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[Press release](#) | 10.10.2013

European border surveillance (EUROSUR)

Sad irony as MEPs approve new border system without effective provisions on saving lives at sea

The European Parliament today endorsed a legislative agreement on setting up a new European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR). The Greens have criticised the focus of the proposed system and hit out at weak provisions on assisting refugees in distress at sea. Commenting after the vote, Green migration policy spokesperson **Ska Keller** stated:

"There is a sad irony in today's approval for the new EU border surveillance system. Coming one week after the latest tragedy in Lampedusa, it serves to highlight the double-speak of EU governments and politicians when it comes to actually tackling the real problems.

"The new EUROSUR border surveillance system falls far short of what is needed to save the lives of those who get into difficulty in European waters. EU member states will have to inform FRONTEX if they are aware of refugees in distress but there is no requirement for them to actually take proactive steps to improve the rescue of shipwrecked refugees by increasing the use of patrol boats in areas that are dangerous for refugees. In addition, they can only request surveillance of the Mediterranean Sea by FRONTEX for the purpose of preventing 'illegal immigration' but not for saving lives. The Greens had proposed to ensure the monitoring system under EUROSUR would also include provisions to ensure the relevant authorities effectively take action to rescue refugees in distress at sea. Sadly, EU governments rejected this.

"New EU rules on the surveillance of sea borders are currently under discussion in the European Parliament and Council but EU governments are again pushing for limited provisions for assistance in the case of emergencies. This is no longer acceptable and must be immediately redressed. EU governments must finally take their responsibility to prevent these avoidable tragedies off Europe's coast.

"The Greens are also concerned about the general focus of the EUROSUR system, which aims to seal off Europe's borders, using intrusive new technologies (like drones and satellites). This skewed approach to immigration misses the point. EUROSUR aims to prevent refugees even setting off from North Africa towards Europe, with cooperation agreements with countries in the region either established or planned to ensure this. In practical terms, this means the EU is effectively shifting its borders to countries that lack an asylum system and may not even be signatories to the Geneva Convention. Instead, we should be seeking to finally make a common asylum system a reality, provide for a more humane treatment of those coming to Europe seeking refuge and asylum, and ensure that EU member states share responsibility for this."

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Ska Keller

Member

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