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Latvia to Build 90-Kilometer Fence on Border With Russia

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The fence would protect not only Latvia from illegal immigrants, but the whole European Union.

Latvian officials have announced their plans to build a 90-kilometer fence on the border with Russia in order to avoid illegal migration, regional news website Delfi reported Saturday, citing the Latvian interior minister's interview with the BNS news agency.

The fence will alternate with sensor-based systems and zones with surveillance cameras. Its overall costs will amount to 3.5 million euros ($4 million), the report said.

Interior Minister Rihards Kozlovskis promised the fence would not become a "Chinese wall" preventing dialogue between the two countries. "It is needed not in order to build a Chinese wall between Russia and Latvia, but to limit the number of illegal immigrants," he told BNS.

"We are to create a system that will prevent [illegal migrants] from crossing the border, or which will give us irrefutable evidence of their tracks," Kozlovskis said.

In accordance with current protocol, Kozlovskis said, if "10 Vietnamese nationals crossed

the Latvian border from the Russian side, their tracks should be ascertained, and Russia should take them back into the country. But right now Russia isn't as good at ascertaining the tracks" as it used to be, he said.

The fence would protect not only Latvia from illegal immigrants, according to Kozlovskis, but the whole European Union, because "no one [from those who were] detained [after illegally crossing the border] wants to stay in Latvia."

Earlier this year Estonian authorities announced their plans to build a wall between Estonia and Russia. The Russian Foreign Ministry said at the time that it considered the initiative politically motivated.

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