



EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S SECRET PLANS TO USE FORCE IN TAKING FINGERPRINTS OF REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

Press Release

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[Statewatch](#) has learned that the European Commission and Member States are now discussing, in secret, a set of “best practice” guidelines that cover the use of detention and force to obtain fingerprints of asylum seekers and irregular migrants entering Europe.

In a [news article](#) released today, [Statewatch](#) describes how the European Commission had requested a survey of Member States to find out “what law and practices exist in Member States in order to take fingerprints for transmission to the EURODAC database, both of asylum applicants and of irregular migrants.”

These findings led the Commission to draft a “[secret LIMITE document](#)” proposing 10 steps to be followed by Member States’ authorities trying to obtain fingerprints. This includes the possibility to use detention and/or force to obtain the fingerprints

While the Commission was keen to stress to [Statewatch](#) that the paper is “an informal staff-level discussion paper” and “not a document representing any official position”, it was intended to serve as a basis for decision-making. It contains comments on:

“...the use of a proportionate degree of coercion” including on “vulnerable persons, such as minors or pregnant women”

Quote sheet and information

“The obligation under the Dublin system for the “country of arrival” to process people's asylum applications has put massive strain on countries such as Greece and Italy, and many people want their applications processed elsewhere. The majority of Member States do not allow the coercive taking of fingerprints from asylum seekers and to do so would add degrading treatment to the suffering they have already been through. Europe's asylum system is simply, flawed.” – Chris Jones, Researcher

25 EU Member States – that is, all of them except Denmark, Italy and Greece – and one Schengen Associated Country (Norway) responded to the Commission’s questionnaire:

- 18 of the 26 states “do not permit or require use of coercive measures to take fingerprinting of applicants for international protection”.
- In four countries – Austria, Belgium, Estonia and Finland – “forcing the concerned person to be fingerprinted is considered inappropriate”, and only seven states (Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Slovakia, UK and Norway) “do provide for such a possibility”.
- Only seven states apparently impose penalties on those who refuse fingerprinting: detention is possible in five states, and fines in the other two.

[Full article here](#)

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