
FRONTEX TO HELP SERBIA MANAGE MIGRANT CHALLENGE

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Europe's Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, and Serbia's Interior Minister, Nebojsa Stefanovic, on Thursday initialed an agreement on cooperation between Serbia and Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

"Cooperation with the Serbian government contributes to achieving other goals with EU support," Avramopoulos said in Belgrade, according to Beta news agency.

He said the agreement would enable Frontex to conduct checks on migrants at the border in cooperation with the Serbian Interior Ministry, Serbian media reported.

The agreement will be sent to the Serbian parliament for ratification.

Earlier on Thursday, Serbias Commissioner for Refugees, Vladimir Cucic, told TV Prva that Frontex was already present on the Serbian border with Bulgaria and Macedonia.

The border and coast guard agency helps EU countries and Schengen-associated countries to manage their external borders and harmonise border controls across the EU.

Non-EU countries cannot become full members.

However, a so-called status agreement may be concluded between the EU and a third country. This is when it is envisaged that Frontex teams will be deployed to a third country in actions where the team members will have executive powers, or where other actions in third countries require it.

A status agreement has to be endorsed by all 28 EU members before coming into force.

Montenegro has also said it wants a status agreement with the EU agency to help curb migration.

Bosnian Security Minister Dragan Mektic said in June that they would "see if it is possible for us from the Western Balkans" to become part of Frontex.

The International Organisation for Migration, the UN migration agency, warned on June 1 that migration flows through the Western Balkans are on the rise.

From January to the end of May, authorities in Bosnia, Montenegro and Albania registered more than 6,700 new migrants and asylum-seekers, more than twice the 2,600 migrants and asylum-seekers registered in the three countries over the whole of 2017.

Local media reports say the migrants and refugees crossing the Balkans come mainly from Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Iraq.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbia-eu-initial-an-agreement-on-border-protection-09-20-2018>

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