ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ПАРЛАМЕНТ   PARLAMENTO EUROPEO   EVROPSKÝ PARLAMENT   EUROPA-PARLAMENTET
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MEPs call for strict rules on use of asylum seekers' fingerprint database

Committees Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs [18-12-2012 - 15:33]

Eurodac is a database containing fingerprints of asylum seekers and irregular immigrants to help with asylum applications, but should it also be used to investigate terrorism and serious crimes? The European Commission wants to enable EU law enforcement bodies to have access to the database for this reason. However, members of the EP's civil liberties committee argued during a vote on the plan on 17 December that this should only be possible with strict data protection safeguards in place.

What is Eurodac?

Eurodac was introduced by the Dublin II regulation, which helps to determine which member state is responsible for dealing with an asylum application. In principle only one member state should be responsible. The regulation also applies to Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

Combating crime and terrorism

The Commission proposes updating the rules concerning the use of Eurodac to address data protection concerns and help combat serious crime and terrorism. The latter would be achieved by allowing national law enforcement bodies to compare fingerprints from their database with those in Eurodac.

"This regulation will increase safety in the EU. Law enforcement authorities in member states will be able to compare fingerprints from crime scenes with those stored in Eurodac for a more efficient and quick identification of suspects, victims and witnesses," said Monica Luisa Macove, a Christian Democrat MEP for Romania, who is responsible for steering the legislation through Parliament.

MEPs favour stricter data protection

MEPs insists on stricter data protection safeguards. Asylum seekers should be informed that their data can be used for law enforcement purposes, while a national authority should check if the conditions for a data request have been met. There should also be a record kept for a month of any search, so that it is possible to check if EU rules on data protection have been complied with when processing the data.

Next step