the Council Conclusions of 2020, the technical and operational strategy for EIBM should build on the findings and recommendations issued in the Schengen 2019-2020 thematic evaluation of the national strategies for EIBM; • The strategy should be structured around the 15 components in Article 3 of the EBCG Regulation; • The strategy should be in line with the political direction provided by EU institutions; • A unified strategy for the EBCG should address both Frontex and the national border management authorities of the Member States; • The strategy should cover actions not only at EU level, but also at national level, including actions aimed at harmonising practices, the standardisation of technical means and operational interoperability; • The strategy should cover five years, taking into account the programming cycle of the multiannual financial framework; • It should be accompanied by an action plan setting out the key measures, the timeframe, the milestones, the necessary resources and the monitoring arrangements.

b) *National strategies for European integrated border management*

Member States retain primary responsibility for the management of their external borders in their interest and in the interest of all Member States. Consequently, the effective implementation of European integrated border management requires that the strategies established at EU level be translated to the national level. Therefore, Article 8(6) of the EBCG Regulation requires that the Member States establish their national strategies for European integrated border management.

Requirements for national strategies for EIBM
• There should be one national strategy for each Member State; • It should establish a national centralised governance structure for EIBM, that coordinates all relevant authorities involved in border management and return, and that takes into account the implications of other EU policies implemented at the external borders of the Member State by the competent national authorities within their respective mandates, such as police, customs and sanitary control authorities; • The national strategy has to be developed in line with the political strategy decided by the EU institutions, the technical and operational strategy of the Agency and with the requirements of the Schengen *acquis*; • It shall build on the findings and recommendations issued in the thematic Schengen 2019-2020 evaluation of the national strategies; • The national strategy should be based on the 15 components in Article 3 of the EBCG Regulation, but may also cover areas of national competence, if this is considered appropriate; • The national strategy should set out national border management coordination structures and participation by the Member State in relevant EU mechanisms coordinated by Frontex and other relevant EU actors;

- It should establish clearly the current and planned allocation of human and financial resources, and the main stages for the development of the necessary infrastructure;
- It should establish a review and monitoring mechanism;
- The national strategy should have a multiannual coverage, ideally taking into account the programming cycle of the multiannual financial framework;
- It should be accompanied by an action plan outlining the key measures, the timeframe, the milestones, the necessary resources and the monitoring arrangements.

c) *Evaluation of the EIBM cycle*

Four years after the adoption of this Communication, the Commission will carry out a thorough evaluation of the policy's implementation by all stakeholders at EU and at national levels, with a view to preparing the next multiannual strategic policy cycle. The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of the implementation by the Agency and Member States of the multiannual strategic policy for EIBM, respecting a coherent, integrated and systematic approach with a view on an EU added value. In doing so, the degree of convergence with the policy priorities and strategic guidelines of the EIBM components will be instrumental. The work on the Schengen cycle, including the State of Schengen Report, will feed into that evaluation, complemented by information to be provided by the Member States and the Agency.