



Commission adopts Schengen Evaluation Report on Greece and proposes recommendations to address deficiencies in external border management

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Following a positive opinion by the Schengen evaluation committee on Friday, the College of Commissioners has today adopted the Schengen Evaluation Report on Greece and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on addressing the serious deficiencies identified in the evaluation report on the application of Schengen rules in the field of management of the external borders by Greece. The recommendations will be submitted to the Council for adoption.

[The Schengen evaluation mechanism](#), established in October 2013, provides for the verification of the application of the Schengen rules through monitoring visits to a given Member State by Commission-led teams with experts from Member States and Frontex. The Schengen evaluation report for Greece and the Proposal for a Council Recommendation has been drawn up jointly by Member States experts and Commission representatives.

Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Commissioner **Dimitris Avramopoulos** said: *"Our ability to maintain an area free of internal border controls depends on our ability to effectively manage our external borders. Today we are proposing a set of recommendations to ensure that, at all external borders of Greece, controls are carried out and brought in line with Schengen rules. At the same time, we take note of the efforts of the Greek Authorities to improve the situation and are reminding that all parts of the Commission's comprehensive plan need to be applied to face the unprecedented pressure at Europe's external borders. The objective of the European Commission and of the Member States is to safeguard and strengthen Schengen. We will only save Schengen by applying Schengen."*

The recommendations seek to ensure that Greece applies all Schengen rules related to management of external border correctly and effectively. Recommendations are made in a number of areas such as the improvement of the registration procedures, including ensuring a sufficient number of staff and fingerprint scanners for registration and verification of migrants and their travel documents against SIS, Interpol and national databases. Greece should provide the necessary facilities for accommodation during the registration process and launch return procedures for irregular migrants who are not seeking asylum and who are not in need of international protection. Border surveillance should be improved, including the establishment of a risk analysis system and increased training of border guards. Improvements should also be made to infrastructure and equipment at the border crossing points.

In order to ensure compliance with these recommendations, the Commission may, in addition, recommend that Greece takes certain specific measures under Article 19a of the Schengen Borders Code, given the serious deficiencies noted in the Schengen Evaluation Report.

Schengen Evaluation Mechanism

Schengen evaluations are carried out in Member States based on a multi-annual and an annual evaluation programme. Such visits can be announced or unannounced.

Following each visit, a report is drawn up identifying any shortcomings and this is accompanied by recommendations for remedial action, with a deadline for their implementation. The recommendations are submitted by the Commission to the Council for adoption. As a follow-up, the Member State in question is required to submit an action plan setting out how it intends to remedy the weaknesses identified. Member States can be assisted in fulfilling the recommendations via practical and/or financial measures from the Commission, Frontex or other EU bodies.

The [Eighth bi-annual report on the functioning of the Schengen area](#) of 15 December 2015 already announced that, depending on the results of the Schengen evaluations in Greece, specific measures as referred to in Article 19a and 26 of the [Schengen Borders Code](#) may be recommended.

Procedures addressing exceptional circumstances

If a Schengen Evaluation Report concludes that the evaluated Member State is "*seriously neglecting its obligations under the Schengen rules*" and if there are "*serious deficiencies in the carrying out of external border control*", the Commission can propose recommendations, to be adopted by the Council, for remedial action to address any deficiencies identified during the evaluation. In order to ensure compliance with these recommendations, the Commission may, under Article 19a of the Schengen Borders Code, recommend that the evaluated Member State take certain specific measures, which may include the deployment of European border guard teams or the submission of a strategic plan setting out how the Member State will deploy its own personnel and equipment to address the concerns. The Commission's proposals must be adopted by a Committee of the Member States, acting by qualified majority. The evaluated Member State then has three months to complete the remedial actions.

Where, after three months from the adoption of the Council recommendations, serious deficiencies persist and the measures taken have not proved sufficient to ensure the adequate remedy of these deficiencies, the Commission may trigger the application of the procedure provided for in Article 26 of the Schengen Borders Code.

Under Article 26 of the Schengen Borders Code, if the measures under Article 19a have not been effective, the Council may, based on a proposal from Commission, recommend that one or more Member States reintroduce border controls at all or at specific parts of their internal borders as a matter of last resort, to protect the common interest of the Schengen area. The Council recommendation needs to be adopted by qualified majority.

Under Article 26, and in the exceptional circumstances described above, controls can be reintroduced for a period of up to six months. This measure can be prolonged for additional six month periods up to a maximum duration of two years.

For More Information

Press release: [Commission discusses draft Schengen Evaluation Report on Greece](#) (27 January 2015)

[The Schengen Border Code](#)

[Eighth biannual report on the functioning of the Schengen area](#) (15 December 2015)

[The Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism](#)

[Directorate-General for Home Affairs website](#)

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Press contacts:

[Natasha BERTAUD](#) (+32 2 296 74 56)

[Tove ERNST](#) (+32 2 298 67 64)

[Markus LAMMERT](#) (+ 32 2 298 04 23)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)