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The abolition of internal border controls cannot come at the expense of security. Since no checks are carried out at the borders between Schengen states, EU States have decided to join forces to attain the dual objective of improving security through more efficient external border controls, while facilitating access of those having a legitimate interest to enter the EU territory.

Harmonising rules and procedures



The [Schengen Borders Code](#) provides EU States with a single set of common rules that govern external border checks on persons, entry requirements and duration of stays in the [Schengen Area](#). By harmonising these rules, the EU seeks to render them more efficient, whilst increasing their transparency. Similarly, through the [Schengen Visa Code](#) EU States have harmonised conditions and procedures for issuing short-stay visas (i.e. visas for stays that do not exceed three months). They have also established a list of countries ([Regulation \(EC\) No 539/2001](#)) whose citizens are subject to a visa requirement when entering the EU and a list of countries for which this requirement is waived (long-stay visas and residence permits for visits exceeding three months remain subject to national conditions).

A [Local Border Traffic Regime](#) has been established for border residents who frequently need to cross the external borders of the Union. It enables EU States to conclude bilateral agreements with their neighbouring non-EU countries so that the border residents can travel back and forth without a

Schengen visa and, therefore, without any impediment to trade, social and cultural interchange in the region concerned.

The EU is currently assessing the establishment of a [Registered Traveller Programme](#) to further facilitate the fluid access to the Union of pre-screened travellers, without undermining security. This would offer simplified, automated border checks to non-EU nationals complying with certain criteria and an [Entry/Exit System](#) that would make it possible to identify overstayers (people who entered the EU lawfully, but have stayed longer than they were entitled to). Preparatory studies for the Registered Traveller Programme and the Entry/Exit system can be found [here](#).

Solidarity and cooperation

All EU States have to make investments to protect their external borders in the interest of the entire Schengen Area. For some States, notably those situated at the external frontiers of the Union, these investments can be very high due to particular migratory pressures. The [EU External Borders Fund](#) establishes solidarity between the Schengen States by supporting those countries with a heavy financial burden in implementing the common standards on external border controls.

Operational cooperation between EU States is coordinated by the [European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders](#) ("FRONTEX"). It manages a pool of border guards available for the [Rapid Border Intervention Teams](#) (RABITs) which are sent to States facing urgent and exceptional pressures at their borders. It also coordinates joint operations ([HERMES](#), [POSEIDON](#)) which can be deployed to assist EU States in managing migratory flows at their external borders.

Currently, the EU is working to establish a new information sharing and cooperation mechanism called [EUROSUR](#) (European Border Surveillance System). This mechanism will provide EU States located at the Eastern and Southern external borders with a common operational and technical framework, which will assist them in countering cross-border crime, preventing unauthorised border crossings and diminishing the tragic death tolls of migrants at sea.

Sharing information

A number of information sharing mechanisms are at the heart of European cooperation on border management. Over the past years, the EU has been striving to embrace new technologies and create large-scale IT systems (such as [SIS](#) and [VIS](#)) in a coherent and proportional way to improve these tools. They permit European authorities throughout the Schengen Area to efficiently share and use data necessary for the execution of their tasks.

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
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