**Frontex launches first operation in Western Balkans**

2019-05-21

Today, Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency is launching its first fully - fledged joint operation outside the European Union, deploying 50 officers with 16 patrol cars and one thermo-vision van from 12 EU Member States to support Albania in border control and tackling cross-border crime.

The launch event is taking place in Tirana, Albania, in the presence of Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama, Albanian Minister of Interior Sandër Lleshaj, EU Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos and Frontex Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri.

“We can only effectively deal with the many challenges at our borders if we work together across borders,” said Frontex Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri.

“Border guards from all around Europe will work shoulder-to-shoulder with their Albanian colleagues at Albania’s border with Greece. I am proud that Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, has once again delivered by launching its first joint operation outside the European Union, here in Albania,” Leggeri added.

Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, said: "With the first ever deployment of European Border and Coast Guard teams outside of the EU, we are opening an entirely new chapter in our cooperation on migration and border management with Albania and with the whole Western Balkan region. This is a real game changer and a truly historical step, bringing this region closer to the EU by working together in a coordinated and mutually supportive way on shared challenges such as better managing migration and protecting our common borders.”