

Fabrizio Colimberti

Frontex. A principal-agent perspective

Thesis (M.A.)

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UCL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY
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FRONTEX:
AN AGENCY AT THE CROSSROADS

FABRIZIO COLIMBERTI

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research focuses on one of the latest and most significant development of Justice, Freedom and Security policies of the EU: the creation of FRONTEX, the Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, established in 2004 and operational since 2005.

In particular, this paper will utilise a principal-agent perspective in an attempt to explain why Frontex has been established, what roles the various institutions played in the process of, and the context behind, its creation. The paper argues that Member States established an agency borne out of the need to enhance the Area of Justice, Freedom and Security in the context of the Schengen agreements. Consequently, the paper highlights the deficiencies of the structure, especially regarding its independence from its principals, and its current funding regulation limits, that result in a wide range of tasks and a high dependence from the resources of Member States.

However, even if primarily only used in the context of counter-illegal immigration operations, the paper highlights how the agency has been growing steadily in power and resources, and represents a first fundamental step towards an effective communitarisation of border management that could lead, in the long term, to the establishment of a European Border Police.