Evaluation and future development of the FRONTEX Agency and a European Border Surveillance System EUROSUR

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On 13 February 2008, the Commission presented the Communication on examining the creation of a European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR). In accordance with this communication, the Commission presents a report on the progress made in the developing the system. This report covers the time period from the presentation of the EUROSUR Communication (February 2008) until July 2009. It concerns in particular progress made in the three phases identified in the EUROSUR project.

To recall: the objective of EUROSUR should provide a common technical framework to support Member States' authorities in reaching full situational awareness at the southern and eastern EU external borders and increase the reaction capability of their border control authorities. Therefore, a decentralised system of (existing) systems should be established gradually in three phases, consisting in total of eight interlinked, but separate steps, which also limits the risk in case one of the steps is delayed.

In brief, the three phases consist of:

- **reinforcing the border surveillance capacity of Member States**, and fostering cooperation between them;
- **developing new tools and concepts at EU level** to be put at the disposal of the Member States;
- **integrating** the needs and tools of all aspects of maritime surveillance in one common information sharing environment.

Progress made during 2008: all concerned Member States welcomed this approach chosen by the Commission for the development of EUROSUR, leading to Council conclusions on the external borders of the EU Member States in June 2008. In its conclusions, the Council requested the Commission to report back to the Council in the first half of 2009 on progress made in developing EUROSUR on the basis of preparatory works carried out, in close cooperation with Member States and FRONTEX, including the technical study on key steps of EUROSUR.

Following the adoption of these conclusions the Commission has given priority to Phases 1 and 2 of EUROSUR, in order to meet the pressing operational needs facing the Union in particular at the southern maritime borders of the Schengen area. FRONTEX has been providing technical expertise throughout the process.

Three principal instruments have been used for the further technical preparations:

1) During 2008, all Member States concerned have programmed relevant measures under the External Borders Fund (EBF) and the Cash-Flow and Schengen Facility in line with Priority 2 of the EBF strategic guidelines which foresees Community funding of up to 75% for:

- investments in establishing or upgrading a single national coordination centre, which coordinates 24 /7 the activities of all national authorities carrying out external border control tasks (detection, identification, tracking, interception) and which is able to exchange information with the centres in other Member States;

- investments in establishing or upgrading a single national surveillance system, which covers all or – based on risk analysis – selected parts of the external border and enables the dissemination of information 24/7 between all authorities involved in external border control.

Several Member States have started with the implementation under the 2008 and 2009 EBF programmes; others are planning to gradually set up the relevant infrastructure until the end of 2013.

2) An **informal expert group** of Member States' representatives and experts (in the following: expert group) has been set up by the Commission, in which FRONTEX has also participated. This group has met so far at seven occasions.

3) In December 2008, the contract for the **technical study on developing concepts for border surveillance infrastructure**, a secure communication network and a "prefrontier" intelligence picture within the framework of EUROSUR has been signed. The study is being implemented between January 2009 and January 2010.

The objective of the study is to develop in 3 subprojects technical concepts, system architectures and technical specifications with regard to Steps 1, 2 and 6 of the EUROSUR:

- **Subproject 1**: in line with step 1 of the EUROSUR Communication, technical and management concepts shall be elaborated which can be used by Member States when extending or upgrading their national infrastructures for border surveillance.
- **Subproject 2**: in line with step 2, the system architecture and technical specifications for a secure communication network between the national coordination centres including FRONTEX shall be developed.
- **Subproject 3**: in line with step 6, the system architecture and technical specifications for a common pre-frontier intelligence picture shall be elaborated.

Next steps: in the 2nd quarter of 2010, the Commission will assess together with the Member States the next measures based on the final results of the technical study and taking into account the progress made under the different steps of EUROSUR. Member States are invited to gradually implement Phase 1 (Steps 1 and 2) from 2011 onwards, starting first with a core group of interested Member States, with the other Member States, whenever ready, joining one after the other until the end of 2013.

Concepts and tools developed under Phase 2 (in particular steps 5 and 6) shall be first tested and then progressively inserted into the EUROSUR framework from 2012 onwards.

The next report on the progress made in developing EUROSUR will be submitted to the Council in mid-2010.