



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

EU 'Smart Borders': Commission wants easier access and enhanced security

Brussels, 25 October 2011 – The EU needs a more modern and efficient management of traveller flows at its external borders. Today the European Commission adopted a Communication which sets out the main options for using new technologies to simplify life for foreigners frequently travelling to the EU and to better monitor third-country nationals crossing the borders.

Enabling smooth and fast border crossing for travellers, while ensuring an adequate level of security, is a challenge for many Member States. Every year more than 700 million EU citizens and third country nationals cross the EU's external borders. This number is expected to rise significantly in the future. By 2030¹ the number of people at European airports could increase by 80%, which will result in longer delays and queues for travellers if border checking procedures are not modernised in time. It is in the interest of the EU to make it as easy as possible for tourists and business travellers to come to Europe.

"The Union must continue to modernise the management of its external borders and ensure that the Schengen area is better equipped to cope with future challenges", said Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs. "The 'Smart Borders' initiative would speed up border crossing for regular travellers but could also help us to better secure our external borders. We now need to make sure that the most efficient systems are in place and I am looking forward to discussing the available options with the European Parliament, the Council and the European Data Protection Supervisor".

Background

The 'Smart Borders' initiative would consist of:

- An Entry/Exit System (EES) which would record the time and place of entry and the length of authorised short stays in an electronic database, replacing the current system of stamping passports. This data would then be made available to border control and immigration authorities.

¹ Compared to 400 million border crossings at the European airports in 2009, 720 million travellers will have to be checked in 2030 (see Eurocontrol's latest [long term forecast](#) published on 17 December 2010)

- A Registered Travellers Programme (RTP) which would allow certain groups of frequent travellers (i.e. business travellers, family members etc.) from third countries to enter the EU, subject to appropriate pre-screening, using simplified border checks at automated gates. This would speed up border crossings for 4 to 5 million travellers per year² and encourage investments in modern automated border controls (e.g. on the basis of e-passports) at major crossing points.

The implementation of these systems needs to be discussed in light of their added value, technological implications, data protection implications and costs.

The Commission will now discuss all these elements with the European Parliament, the Council and the European Data Protection Supervisor. It will then present legislative proposals during the course of next year.

Today's Communication is a first response to the European Council conclusions (24 June 2011) which called for work on "Smart Borders" to be pushed forward ([IP/11/781](#)).

It is part of a comprehensive approach to strengthen the overall governance of the Schengen area (for the 'Schengen package', see [IP/11/1036](#) and [MEMO/11/606](#)), as announced in the Communication on Migration adopted on 4 May 2011 ([IP/11/532](#) and [MEMO/11/273](#)).

It elaborates on a Communication adopted in 2008 entitled "Preparing the next steps in border management in the European Union" ([IP/08/215](#)).

For more information

[MEMO/11/728](#)

Homepage of Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/malmstrom/welcome/default_en.htm

Homepage DG Home Affairs:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/index_en.htm

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² This calculation is based on the assumption that 20% out of all persons issued a multiple-entry visa (around 10 million a year) and that an equivalent number of persons not requiring a visa would apply for a registered traveller status.