



Security Union: Commission proposes to reinforce the Schengen Information System to better fight terrorism and cross-border crime

Brussels, 21 December 2016

The Commission is today proposing to strengthen the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the Schengen Information System (SIS), as announced in the [Communication](#) setting out the way forward towards the achievement of an effective and sustainable EU Security Union and as reiterated in President Juncker's [State of the Union Address](#). Consulted 2.9 billion times in 2015, SIS is the most widely used information sharing system for border management and security in Europe. The proposed improvements will further enhance the ability of the system to fight terrorism and cross-border crime, improve border and migration management and ensure an effective information exchange between Member States to increase the security of European citizens.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, **Dimitris Avramopoulos**, said: "*With today's proposals, we extend the scope of the Schengen Information System to close information gaps and improve information exchange on terrorism, cross-border crime and irregular migration – contributing to a stronger control of our external borders and an effective and sustainable EU Security Union. In the future, no critical information should ever be lost on potential terrorist suspects or irregular migrants crossing our external borders.*"

Commissioner for the Security Union, Julian **King**, said: "*The Schengen Information System is central to Europe's internal security. Today's measures will deliver important technical and operational improvements so it's easier to detect and identify those who wish us harm. It will also improve cooperation and information sharing between Member States and with relevant EU agencies. Much more remains to be done though: SIS is only as good as the data inputted into it. We'll bring forward further improvements in 2017*"

As concluded by the Commission in its evaluation report on SIS, also presented today, the system has a clear added value at EU level and has been an outstanding operational and technical success. The evaluation also identifies areas for technical and operational improvements to further increase the effectiveness of the system – which can only be as efficient as the data it is fed.

In particular, the changes proposed by the Commission today will:

- improve the security and accessibility of the system by providing for uniform requirements for officers on the ground on how to process SIS data in a secure way and ensure business-continuity for end-users;
- strengthen data protection by introducing additional safeguards to ensure that the collection and processing of and access to data is limited to what is strictly necessary, in full respect of EU legislation and fundamental rights, including the right to effective remedies;
- improve information sharing and cooperation between Member States, notably through the introduction of a new alert category on "unknown wanted persons" and full access rights for Europol ;
- help combat terrorism by introducing the obligation to create a SIS alert in cases related to terrorist offences and a new 'inquiry check' to help authorities gather essential information;
- better protect children by allowing authorities to issue, in addition to alerts for missing children, preventive alerts for children who are at high risk of abduction;
- contribute to the effective enforcement of entry bans for third-country nationals at the external border by making their introduction in the SIS compulsory;
- improve the enforcement of return decisions issued to irregularly staying third-country nationals by introducing a new alert category for return decisions;
- make more effective use of data such as facial imaging and palm prints to identify persons entering the Schengen area;

- strengthen the support for prevention and investigation of theft and counterfeiting by providing for alerts to be issued on a wider range of stolen and falsified goods and documents.

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 29 countries throughout Europe. It currently contains around 70 million records, and was consulted 2.9 billion times in 2015 – 1 billion times more than in 2014. 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.

As announced in the [Communication](#) setting out the way forward towards the achievement of an effective and sustainable EU Security Union from 20 April and in the Communication of 6 April on [Stronger and Smarter Information Systems for Borders and Security](#), in order to improve existing information systems to enhance security and strengthen our borders, the Commission would examine possible additional functionalities to improve the system with a view to presenting proposals to revise the legal basis of SIS.

To this effect, the Commission carried out a comprehensive evaluation of SIS in 2016. The evaluation found that SIS is operating effectively and confirms the overall outstanding operational and technical success of the system. No other law enforcement cooperation system generates as many positive outcomes or can handle as much information flow in real time with the result that, year on year and in all alert categories, hits have increased. Building on this success, the evaluation report also sets out some areas where operational and technical improvements can be made. Today's proposals implement the recommendations set out in the evaluation report.

For more information

[Frequently asked questions: Schengen Information System \(SIS\)](#)

[Factsheet](#): Schengen Information System (SIS)

Proposals to improve the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the Schengen Information System (SIS):

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

[Evaluation report](#) of the second generation Schengen Information System (SIS II)

Commission [Staff Working Document](#) accompanying the evaluation Report

[Communication on 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](#)

[Press release](#): State of the Union 2016: Commission Targets Stronger External Borders

[Frequently asked questions](#): State of the Union 2016: Paving the way towards a genuine and effective Security Union – Questions & Answers

[Press release](#): Stronger and Smarter Borders in the EU: Commission proposes to establish an Entry-Exit System

[Frequently asked questions](#): Smart Borders package

[Factsheet](#): Stronger and Smarter borders for the European Union. The Entry-Exit System

[Press release](#): Commission launches discussion on future framework for stronger and smarter information systems for border management and internal security

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