

Schengen information system: agreement between the Council Presidency and the European Parliament

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On 12 June 2018, the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council and the European Parliament reached an informal agreement on three regulations on the use of the Schengen Information System:

- in the field of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters
- in the field of border checks
- for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals

Information sharing is a key part of EU efforts to improve security and to manage migration, and the Schengen Information System (SIS) is an essential tool for this. The updated SIS rules will include new categories of alerts, closing any potential gaps and addressing new needs.

Valentin Radev, Bulgarian minister of interior.

The draft regulations address potential gaps and introduce several essential changes to the current system on the types of alert entered.

They will contribute to strengthen the fight against terrorism and serious crime, ensuring a high level of security in the EU, and will help migration management.

Alert categories

The draft regulations introduce additional categories of alerts to the system:

- alerts issued for the purpose of **inquiry checks**, an intermediary step between discreet checks and specific checks, which allows for interviews of individuals.
- alerts on **unknown suspects or wanted persons**, which provide for the introduction into the SIS of fingerprints or palm prints discovered at the scenes of serious crimes or terrorist offences and which are

considered to belong to a perpetrator.

- preventive alerts for **children at risk of parental abduction**, as well as **children and vulnerable persons who need to be prevented from travelling for their own protection** (for example, where travel might lead to the risk of forced marriage, female genital mutilation, trafficking of human beings).
- alerts for the **purpose of return**, which require the introduction of an alert in relation to return decisions issued to illegally staying third-country nationals, thus improving exchange of information in relation to return decisions.

They also **expand the list of objects** for which alerts can be issued, to include, among other, false documents and high-value identifiable objects , as well as IT equipment.

In addition, the introduction of alerts in the SIS as regards **entry bans for third-country nationals** becomes compulsory.

Types of data

The draft regulations introduce the possibility of using **facial images** for identification purposes, in particular to ensure consistency in border control procedures. It also allows for the inclusion of a **DNA profile** to facilitate the identification of missing persons in cases where fingerprint data, photographs or facial images are not available or not suitable for identification.

Access to data

Europol will be able to access all categories of data in the SIS and to exchange supplementary information with Member States SIRENE Bureaux. In addition, member states must inform Europol of any hits when a person is sought in relation to a terrorist offence. This will allow Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre to check if there is any additional contextual information available in Europol's databases.

For the purposes set out in its mandate, the new **European Border and Coast Guard Agency** will also have access to the alert categories in SIS.

Next steps

The informal agreement will now be presented to EU ambassadors for confirmation on behalf of the Council. Following this, the regulation will be submitted to the European Parliament for a vote at first reading, and subsequently to the Council for adoption.

Background

The Schengen Information System is the most widely used and efficient IT system of the EU in the area of freedom, security and justice. The system contains more than 76 million alerts. In 2017 it was accessed more than 5.1 billion times by member states, triggering more than 240 000 hits on foreign

alerts (alerts issued by another country).

In December 2016, the European Commission presented a legislative package to improve the SIS from a technical point of view and to respond to the development of certain forms of serious crime, including terrorism.

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