

Security Union: Commission welcomes agreement on a reinforced Schengen Information System

Today, a political agreement was reached by the European Parliament and the Council on the Commission's proposals to strengthen the [Schengen Information System](#) (SIS) – Europe's most widely used information sharing system for security and border management. Consulted over 5 billion times by national authorities in 2017, the reinforced SIS will help border guards to better monitor who is crossing the EU's borders; support police and law enforcement in capturing dangerous criminals and terrorists; and offer greater protection for missing children and vulnerable adults, in line with the new data protection rules.

Welcoming the agreement Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, said: *"The Schengen Information System is a vital instrument for enhancing our internal security and strengthening the management of the EU's external borders. The system lies at the heart of Schengen. With the new obligatory alerts for terrorist suspects, new alerts on return decisions and stronger interoperability with other systems for security, borders and migration management, it will help preserve free movement and the very essence of Schengen for our citizens, knowing that their Union is protecting them."*

Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: *"A strengthened SIS will provide police and border guards with the information they need to do their jobs and help keep Europeans safe. It is the centrepiece of information exchange in Europe and the main law enforcement database in the EU, and has contributed to almost 40,000 arrests and 200,000 serious criminals being tracked down. We have been making the SIS stronger and smarter – for example with the launch of the Automated Fingerprint Identification System earlier this year – and it will in future be a key pillar underpinning the interoperability of the EU's information systems."*

The reinforced SIS will include, among others, the following upgrades:

- **New alerts on criminals and return decisions:** The agreed changes will allow SIS alerts to be issued for unknown persons who are wanted in connection with a crime. In addition, a new alert category for "return decisions" will be introduced to improve the enforcement of return decisions issued to irregularly staying third-country nationals;
- **Greater vigilance for terrorist offences:** National authorities will be obliged to create a SIS alert in cases related to terrorist offences and a new 'inquiry check' to gather essential information;
- **Stronger provisions on missing children and people in need:** National authorities will be able to issue preventive alerts on persons who are in need of protection, in addition to existing alerts on missing persons;

- **Enforcement of entry bans:** It will be now compulsory to insert into SIS any entry bans issued to third-country nationals preventing them from entering the Schengen area;
- **Stronger data protection rules:** The agreed changes will strengthen the protection of personal data, by bringing it into line with the new General Data Protection Regulation and the Police Directive on data protection;
- **Improved interoperability:** The reinforced SIS will make more efficient use of fingerprints, palm prints and facial images to identify persons entering the Schengen area. The upgrades are also geared towards ensuring full interoperability of the SIS with other EU systems for migration, border management and security;
- **Enhanced access for EU Agencies:** Europol will now have access to all alert categories in the SIS while the European Border and Coast Guard Agency operational teams will be able to access SIS for the purpose of carrying out their tasks in the hotspots.

Next Steps

The compromise text of the three agreed Regulations on reinforced SIS will now need to be formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council.

While the new functionalities in SIS will be implemented in different stages, with a requirement for the work to be completed by 2021, some provisions, such as the obligation for Member States to create alerts in the case of terrorism will need to be implemented immediately. The European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT Systems in the area of freedom, security and justice, eu-LISA, will be responsible for the implementation of the technical and operational changes into the SIS.

Background

The [Schengen Information System \(SIS\)](#) is a large-scale, centralised information system that supports checks at the external Schengen borders and improves law enforcement and judicial cooperation in 30 countries throughout Europe. It currently contains around 79 million records, and was consulted 5 billion times in 2017. The SIS notably provides information on individuals who do not have the right to enter or stay in the Schengen area, persons sought in relation to criminal activities and missing persons, as well as details of certain lost or stolen objects (for example cars, firearms, boats and identity documents) and data that is needed to locate a person and confirm their identity.

Since April 2013, when SIS II started to operate, until the end of 2017 there were 800,000 hits (an average of over 450 hits per day), meaning that a person or object being checked by border guard or police matched a piece of information in the database. As a result:

- Almost 40,000 people were arrested over offences committed in another Member State;
- Almost 150,000 people were refused entry or stay in the Schengen area (having already been subject of a decision on refusal of entry or stay);

- Over 28,000 missing persons were found having crossed a border into another Member State;
- Over 180,000 people were traced to assist with a criminal judicial procedure;
- Over 200,000 travelling serious criminals and other people posing threats to security were located;
- Almost 200,000 cases were solved concerning stolen motor vehicles, misuse of identity or travel documents, stolen firearms, stolen number plates and other lost or stolen property.
- Almost 150,000 fingerprints were included in the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) by the end of May; with up to 1,000 searches in AFIS each day.

The Commission tabled three proposals to strengthen cooperation between the Member States making use of the Schengen Information System (SIS) on [21 December 2016](#). Today, the co-legislators, the European Parliament and the Council reached political agreement on all three proposals. The compromise text of the three agreed Regulations on reinforced SIS will now need to be formally adopted.

For More Information

[Press Release](#) – Security Union: Commission proposes to reinforce the Schengen Information System to better fight terrorism and cross-border crime

[DG HOME website](#) – Schengen Information System