

Improving security through information sharing: Council agrees negotiating mandate on interoperability

On 14 June 2018, the Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) endorsed, on behalf of the Council, a mandate for negotiations on two regulations establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the area of justice and home affairs. On the basis of this mandate, the Council Presidency will start negotiations with the European Parliament once the latter has adopted its position.

For information sharing to work to its fullest it is not only important to have the right information but also to be able to make the right links. By ensuring the interoperability of existing EU information systems we will be able to better connect the dots, which means better protection and security for everyone.

Valentin Radev, Bulgarian minister of interior

The proposed regulations aim to improve security within the EU, make checks at external borders more effective and efficient, and prevent and combat illegal migration. Interoperability between information systems will allow the systems to complement each other, help facilitate the correct identification of persons and contribute to fighting identity fraud.

The regulations establish the following interoperability components:

- A **European search portal**, which would allow competent authorities to search multiple information systems simultaneously, using both biographical and biometric data.
- A **shared biometric matching service**, which would enable the searching and comparing of biometric data (fingerprints and facial images) from several systems.
- A **common identity repository**, which would contain biographical and biometric identity data of third-country nationals available in several EU information systems.
- A **multiple identity detector**, which checks whether the biographical identity data contained in the search exists in other systems covered, to enable the detection of multiple identities linked to the same set of biometric data.

The systems covered by the regulation include the entry/exit system (EES), the visa information system (VIS), the European travel information and authorisation system (ETIAS), Eurodac, the Schengen information system (SIS) and the European criminal records information system for third country nationals (ECRIS-TCN), as well as Europol data and certain Interpol databases on travel documents.

The new regulations do not modify the rights of access. The European search portal will flag where data or links exist in relation to a query, but the system will only show each authority the data to which they already have a right of access under previous legislation setting up the different databases.

Background

Interoperability of EU information systems in the area of justice and home affairs has been a priority at the highest political level over the past few years. In its conclusions of 18 December 2015, the European Council stated that recent terrorist attacks demonstrated the urgency of enhancing information sharing, notably as regards ensuring the interoperability of the relevant databases with regard to security checks. A high level expert group on information systems and interoperability was established and prepared a report which stressed the need for a more effective and efficient data management for borders and security in the EU.

In June 2017, the European Council invited the Commission to prepare as soon as possible legislative proposals on this issue, on the basis of the recommendations made by the high level expert group. The Commission presented two legislative proposals on 12 December 2017.

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319
press.office@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press