

# Refugee crisis: EU Fisheries Control Agency to help detect migrant boats

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The European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) which centralises and coordinates EU member states' fisheries inspections, will be empowered to use the data provided by its ship reporting systems to detect vessels carrying migrants under updated rules approved by Parliament's Fisheries Committee on Tuesday. It will also be able to and conduct new types of operations to disrupt people smuggling routes.

Under the updated regulation, which the Fisheries Committee approved by 14 votes to ,with and 4 abstentions, the EFCA will cooperate with the future European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the European Maritime Safety Agency to support national authorities doing coastguard tasks at national and EU levels, and where appropriate at international level too. The proposed law aims to improve synergies between the agencies' services.

"Coordinating all EU coastguard functions is a necessity in the current migration context. Europe must be effective in preventing disasters at sea. The tools and means for action are national, but the coordination can only be European", said Fisheries Committee chair and rapporteur, Alain Cadec (EPP, FR).

## New powers to detect and disrupt

The EFCA's new, enhanced powers include:

- sharing information generated by data from reporting systems such as the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and the Electronic Reporting System (ERS). Data from VMS, a satellite-based monitoring system, can show the real-time position and history of movement of any vessel at any time. These data could help migration control by detecting vessels that stop in a port to take immigrants on board or move unusually slowly because they are heavily loaded with migrants,
- capacity sharing, including the planning and implementation of multipurpose operations and the sharing of assets and other capabilities across sectors and borders. The EFCA will be able to conduct new types of operations to detect criminal activities and disrupt trafficking routes,
- providing surveillance and communication services that use state-of-the-art technology, including space-based and ground infrastructure and sensors mounted on any kind of platform, such as drones and
- capacity building, by elaborating guidelines, recommendations and best practices, plus supporting staff training and exchanges.

## Next steps

The updated EFCA regulation still needs to be approved by Parliament as a whole - the plenary vote is scheduled for June-and the Council. It will enter into force 20 days after its

# Press release

publication in the EU Official Journal.

## **Note to editors**

*The EU Commission tabled three proposals, one for each of the agencies, in mid-December 2015. The EFCA regulation, for which Parliament's Fisheries Committee is responsible, is the first to be updated. Parliament's Transport Committee will work on updating the European Maritime Safety Agency regulation and its Civil Liberties Committee will take the lead on the regulation for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, which will be built from the existing Frontex border agency. Both the latter committees plan to vote on the proposed changes in May (tbc).*

*Procedure: Ordinary legislative procedure (co-decision)*

### **Further information**

- Committee on Fisheries: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/pech/home.html>
- Alain Cadec (EPP, FR): [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/96849/ALAIN\\_CADEC\\_home.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/96849/ALAIN_CADEC_home.html)
- Procedure file (European Fisheries Control Agency):  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/0308\(COD\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/0308(COD)&l=en)
- Procedure file (European Border and Coast Guard Agency):  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/0310\(COD\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/0310(COD)&l=en)
- Procedure file (European Maritime Safety Agency):  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/0313\(COD\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2015/0313(COD)&l=en)
- European Fisheries Control Agency : <http://www.efca.europa.eu/>

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