[Statement by the Spokesperson on the murder of journalists in Mexico](#)

The continuing wave of targeted assassinations and attacks against journalists in Mexico raises serious concerns. Yesterday, two journalists, Javier Valdez, laureate of the International Press Freedom Award, and Jonathan Rodríguez Córdova were shot dead while Sonia Córdova was seriously injured. The EU expresses its deepest condolences to the families and colleagues of the victims, and wishes a prompt recovery to Mrs Córdova.

Swift and transparent investigations are needed in order to bring perpetrators of all crimes to justice. In this context we note the request issued after the first crime by Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto for the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Freedom of Expression (FEADLE) to support local authorities in the investigation.

These incidences of violence – with seven murders of journalists since the beginning of the year and fifteen in 2016 – make Mexico one of the most dangerous countries in the world for media workers. The Mexican authorities are expected to effectively protect journalists, to allow them to work without fear of reprisals and to end impunity in the cases of crimes against journalists and activists.

The EU remains firmly committed to promoting freedom of expression and freedom of press. The existence of free, diverse and independent media is an indispensable precondition for the protection and promotion of democracy.

[We're leading the way with progressive policies](#)

Over the last ten years we've worked hard to make Scotland the best country it can be. It's no wonder other parties are now taking their lead from the SNP.

[I'm hugely proud of what we've](#)

[achieved in ten years](#)

Ten years ago this very day, the first ever SNP government was formally sworn in at the Scottish Parliament.

[European Agenda on Security: Commission sets out new approach on interoperability of information systems](#)

In addition to providing an update on progress made on key files, the report focuses on the ongoing work to improve information management for borders and security and sets out the Commission's new approach towards achieving the interoperability of EU information systems for security, border and migration management by 2020. Following the recent global cyberattack, the report also stresses the Commission's commitment to accelerate work to review the 2013 EU Cybersecurity Strategy in order to provide an effective response to cyber threats.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"The value of our security information is maximised when our systems talk to each other. The complex and fragmented systems we have today make us vulnerable. Actionable information is not always available for the law enforcement officials that need it. Today, we present a clear vision on how to act to correct this. To connect the dots and to eliminate blind spots to step up the security of our citizens across the EU."*

Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: *"The recent tragic attacks in Europe have highlighted the importance of effective information sharing between Member State authorities. The approach we are outlining today sets out a targeted and intelligent way of using the existing data to best effect. What we propose would be a step-change in the way we manage data for security, helping national authorities better addressing transnational threats and detecting terrorists who act across borders."*

In April 2016, the Commission presented a Communication on stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security and launched the work of the High Level Expert Group on Information Systems and Interoperability. The High Level Expert Group delivered its [report on 11 May](#) confirming the views expressed in the April 2016 Communication, and putting forward recommendations towards the interoperability of information systems. Today's report takes stock of the recommendations of the High Level Expert Group, and

proposes the way forward to address structural shortcomings under the three main areas: (i) maximising the utility of existing information systems; (ii) where necessary, developing complementary systems to close information gaps; and (iii) ensuring interoperability between our systems.

Over the past year, the Commission has put forward a number of proposals with the aim of closing the outstanding information gaps, including the establishment of new systems such as the EU Entry/Exist System and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) as well as reinforcing existing ones such as the Schengen Information System, Eurodac and the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS).

Today's sets out a new approach to the management of data, where all centralised EU information systems for security, border and migration management are interoperable in full respect of data protection and fundamental rights. The main features of this approach are:

- **European search portal** – allowing the systems to be searched simultaneously, in full compliance with data protection safeguards and possibly with more streamlined rules for access to the systems by law enforcement authorities;
- **Shared biometric matching service** – enabling searches across different information systems holding biometric data, possibly with hit/no-hit flags indicating the connection with related biometric data found in another system;
- **Common identity repository** – based on alphanumeric identity data (e.g. dates of birth, passport numbers) and detecting whether a person is registered under multiple identities in different databases.

The proposed approach would overcome the current weakness in the EU's data management architecture eliminating blind spots. As a result, the EU Agency responsible for information system management, eu-LISA, would play a crucial role in providing technical expertise and bringing the work towards the interoperability of information systems forward. In order to allow eu-LISA to implement this new approach, the Commission will present a legislative proposal to strengthen the Agency's mandate in June 2017.

Next steps

The Commission will discuss the new approach with the European Parliament and the Council with an aim of reaching a common understanding on the way forward before the end of 2017. The discussion will feed into the proposal on interoperability which the Commission will present as soon as possible.

As the same time, the Commission calls on the European Parliament and the Council to move swiftly on the delivery of legislative priorities on information systems for security, borders and migration management.

In the area of aviation security, the Commission has facilitated contacts at political level to ensure coordinated actions between the United States and the EU. A meeting between the United States and the EU side will take place in Brussels on 17 May 2017, in order to jointly assess the potential risks

and work towards a common approach to address possible developing threats.

Background

President Juncker's [State of the Union](#) address in September 2016 and the European Council conclusions of [December 2016](#)highlighted the importance of overcoming the current shortcomings in data management and of improving the interoperability of existing information systems. Recent terrorist attacks have brought this into even greater focus, highlighting the urgent need for information systems to be interoperable, and to eliminate the current blind spots where terrorist suspects can be recorded in different, unconnected databases under different aliases.

In [April 2016](#) the Commission presented a Communication on stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security, initiating a discussion on how information systems in the European Union can better enhance border management and internal security. In June 2016, the Commission set up a High Level Expert Group on Information Systems and Interoperability to take this work forward and to address the legal, technical and operational challenges to achieve interoperability. The High Level Expert Group held its last meeting on 25 April 2017 and presented the [final report](#) on 11 May 2017.

The [European Agenda on Security](#) guides the Commission's work in this area, setting out the main actions to ensure an effective EU response to terrorism and security threats in the European Union. Since the adoption of the agenda, significant progress has been made in its implementation, paving a way towards an effective and genuine and [Security Union](#).

For More Information

[Communication](#): 7th Progress Report on Security Union

[Communication](#): Stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security

[Communication](#): Delivering on the European Agenda on Security to fight against terrorism and pave the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union

[Communication](#): European Agenda on Security

[Factsheet](#): EU Information Systems

[Factsheet](#): Security Union

[Commission introduces new measures to](#)

[fight poaching and to end trade in raw ivory](#)

Is the Commission banning ivory exports?

The export of raw ivory is banned. The Commission guidance document recommends that EU Member States cease issuing export documents for **raw ivory.** Without an export document, no export of ivory can take place. Between 2013 and 2016, around 1900 old ivory tusks were exported legally from the EU to Asia, marking a sharp increase compared to previous years. Such exports will no longer be possible under the new guidance document.

The **export of worked ivory** will only be possible under very strict conditions. Only items acquired before 1976 can be exported and it is for the person wishing to export the items to demonstrate that they were acquired before that date. If such evidence cannot be provided by the applicant, then no export document will be delivered by the exporting EU Member State.

The legal export of worked ivory from the EU has also increased in recent years, reaching several thousand items annually. The most commonly exported products are small items made of ivory or containing ivory, musical instruments (especially pianos with ivory keys), carvings and antiques. The Commission guidance document recommends that EU Member States exercise a high level of scrutiny before authorising any export of worked ivory. It details, in particular, what type of evidence demonstrating the legality of the items can be accepted.

What are the international and EU rules on ivory trade?

International ivory trade is banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), with narrowly defined exemptions (for example for items acquired before elephants became protected under CITES).

EU rules on ivory trade are more restrictive than the CITES regime in many instances, notably as they regulate domestic trade in ivory, which is not required under CITES.

Can I import ivory into the EU? Can I purchase ivory goods and bring them in to the EU?

Import of ivory is prohibited, except for very narrow exemptions. Most of the ivory traded into the EU consists of hunting trophies and of old carvings or musical instruments imported as personal belongings (for example as part of a removal). These imports can only take place with the relevant export and import documents and are subject to very strict controls at the borders by customs agencies.

What is the EU doing against illegal ivory trade in the EU?

The Commission is fully committed to fight illegal ivory trade. Tackling

ivory trafficking is a priority for the EU. Under the EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking, the Commission, enforcement agencies in the Member States and Europol have stepped up action against ivory trafficking. This is already delivering first results. Member States seized more than 2.5 tonnes of ivory in 2016, the biggest volume in recent years. Most of this ivory was seized in the EU on its way to Asia.

Why is the EU not banning all intra-EU trade in ivory?

Intra-EU trade in ivory is limited and strictly regulated. Domestic ivory is authorised only for ivory items imported into the EU before elephant species obtained maximum protection under the CITES Convention (18 January 1990 for the African elephant and 1 July 1975 for the Asian elephant) and subject to strict controls. Domestic EU trade can only take place if a certificate has been issued to this effect by the relevant EU Member State, except for "worked items" acquired before 3 March 1947 – , which can be traded in the EU without a certificate.

Since the international ban on ivory trade came into effect, the demand for ivory in Europe has fallen considerably. Intra-EU trade consists mostly of antiques and EU Member States have not been identified as important destination markets for ivory of illegal origin. However, there have been some instances of illegal trade in ivory items within the EU, and there are differences between Member States in applying EU rules on ivory trade. Therefore, the new guidance document sets out criteria and recommendations for Member States to further strengthen vigilance and controls.