

MEPs back plans to pool policing of EU external borders

Plenary sessions [06-07-2016 - 13:27]

Plans to set up an EU border control system, bringing together the EU's Frontex border agency and national border management authorities, were endorsed by MEPs on Wednesday. Under these plans, national authorities will still manage their borders on a day-to-day basis but, if their EU external borders are under pressure, they will be able to seek help from the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG), to rapidly deploy pooled border guard teams to those borders.

"The European Border and Coast Guard Regulation will ensure that the EU external borders are safer and better managed. This is not a silver bullet that can solve the migration crisis that the EU is facing today or fully restore trust in the Schengen area, but it is very much needed first step", said rapporteur Artis Pabriks (EPP, LV).

The new rules were approved by 483 votes to 181 with 48 abstentions.

Launching rapid border interventions in crisis situations

In cases where a member state faces increased pressures on its external border, such as disproportionate migratory pressure or cross-border crime, rapid border intervention teams could be temporarily deployed either at the request of an EU member state or by Council decision:

- following a member state request, an operational plan would be agreed with the EBCG, which would deploy, within five working days, the necessary staff and provide technical equipment,
- in cases where a member state does not take up the measures proposed by the EBCG or migratory pressure is jeopardising the functioning of the Schengen border check-free area, the EU Commission may present the Council with a proposal to act. The Council will then decide on the need to send border intervention teams. The operational plan should be agreed by the member state concerned and the EBCG before deployment can take place, and
- if a member state opposes a Council decision to provide assistance, other EU countries may temporarily reintroduce internal border checks.

Return operations

The EBCG will play a greater role than today's Frontex agency in returning migrants to their country of origin, but only where executing decisions that have already been taken by national authorities. Return provisions have been further strengthened by additional fundamental rights safeguards. The EBCG agency will not be involved in returns between non-EU countries.

Pool of guards and technical equipment pool

The EBCG will not have its own border guards but will be able to call on a rapid reaction pool of 1,500 border guards to be nominated by member states.

Press release

MEPs ensured that the teams of border guards in the Rapid Reaction Pool will have the equipment they need, by inserting a requirement to make equipment available from the rapid reaction pool no later than 10 days after the operational plan is agreed.

Accountability and information

The EBCG will be accountable to the European Parliament and Council. Parliament will be kept informed through regular reporting and access to information for MEPs.

Cooperation with other agencies

The mandates of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) will be aligned with that of the EBCG, so as to enable all three to coordinate their operations at sea and share information.

They are empowered to support national authorities performing coastguard tasks at national and EU levels and where appropriate at international level.

Next steps

The text voted by the European Parliament will be sent to the Council for approval. The legislation is expected to enter into force this autumn.

Further information

- Adopted text (2015/0310(COD)) will soon be available here (click on 06.07.2016)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 05.07.2016)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- Video of the press conference (click on 06.07.2016)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/other-events/schedule>
- EbS+ (05.07.2016)
: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm?sitelang=en&page=3&institution=0&date=07/05/2016>
- Audiovisual material for professionals
: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Page.aspx?id=2393>
- EPRS: European Border and Coast Guard Agency
: <https://epthinktank.eu/2016/07/01/european-border-and-coast-guard-agency-plenary-podcast/>

Political groups

- Press release by the EPP group: <http://bit.ly/29hiQQE>
- News pages of the S&D group: <http://bit.ly/1WWG6F4>
- News pages of the ECR group: <http://bit.ly/1Y0YFrj>
- News pages of the ALDE group: <http://bit.ly/1XbSQs6>
- News pages of the GUE/NGL group: <http://bit.ly/1UrAIM9>
- News pages of the Greens/EFA group: <http://bit.ly/1TV9vvr>
- News pages of the EFDD group: <http://bit.ly/1TUnDFU>

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