

Plan to check EU citizens at external borders backed by civil liberties MEPs

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An EU Commission plan to systematically check all EU citizens entering or leaving the EU was endorsed by Civil Liberties Committee MEPs on Tuesday. Members amended the proposal to enable member states to run targeted checks, as an exception, in the event of lengthy delays and provided that security is not at risk.

The text, drafted by Monica Macovei (ECR, RO) and approved by 48 votes to 6 with 0 abstentions, notes that systematically checking all EU citizens, as well as family members with third country nationalities, against EU-wide and national internal security databases, or those listing lost or stolen travel documents, would make it easier to apprehend travellers trying to hide their real identities.

The databases include Interpol's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database (SLTD) and the Schengen Information System.

"The right to life is the most basic of human rights. The recent terrorist attacks bitterly demonstrate the current threat to Europe's internal security and proves that changes are needed. It is also worth giving up some of our comforts and time, even if this means longer queues at the borders, in order to save lives", said Ms Macovei.

Ms Macovei will hold a press conference on the results of the vote today at 15:00 ([live here](#))

The draft regulation is a response to the rise in terrorist threats in Europe, such as the recent attacks in Paris, Copenhagen and Brussels. It also aims to combat terrorist "foreign fighters", many of whom are EU citizens, irregular migration and human trafficking.

Targeted checks in the event of lengthy delays

The proposal, which amends the current Schengen Borders Code, would introduce more thorough checks than the current ones at all EU external air-, sea- and land borders. However, if these systematic controls slow down border traffic flows too much, the EU member states should be able to carry out targeted checks at specified border crossings instead, but only if it first can be concluded that such a relaxation of the rules would not increase security risks, say MEPs.

Every risk assessment should also be based on EU-wide security indicators developed by the Commission, the new EU border and coast guard agency and the Council, says the text. Each analysis would have to be sent to the border member states' relevant authorities, the EU border agency and the Commission.

Better data management, technological progress and improved connections between member states' information systems should nevertheless ensure that the checks have a limited effect on the duration of borders crossings, MEPs argue.

Third country nationals to be checked when leaving the EU, too

Where targeted checks are introduced, all travellers would still have to undergo a minimum, rapid check on the standard travel documents. Biometric identifiers in passports, such as fingerprints or facial images, should also be thoroughly checked and verified

Press release

whenever a person's identity is in doubt, say MEPs.

Finally, the proposal would also make it mandatory to check all third-country nationals who are leaving the EU against relevant databases, to ensure that they pose no security threat.

Next steps

The Civil Liberties Committee approved a mandate for MEPs to start negotiations with Council very soon to try to reach a first reading agreement.

Further information

- Catch up via Video on Demand (VOD) (21.06.2016): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/search>
- Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/libe/home.html>
- Monica Macovei (ECR, RO): http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/96824/MONICA_MACOVEI_home.html
- Dynamic page containing latest videos and photos: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Page.aspx?id=2872>
- Briefing: Schengen and the management of the EU's external borders: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/581392/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)581392_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/581392/EPRS_BRI(2016)581392_EN.pdf)

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