External borders: integrated management of borders of the Member States of the Union

2002/2212(INI) - 07/05/2002 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : on the management of the European Union's external borders. CONTENT : The security of the external borders of the EU is an essential subject for European citizens. The EU already possesses an exact acquis communautaire in this area, but the main difficulty is the ability to organise between Member States all the operational synergies that are necessary. Moreover, in the context of expansion, citizens recall the necessity to improve the level of enlarged security of an enlarged EU. This is now a priority question. Four major needs have to be met: -ensure mutual confidence between the Member States which have abolished checks at their internal borders and thereby facilitate movement of travellers; -increase the effectiveness of the fight against illegal immigration, and trafficking in human beings and drugs, whilst respecting the right to asylum; -combating the threats posed by terrorism; -guarantee a high level of security within the EU after enlargement, in particular after the new Member States have been authorised to implement the Schengen acquis, which will consequently have an increase in the external land borders in a regional environment which is frequently more difficult. This Communication starts by taking stock of the situation and describing the acquis and existing operational practices, so as to lead to a diagnosis of the needs of the EU in the process of expansion. On the basis of this diagnosis it proposes the development of a common policy on management of the external borders of the EU, incorporating the components which are regarded as inseparable from each other. The Commission recommends structuring projects and ensuring continuity within a common policy of integrated management of external borders. This common policy should include at least five mutually interdependent components: -a common corpus of legislation; -a common co-ordination and operational co-operation mechanism. This involves the establishment of an External borders practitioners common unit involving those responsible for border guards service in the Member States and the representatives of various services whose functions also contribute to security at external borders. The common unit should have a steering role to carry out integrated risk analysis, co-ordinate projects on the ground, encourage major convergence in the field of the staff and the equipment, exercise an inspection function and put forward emergency operational measures. Certain measures may require Treaty amendment in due time. In the medium term, the unit should explore the need for a security procedure at external borders, consisting of establishing exchanges and processing of information between the authorities concerned with security at borders, possibly setting up permanent contact points. -common integrated risk analysis; -staff trained in the European dimension and inter-operational equipment; -financial burden sharing between Member States in the run up to a European Corps of Border Guards. The first function of the latter would be the "common surveillance" of the most sensitive places, particularly maritime borders, before assuming checking functions at crossing border points. Democratic and jurisdictional control of these activities must be assured.