**Research Project on Ethics in EU Border Management**

**TOPIC:** The Security and Ethics of EU Border Management

**TO:** Frontex

**FROM:** Dr Mike Bourne (on behalf of a multidisciplinary team of researchers at Queen’s University Belfast)

**DATE:**  6th November, 2015

**WHAT OUR PROJECT DOES:** We are a team of researchers with expertise in security, law, and ethics, and with extensive experience in conducting field research at border sites and engaging with relevant policy communities. We are interested in the governance of the free movement of persons and the extent to which *rights and ethics* feature in border management and security concerns. Our research examines how people and objects are managed through security procedures at EU border sites, by comparing how travellers, baggage and freight are processed at select EU borders. Through this research we expect to be able to further deepen and strengthen existing engagement with ethics in border management practice, such as that discussed in the 2010 Frontex commissioned report ‘Ethics of Border Security’ (Frontex/64/2010), and the extent to which rights are being mainstreamed in Frontex operation procedures (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, ‘EU Solidarity and FRONTEX: fundamental rights challenges’, 2013). We will produce an independent expert examination of how ethics operates in practice in the management of specific border sites in order to identify best practices and help develop an ethical framework for border management policy and practice. This will take the form of a dedicated report and will feed into a stakeholder workshop.

**WHAT OUR PROJECT CAN DO FOR FRONTEX:** We are aware of the extensive engagement of Frontex with ethics and fundamental rights, which are central to its revised mandate. By working in collaboration with Frontex we hope to help policy-makers and practitioners by bringing an independent perspective on current strategic thinking about how to improve border management in Europe. In particular, we hope to:

* Identify and share **ethical best practice** by providing an in-depth analysis of border management across mulitiple levels within the EU, from policy-makers and senior managers down to operational personnel; and from Frontex to wider stakeholders (commercial partners, advocacy groups etc.).
* Reveal new opportunities to **decrease barriers** to the dissemination of best practices (e.g. ‘silo’ thinking) and **increase interoperability** between the different specialists involved in border management.
* Identify and develop strategies to negotiate emerging tensions between **ethical border management, security, fundamental rights, free movement and efficiency**.
* Develop and enhance strategies that can help Frontex demonstrate that the **rights of travellers** are respected, especially in times of rapid change.
* Provide useful input to Frontex and other stakeholders in **ensuring strong and effective ethical practices** within a changing regulatory and political environment through evidence-based analysis and ethical framework development leading to resilient practical strategies.

We will share our insights with Frontex as they develop during the lifecycle of the project; we will also disseminate our findings to Frontex personnel in a dedicated report which will be presented at our final stakeholder meeting.

**CONFIDENTIALITY AND RESEARCH ETHICS:** Our project adopts the highest research ethics standards and has been approved through rigorous internal and external ethical reviews (i.e. Queen’s University Belfast; UK Economic and Social Research Council). We understand and appreciate the sensitivities around the work of Frontex, and therefore we will:

* Respect and guarantee **anonymity and confidentiality** of any persons interviewed when requested.
* Maintain our observation field notes, transcripts and any other collected data in **secure storage, and in accordance with all data protection legislation**.
* **Share our findings in advance** of any presentation or publication.
* Respect and guarantee any requests to **withdraw any data or quotations**, in part or in full, from the project.
* Respect and obey the **parameters of access** that are agreed prior to any site visits.

**WHAT WE ARE ASKING OF FRONTEX:** We are mindful of the sensitivity and time-pressure of Frontex’s work, and are therefore requesting the following from appropriate Frontex personnel:

* To help facilitate **interviews** with key Frontex personnel and national border agency personnel at both Headquarters and at operational sites.
* To help **facilitate access** to key EU border sites at ports and. At these sites we would like to observe the daily practices of border personnel in order to gain understanding of the ethical and practical challenges encountered.
* To attend and participate in our **final Stakeholder workshop** in October 2016.

**GET IN TOUCH:** we are happy to answer any questions or provide any existing documentation about our project. Please contact:

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**The Research Team**

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Dr Tom Walker (Principal Investigator) (Philosophy specialist in Ethics, Director of Centre for Ethics)