

AFIS for SIS II to be deployed this month

The Schengen Information System (SIS II) is a highly efficient large-scale information system that supports law enforcement cooperation and external border control throughout the Member States of the European Union (and Schengen Associated Countries).

The SIS II enables competent authorities, for example police officers and border guards, to enter and consult alerts on specific categories of wanted or missing persons and objects.

SIS II acts as an information sharing system between all the countries that use it and holds information in the form of "alerts". Each *Person alert* can contain biographical information such as, name, date of birth, gender and nationality. In addition to this, SIS II can also store fingerprints and photographs of the person an alert is related to.

Although the legal basis of SIS II permits the storage of fingerprints, they have only been used so far to confirm the identity of a person who has been identified following a check on his/her name and/or date of birth. Though this feature has been useful, the real added value of fingerprints is to be able to identify a person from his/her fingerprints alone.

In order for this to occur, an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) is necessary and is now ready to go live.

How is an AFIS used?

Many people, sought after by the police, can be evasive about their identity and tend to use multiple aliases. Some subjects of SIS II alerts for "refusal of entry" have even sought to legally change their identity to avoid detection. AFIS provides the technology to identify a person on the basis of fingerprints held in SIS II.

What is the purpose?

The SIS II central system database already contains many thousands of fingerprint records, but there was no fingerprint search capability at the central level. The SIS II AFIS allows all Member States to leverage on a centralized policing-oriented database. As such, it will strengthen the fight against crime within Europe.

Who is part of the AFIS Project?

The Project Management Forum (PMF) is responsible for managing technical implementation at both national and central system levels. Its members are:

- The eu-LISA AFIS team,

- National Project Managers of all the SIS II Member States,
- Representatives of the European Commission,
- SIS II contractor – responsible for the design and delivery of the AFIS to eu-LISA.

The first PMF meeting took place in June 2016, followed by 15 further regular meetings, that gathered the end-users from the Member States and Associated Countries. Training sessions for the Member States has already been delivered in Strasbourg and via web-based seminars.

When will it be implemented?

The Phase 1 Go-live will take place on 5 March 2018. It will introduce the biometric search capability into SIS II. Ten Member States (AT, CH, DE, LI, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT & SI) have confirmed that they will be ready to use the biometric queries from day 1. Within 2018, it is expected that other Member States will also use this functionality offered by the Central System.

Further work will take place to develop the AFIS' capabilities in Phase 2 which will be implemented in 2019.