2025 Annual Report of the Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer

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In July 2026, the Fundamental Rights Office (FRO) of Frontex published its Annual Report for 2025. The report presents the FRO's monitoring activities at the external borders and in third countries, including the monitoring of return operations. It also examines reporting and accountability mechanisms, particularly serious incident reports and complaints concerning alleged violations of fundamental rights. For the 2024 annual report →eucrim 2/2025, 134-135.

The 2025 report is divided into five chapters:

- The first chapter presents the main findings related to monitoring activities at the external borders and in third countries. In 2025, the FRO conducted 131 monitoring missions in 17 EU Member States and six third countries, totalling 1576 field monitoring days. Most field monitoring days were conducted in Spain and Greece. Access to operational areas and relevant documents improved compared to previous years. Reports of collective expulsions at land and sea borders decreased compared to previous years. However, allegations of inhuman or degrading treatment, excessive use of force, and restrictions on access to asylum remained a serious concern. While cooperation with Bulgarian authorities improved, the FRO continues to express concerns regarding fundamental rights compliance in Greece. It advises against launching operational activities in the Eastern Aegean unless additional safeguards are met. The FRO also raises concerns about Frontex's aerial surveillance activities in the Central Mediterranean and along the West African migratory route, particularly regarding information-sharing with third countries accused of human rights violations. Deficiencies persisted in fundamental rights safeguards during debriefing interviews and the collection of risk-analysis information from migrants. Gaps were also identified in the identification and referral of vulnerable persons.
- The second chapter focuses on return-related activities, including the monitoring of return operations and reintegration programmes. Most return operations were carried out by Germany, Italy, and Sweden. The share of return flights with at least one monitor on board increased from 60% in 2020 (140 flights) to 86% in 2025 (222 flights). The FRO reiterates that coercive measures must be necessary, proportionate, and based on individual risk assessments.
- The third chapter examines the three accountability mechanisms under the FRO's mandate: (1) serious incident reporting, (2) the complaints mechanism, and (3) the use-of-force supervisory mechanism. In 2025, the FRO examined over 200 potential serious incidents involving alleged fundamental rights violations and opened 47 investigations. The 47 serious incident reports concerned a total of 64 allegations of fundamental rights violations. Of these, 12 (19%) involved inhuman or degrading treatment, 11 (17%) concerned alleged violations of the right to life, while lack of access to asylum and collective expulsion accounted for seven allegations each (11%). Of the 42 cases closed, violations were

confirmed in seven cases and considered likely in another 21. The number of complaints increased from 84 in 2024 to 112 in 2025. Only one complaint was declared admissible and forwarded to the competent national authorities.

- The fourth chapter addresses the FRO's advisory functions and cooperation with EU institutions, national authorities, and third countries. It also covers the Fundamental Rights Action Plan and the Technical and Operational Strategy on European Integrated Border Management. The FRO provided advice on cooperation with third countries and carried out human rights impact assessments concerning The Gambia, Turkmenistan, and Armenia.
- The fifth and final chapter provides an overview of the FRO's training and capacity-building activities aimed at promoting fundamental rights. In 2025, the FRO delivered 86 training sessions covering return operations, border surveillance, screening, debriefing, use of force, and other aspects of border management.

Finally, the report outlines three main priorities for 2026: (1) strengthening compliance with fundamental rights, (2) closer alignment with EU institutions, and (3) reinforcing fundamental rights within European integrated border management. These priorities include improving cooperation with national authorities, fully implementing relevant action plans and strengthening the monitoring of fundamental rights compliance. The FRO also intends to expand its engagement with EU institutions, funding mechanisms, and third countries, while promoting Frontex deployments over bilateral arrangements and monitoring return flights irrespective of Frontex involvement.

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