

Brussels, 13 February 2008

A comprehensive vision for an integrated European border management system for the 21st Century

The Commission today set out its vision of how to develop the EU's external border management system. These consist of a mix of concrete measures (on the FRONTEX Agency and on control of maritime borders) and longer term reflections on ways of recording entry and exit of third country nationals. This approach will ensure that the integrity of the Schengen area is preserved, while keeping the crossing of the external border as simple as possible for third country nationals fulfilling the entry conditions. It represents another in the recent steps taken by the Commission to contribute to reinforced solidarity and cooperation in managing the external border and in developing an EU immigration policy.

Vice-President Franco Frattini, Commissioner responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, commented: "This package puts forward new ideas on the table for the control of our borders, at check points as well as along the length of the border, using the most advanced technology to reach the highest level of security, whilst at the same time facilitating the procedures for bona fide third country nationals wishing to enter the Schengen area. These ideas will promote legitimate free movement of people, whilst also dealing with unexpected migratory pressure, especially at the southern maritime border of the Union, and reducing the trafficking of human beings into the EU".

The Communications

The communications are forward looking in that they include measures to reinforce all dimensions of efficient and managed entry into the territory of the European Union. They include:

- facilitating border surveillance, by improving cooperation between Member States and using new technology;
- gearing up operational coordination between Member States through FRONTEX (the EU Border agency), by implementing the current mandate of the Agency in full, and in particular by intensifying joint operations between Member States, including sea border patrols;
- launching a discussion on: an entry-exit system to facilitate better oversight of persons entering/exiting the Schengen space,; and on a Registered Traveller Programme for quick and easy travel for frequent travellers from third countries who satisfy a pre-screening assessment.

Time for renewal

The communications have been put forward by the Commission in response to the challenges posed by 21st Century travel and movement of people. They are further building blocks in the often stated aim of the European Union to build a space of free

and secure travel through collective responsibility and solidarity. The objective should be to ensure a Schengen space which will continue to allow secure border-free-travel for citizens and travellers to 24 countries in Europe while improving border security. This should also encourage links between EU citizens and people in neighbouring countries in particular.

The Slovenian Presidency has indicated the importance it attaches to these proposals with the declaration that they will be discussed at the Ministerial Conference on "The Challenges of the EU External Border Management" in March. .

Timing

Measures relating to FRONTEX and EUROSUR, in particular intensified participation of Member States in joint border patrol operations could be taken forward in 2008. In line with this, preparations are in progress to enhance border surveillance. Other proposals should engage a reflection with the Council and the European Parliament and, on the basis of this reflection, the Commission will assess the possible development of new systems.

To find out more about Vice President Frattini's work please visit his website: http://www.ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/frattini/index_en.htm