

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002858/26
to the Commission
Anna Maria Cisint (PFE)
(9 July 2026)**

Subject: Drug and firearms trafficking along the Balkan route

The Frontex Annual Risk Analysis (ARA) for 2026/2027 states that criminal organisations operating along the Western Balkans route have bolstered their operational capacity by consolidating their physical presence in drug-producing countries and stepping up cocaine, heroin and cannabis smuggling operations into the European Union. The ARA also highlights that the ever-growing flow of illegal firearms from Türkiye and the Western Balkans is fuelling the rise of increasingly organised, sophisticated and violent criminal networks that are often involved in migrant smuggling. Frontex's findings are borne out by recent events in Italy, where a sting coordinated by the Milan District Anti-Mafia Directorate succeeded in dismantling a transnational organisation involved in drug and weapons trafficking along the Balkan route.

In the light of the above, I ask the Commission:

1. What additional measures — potentially involving Frontex and Europol, as well as enhanced cooperation with countries in the Western Balkans — need to be implemented to tackle cross-border drug and firearms trafficking along the Balkan route?
2. What tangible results have been achieved by Frontex's operations against the criminal networks that use the Balkan route, and how could the Agency step up its support to Member State border and customs authorities with a view to enhancing efforts to detect and combat the smuggling of drugs, firearms and other illicit goods?

Submitted: 9.7.2026

**Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission
(1 September 2026)**

The Commission is aware of the situation and the findings of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) Annual Risk Analysis on serious cross-border crime along the Western Balkans route.

Here, Frontex provides operational support to Member States through joint operations and its role in the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) ⁽¹⁾.

The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) supports Member States in combating illicit firearms and drug trafficking.

Together with Member States and Western Balkan partners, both agencies execute joint operational actions against organised crime and exchange intelligence to maintain a shared situational picture at EU borders. In 2025, Frontex joint operations with EMPACT led to seizures of 191 firearms and 104 000 kg of illicit drugs.

The EU supports capacity building, criminal intelligence and prevention across the Western Balkans. For example, via EU4FAST (with Frontex), it fights migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and organised crime.

The Commission proposed a new Directive to fight illicit firearms trafficking ⁽²⁾ in 2026, introducing EU-wide criminal penalties and establishing mandatory cross-border intelligence sharing.

Under the EU Drugs Strategy ⁽³⁾ and Action Plan ⁽⁴⁾, the Western Balkans is a priority region for cooperation to disrupt trafficking routes. The EU also continues supporting the Western Balkan partners in implementing the regional Small Arms and Light Weapons Roadmap ⁽⁵⁾.

The Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy have recently proposed a new EU sanctions regime ⁽⁶⁾ to tackle migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and other forms of organised crime.

⁽¹⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/law-enforcement-cooperation/empact-fighting-crime-together_en.

⁽²⁾ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-proposes-new-rules-combat-trafficking-illicit-firearms-2026-02-26_en.

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0743>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0744>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.seesac.org/SALW-Control-Roadmap/>.

⁽⁶⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_1562.