# Establishing the European Border Surveillance System

The European Border Surveillance System (Eurosur) is a key element of integrated border management on the EU's external frontiers, in which Member States cooperate with each other and with Frontex to exchange information on irregular migration and cross-border crime. Developing Eurosur as a full-scale system, as proposed in the draft regulation, will also address the dangers faced by migrants on the EU's southern sea borders.

## Context

In 2002, a Commission Communication set out priorities for the development of integrated management of the EU's external borders, based on common rules, operational cooperation and financial solidarity between Member States (MS). At the same time, increasing numbers of migrants making dangerous sea crossings in unsafe boats led the Commission to focus on the Southern Maritime Borders.

The goal of establishing integrated border management was added with the Lisbon Treaty (Article 77(2)(d) TFEU), and given force in the updated Schengen Borders Code. The establishment, in 2004, of Frontex, the Agency for managing cooperation on the EU's external borders, was a key element in fostering improved coordination. With the 2011 update of Frontex's mandate, developing a European border surveillance system is now a key task for the Agency, as well as more generally assessing risks on the external frontiers.

## Developing Eurosur

In a 2008 Communication, the Commission set out three phases for the development of Eurosur. First, national coordination centres (NCCs) would be created, and interlinked to enable data to be exchanged between MS and Frontex. In a second phase, common tools such as satellites would be integrated, along with extensions of surveillance to third countries (based on bilateral agreements). In the third phase, all MS systems would be integrated into a common monitoring and information-sharing environment covering the entire EU and adjacent seas.

A pilot project launched in 2010 saw six MS establish and link NCCs. In March 2012, this informal network expanded to cover 17 MS (plus Norway). Meanwhile the Perseus research project has worked to integrate and enhance existing surveillance systems.

## European Parliament position

Parliament has welcomed the development of Eurosur, notably in resolutions on the Internal Security Strategy and on the Maritime Dimension of Security and Defence Policy. The Commission's proposal to establish Eurosur was the subject of an agreement in trilogue, subsequently approved by the Civil Liberties Committee on 19 June 2013 (rapporteur Jan Mulder, ALDE, the Netherlands).

The agreed text sets out the framework for cooperation and information exchange, and the tasks of Frontex and NCCs. In particular, it specifies the continual maintenance of so-called situational pictures, in order to give accurate, effective and timely information to all relevant authorities. Frontex is mandated to cooperate with other EU bodies, with third countries and international organisations and with the UK and Ireland. Eurosur should be operational in the southern and eastern MS from 2 December. The Commission estimates the costs at €244 million for 2014-20.

## Stakeholders' views

The proposal has been criticised for giving the impression that the EU is moving further towards "Fortress Europe", even though the text requires fundamental rights to be respected. The UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants regrets the absence of any specific element for ensuring rescue at sea. On the other hand, the European Organisation for Security, representing technology firms, welcomes the proposal, seeing it as a key step towards a common information sharing

environment (CISE) for maritime surveillance.

**Author:** Francesca Ferraro
**Contact**: francesca.ferraro@ep.europa.eu