



Back to Schengen: Commission proposes Roadmap for restoring fully functioning Schengen system

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The Commission today presented a detailed Roadmap of the concrete steps needed to return order to the management of the EU's external and internal borders. The creation of the Schengen area without internal borders has brought important benefits to European citizens and business alike, yet in recent months the system has been severely tested by the refugee crisis. The European Council of 18-19 February set the clear mandate of restoring the normal functioning of the Schengen area, and to do so in a concerted manner, while giving full support to Member States facing difficult circumstances.

First Vice-President **Frans Timmermans** said: "*Schengen is one of the most cherished achievements of European integration, and the costs of losing it would be huge. Our aim is to lift all internal border controls as quickly as possible, and by December 2016 at the latest. For this purpose, we need a coordinated European approach to temporary border controls within the framework of the Schengen rules instead of the current patchwork of unilateral decisions. In the meantime, we must fully implement the measures set out in our roadmap in order to strengthen control of our external border and improve the functioning of our asylum system. We must also continue to work with Turkey to fully implement the Joint Action Plan and substantially reduce the flow of arrivals.*"

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship **Dimitris Avramopoulos** added: "*With this roadmap, we are presenting the next steps that we must take together to restore a normal functioning Schengen Area as soon as possible, and this requires taking a number of important actions. First, all Member States need to apply the rules - the 'wave through' approach must end and Member States must grant access to asylum applicants, but refuse entry to those who merely wish to transit. Secondly, we must remedy the serious deficiencies at our external borders - as indeed an internal area without border controls is only possible if we have a strong protection of our external borders. For this, the Commission's proposal for a European Border and Coast Guard - presented in December - needs to be adopted by Member States without delay so that it can start functioning during the summer already. It is now time for Member States to pull together in the common interest to safeguard one of the Union's crowning achievements.*"

The Cost of Non-Schengen

Temporary border controls not only hamper the free movement of persons, they also come with significant economic costs. The Commission has estimated that a full re-establishment of border controls within the Schengen area would generate immediate direct costs of between €5 and €18 billion annually (or 0.05%-0.13% of GDP). These costs would be concentrated on certain actors and regions but would inevitably impact the EU economy as a whole. For example:

- Member States such as Poland, the Netherlands or Germany would face more than €500 million of additional costs for the road transport of traded goods;
- Spain or the Czech Republic would see their businesses paying more than €200 million in additional costs;
- Border controls would cost the 1.7 million cross-border workers between €1.3 and €5.2 billion in terms of time lost;
- At least 13 million tourist nights could be lost, with a total cost of €1.2 billion;
- Between €0,6 and €5.8 billion of administrative costs would have to be paid by governments due to the need for increased staff for border controls.

Ensuring the protection of the external borders

Securing the EU's external borders and ensuring efficient border controls is a prerequisite in an area of free movement. This must be a shared responsibility. In December, the Commission presented an ambitious proposal for a [European Border and Coast Guard](#). It is imperative that the European

Parliament and the Council adopt this proposal no later than June, so that it can become operational during the summer. The Commission today calls on Member States and Frontex to already start the necessary preparations for rolling out the new system, notably by identifying the necessary human and technical resources. The Commission also calls for greater support from Member States in the meantime to existing Frontex operations.

Immediate support for Greece

The massive inflow of migrants would put the external border control of any Member State under severe pressure. The external border in Greece is under immense pressure and there is an immediate need to address the current shortcomings in border management. There are a number of clearly defined steps that must be taken in the coming months:

- Commission experts in Greece should continue to cooperate with the Greek authorities and coordinate with the other actors involved;
- There should be 100% identification and registration of all entries, including systematic security checks against databases;
- Greece should present an action plan to address the Schengen Evaluation Recommendations and a needs assessment to allow other Member States, EU Agencies and the Commission to provide timely support;
- If needed, Frontex should immediately prepare the further deployment of European Border Guard teams and launch additional calls for contributions, by 22 March;
- Other Member States should assume their responsibility and respond to these calls within 10 days with human resources and technical equipment.

The implementation of the [EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan](#) and of the [voluntary humanitarian admission scheme with Turkey](#) will also be pursued to bring a rapid decrease in the number of arrivals in Greece. More effective implementation of the emergency relocation schemes and more returns to Turkey and to countries of origin should also reduce the pressure on Greece.

In the meantime, as the border controls have tightened along the Western Balkan route and as the flow of migrants into Greece continues the numbers of migrants build-up in Greece. This makes it all the more urgent and necessary that Member States step up their implementation of the Relocation decisions. The Commission will assist efforts to accelerate both relocation and will report on a monthly basis on the progress made. Earlier this week, the Commission presented proposals for a new [Emergency Assistance instrument](#) for faster crisis response within the EU.

Applying the rules and stopping the wave-through approach

The Conclusions of the European Council of 18-19 February were clear that the current wave-through approach is neither legally nor politically acceptable. Member States must grant access to asylum procedures for all applications made at their borders. The decision about which Member States is responsible for handling that application should then be taken in line with EU law, in particular the existing Dublin system. This means that there must be a real opportunity to return asylum seekers to the first country of entry. The Commission therefore envisages presenting its Commission assessment of the possibility of resuming Dublin transfers to Greece before the June European Council.

At the same time, Member States should refuse entry at the border to third country nationals who do not satisfy the entry conditions of the Schengen Borders Code and who have not submitted an application for asylum despite having had the opportunity to do so. It should be borne in mind that under EU law, asylum seekers have no right to choose the Member State granting them protection. These refusals should be applied at the external Schengen border and at the borders of Member States with temporary internal border controls. An effective application of these policies will contribute to a strengthening of the Schengen and Dublin systems and of the emergency relocation scheme.

Internal border controls: from a patchwork to a coherent approach

Temporary border controls at internal borders should remain exceptional and proportional with the objective of returning to a normal situation as soon as possible. Since September 2015, eight countries have reintroduced border controls at their internal borders for reasons related to the refugee crisis. Until now, this has been done based on unilateral actions, within the framework of the Schengen Borders Code (Articles 23-25).

If the current migratory pressures and the serious deficiencies in external border control were to persist beyond 12 May, the Commission would need to present a proposal under [Article 26\(2\) of the Schengen Borders Code](#), recommending to the Council a coherent EU approach to internal border controls until the structural deficiencies are remedied. The Commission will be prepared for this eventuality and would act without delay, proposing border controls only at the sections of the border

where they are necessary and proportionate.

The objective would be to lift all internal border controls by December, so that there can be a return to a normally functioning Schengen area by the end of 2016.

For More Information

[Communication: Back to Schengen - A Roadmap](#)

[Annexes: Back to Schengen – A Roadmap](#)

[Progress Report on the implementation of the hotspot approach in Greece](#)

[EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan – Third implementation report](#)

Press release: [Commission Visa Progress Report: Turkey makes progress towards visa liberalisation](#)

FACTSHEET: [The Schengen Rules Explained](#)

FACTSHEET: [EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan - Implementation report](#)

FACTSHEET: [Greece: Progress Report](#)

FACTSHEET: [Relocation and Resettlement](#)

ANNEX: ROADMAP

The roadmap back to a fully functioning Schengen area, involves the following steps:

- **4 March (and monthly thereafter):** Greece reports on its progress in implementing the actions identified in the Recommendation on resuming Dublin transfers.
- **12 March 2016 at the latest:** Greece provides its action plan to implement the recommendations made by the Council, together with a needs assessment.
- **16 March 2016:** Commission Communication on the reform of the Dublin Regulation based on the objective of solidarity and fair burden-sharing between Member States.
- **16 March 2016:** Commission presents its first Report on Relocation and Resettlement commitments.
- **22 March 2016 at the latest:** Frontex launches additional calls for contributions to further deploy European Border Guard teams to support Greece.
- **1 April 2016 at the latest:** Member States respond to the Frontex call by providing human resources and technical equipment.
- **12 April 2016 at the latest:** the Commission presents its assessment of the adequacy of the action plan prepared by Greece.
- **16 April 2016:** Commission presents its Second Report on Relocation and Resettlement commitments
- **11-17 April 2016:** a Schengen evaluation by Commission and Member State experts of air, land and sea borders of Greece will take place.
- **12 May 2016 at the latest:** Greece reports on the implementation of the Council recommendations.
- **12 May 2016:** if the serious deficiencies in external border control were to persist, the Commission will present a proposal under Article 26(2) of the Schengen Borders Code.
- **13 May 2016:** if the serious deficiencies in external border control were to persist, the Council should adopt a recommendation under Article 26(2) of the Schengen Borders Code for a coherent Union approach to temporary internal border controls.
- **16 May 2016:** the Commission presents its Third Report on Relocation and Resettlement commitments.
- **June 2016 at the latest:** the co-legislators reach political agreement on the European Border and Coast Guard and adopt the legal act.
- **June 2016:** Commission presents its assessment of the possibility of resuming Dublin transfers to Greece.
- **August 2016 at the latest:** the European Border and Coast Guard is operational.
- **September 2016 at the latest:** the European Border and Coast Guard is fully functional and has delivered the first vulnerability tests so that any necessary preventive measures can be taken.

- **December 2016**: if the overall situation allows, the target date for bringing to an end the exceptional safeguard measures taken.

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