

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.

Statement of Vice-President Šefčovič on natural gas situation following contacts with Russian-Ukrainian counterparts

Following the contact by the Ukrainian authorities at the end of the week regarding the situation of the Ukrainian gas system and the gas imports from Russia, Vice-President Šefčovič has reached out to both the Ukrainian and Russian authorities. Over the past days, Vice-President Šefčovič spoke to Ukraine's Prime Minister Groysman, to Naftogaz CEO Kobolev and to Russia's Energy Minister Novak. The conversations focused on Ukraine's concern regarding pressure levels in gas supply from Russia, on gas for the transit to the European Union as well as on the recent decision of the Stockholm Arbitration Tribunal.

All existing commitments to supply and transit gas to the EU are being honoured.

Regarding the situation in Ukraine Vice-President Šefčovič has been informed

by Naftogaz that today the situation is under control and managed well, following the adoption, by the Ukrainian authorities, of special measures and Naftogaz contracting additional volumes of gas from Poland, hence ensuring stable gas supply for domestic purposes.

The European Commission has involved the [European Network for Transmission System Operators for Gas \(ENTSOG\)](#) in monitoring and helping resolve the situation.

For his part, the Russian Minister of Energy Mr Novak, gave reassurances that the transit of gas to the EU Member States is not endangered and remains reliable. Regarding the Stockholm Arbitration decision Vice-President Šefčovič has been informed that Gazprom remains set to terminate its contracts with Naftogaz. This procedure may, however, take some time and will not have immediate consequences on the gas flows.

In this context, Vice-President Šefčovič encouraged both sides to engage in seeking a satisfactory solution to this issue: “The European Commission stands ready to engage and mediate in a trilateral process, which in the past proved to be effective in bridging differences between the parties. Due to the complexity and sensitivity of the issue, we will further explore the possibility of such process bilaterally. Both Ukraine and Russia have confirmed their readiness to stay in close contact with the European Commission. I will follow the situation closely in order to ensure that the transit of Russian gas through Ukraine to the EU – as it remains our priority – is safeguarded at all times.”

LINK:

Statement of Vice-President Šefčovič on Russian-Ukrainian natural gas situation in March 2018

Brussels, 2 March 2018

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-18-1505_en.htm

[Statement by Eurogroup President Mario Centeno on Greece](#)

Press contacts

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I have been informed that the Eurogroup Working Group on 2 March verified that all prior actions of the third review of the Greek ESM programme have been completed.

The full implementation of the prior actions confirms the commitment of the Greek government to the programme and a continued reform effort.

The ESM Board of Directors is expected to approve the disbursement of the fourth tranche of the ESM programme after national parliamentary procedures have been completed.

This will pave the way to the release of the first subtranche of €5.7bn in the second half of March.

We have now entered the final lap of the ESM Greek programme. The fourth and final review is ongoing. So is the technical work of possible new debt relief measures.

Greece has started its return to market financing and the Greek government is working on a long-term growth strategy, which will be critical to define the post-programme framework.

I'm confident this will help Greece to return to an equal footing with its European partners and leave crisis days behind.

[Download as pdf](#)

[Indicative programme – Environment Council of 5 March 2018](#)

Press contacts

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Place:

Europa building, Brussels

Chair:

Neno Dimov, Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria

All times are approximate and subject to change

from 08.00

Arrivals (Europa building VIP entrance)

+/- 08.50

Doorstep by Minister Dimov

+/- 10.00

Beginning of Environment Council meeting (Roundtable)

Adoption of the agenda

Approval of non-legislative A items

+/- 10.10

Circular Economy Action Plan

Plastics Strategy

The interface between chemicals, products and waste

+/- 12.10

Any other business:

- 21st European Forum on Eco-innovation for air quality
- Global Pact for the Environment
- Eliminate deforestation from supply chains
- Invasive alien species
- Commercial trade in raw ivory
- REACH review
- CO2 standards for cars and vans ([live streaming](#))
- Shipping and the International Maritime Organization
- Climate change: UNFCCC COP24

+/- 13.25

Working lunch discussion on eco-innovation in the context of the circular economy

+/- 15.00

Greening the European Semester

+/- 16.30

Press conference (Justus Lipsius press room [live streaming](#))

[Download as pdf](#)

[**EASO guidance on contingency planning in the context of reception**](#)

Following the release of its [EASO Guidance on reception conditions: operational standards and indicators](#) in December 2016, EASO has just issued the [EASO guidance on contingency planning in the context of reception](#).

The high-influx situation in 2015 and 2016 has exposed the need for EU + states to be better prepared to deal with disproportionate numbers of asylum seekers. Reception authorities need to strengthen their ability to cope with possible volatile situations that can put reception systems under high pressure. Contingency planning ensures a rapid and well-thought-out response to any extreme situation or event. As a result, contingency planning should always be undertaken when there is a risk or a high probability that a high-influx situation may occur.

The purpose of this guidance is multiple: It is meant to serve as an aid to the detailed planning and management of the various actors in a high-influx situation and to facilitate early action against a potentially serious situation. It is also a tool to help manage future uncertainty by developing responses in advance when there is a risk or probability that a high-influx situation may occur. It will help reception authorities to anticipate and solve problems that arise in situations that require an immediate response.

The Guidance focuses on key aspects of contingency planning in the field of reception, through an integral approach, notably on monitoring and evaluation, risk analysis, management and decision making process. The standards included in the document reflect existing and commonly agreed practice across EU Member States, as well as good practices identified across the EU. This is a framework for contingency planning including guidance and the sharing of best practices in order to enhance preparedness for emergencies.

The development process of the Guidance followed a consultative approach, aimed at gathering expertise from Member States and other relevant actors in the field of reception. The draft document was developed by a working group of experts from EU Member States with the support of a reference group consisting of the European Commission, the UNHCR and the Red Cross EU office.

The Guidance is available in English on the EASO website at:
<https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/easo-guidance-contingency-planning-2018.pdf>

The document is currently being translated into 22 EU languages, which will be made available on the Agency's website in the coming months.