Security Union: Commission proposes a European Travel Information and Authorisation System

Brussels, 16 November 2016

"We need to know who is crossing our borders. By November, we will propose an automated system to determine who will be allowed to travel to Europe. This way we will know who is travelling to Europe before they even get here." – President Jean-Claude Juncker, 2016 State of the Union Address

The Commission is today proposing to establish a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) to strengthen security checks on visa-free travellers. This follows the announcement in September by President Juncker in his 2016 State of the Union address, and is a first deliverable of the priorities for action identified in the Bratislava Roadmap. The ETIAS will gather information on all those travelling visa-free to the European Union to allow for advance irregular migration and security checks. This will contribute to a more efficient management of the EU's external borders and improve internal security, whilst at the same time facilitating legal travel across Schengen borders.

First Vice-President **Frans Timmermans** said: *"Securing our borders and protecting our citizens is our first priority. ETIAS will close an information gap by cross-checking visa exempt applicants' information against all our other systems. At the same time, the future ETIAS will be easy, quick, cheap and effective."*

Migration and Home Affairs Commissioner **Dimitris Avramopoulos** said: *"ETIAS is the missing link in our border management, connecting the dots with our migration and security policies and enhancing Schengen entry for at least 95% of visa-free travellers. Europe's openness does not come at the cost of its security."*

Security Union Commissioner **Julian King** said: *"Terrorists and criminals don't care much for national borders. The only way to defeat them is by working together effectively. ETIAS will help do that: by spotting problem individuals and stopping them from coming, we'll enhance Europe's internal security."*

The ETIAS authorisation is not a visa; it is a lighter and more visitor-friendly regime. Nationals of visa liberalisation countries will still be able to travel without a visa but will have to obtain a simple travel authorisation prior to their travel to the Schengen Area. This will help identify persons who may pose an irregular migration or security risk before they arrive at the border and significantly enhance the security of the external borders. The ETIAS will also bridge an existing information gap on visa-free travellers by gathering information that could be vital to Member States' authorities in advance of their arrival at the Schengen border. The ETIAS is therefore an important step forward towards stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security. The ETIAS will also facilitate the crossing of the external border by visa-exempt third country nationals. Travellers will have a reliable early indication of entry into the Schengen area which will thus substantially reduce the number of refusals of entry.

In order to decide whether to issue or reject a request to travel to the EU, an automated system will conduct prior checks, **in full respect of fundamental rights and personal data protection**. Although the final decision to grant or refuse entry will always be taken by the national border guards who are conducting border controls under the Schengen Borders Code, prior verifications of all travellers will facilitate border checks and ensure a coordinated and harmonised assessment of visa-exempt third-country nationals.

The ETIAS will be managed by the European Border and Coast Guard in close cooperation with the competent authorities of the Member States and Europol. The Agency eu-LISA will develop and provide technical management of this information system.

The key functions of ETIAS will be to:

- **Verify the information submitted** by visa-exempt third country nationals (such as information related to identity, travel document, residence information, contact details etc.), via an online application ahead of their travel to the EU's external borders, to assess if they pose a risk for irregular migration, security or public health;

- **Automatically process each application** submitted via a website or a mobile application against

other EU information systems (such as SIS, VIS, Europol's database, Interpol's database, the EES, Eurodac, ECRIS), a dedicated ETIAS watch list (established by Europol) and targeted, proportionate and clearly defined screening rules to determine if there are factual indications or reasonable grounds to issue or refuse a travel authorisation;

- **Issue travel authorisations**. In cases where no hits or elements requiring further analysis are identified, the travel authorisation is issued automatically within minutes after the application has been submitted.

An authorisation will be obtained through a procedure that is simple, cheap and fast; in the vast majority of cases, an authorisation should be given in a matter of minutes. The authorisation, the application for which will not take more than ten minutes to fill in and which only requires a valid travel document, will be **valid for a period of five years** and for multiple travels. An **application fee of €5** only will apply to all applicants above the age of 18.

Background

Security has been a constant theme since the beginning of the Juncker Commission's mandate – from President Juncker's Political Guidelines of July 2014, to the latest State of the Union address in September 2016. In his speech, President Juncker announced that by November the Commission will propose a European Travel Information System (ETIAS) – an automated system to determine who will be allowed to travel to the Schengen Area. The setting up of this system has been further prioritised in the Bratislava Roadmap signed and agreed by the EU 27 leaders, committing to: "*set up a Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) to allow for advance checks and, if necessary, deny entry of visa-exempt travellers*".

The European Commission adopted the European Agenda on Security on 28 April 2015, setting out the main actions to ensure an effective EU response to terrorism and security threats in the European Union over the period 2015-2020.

Since the adoption of the Agenda, significant progress has been made in its implementation. In November 2015, the Commission proposed the revision of the Firearms Directive followed by an Action Plan on firearms and explosives in December 2015. On terrorism, a new Directive on Combatting Terrorism was adopted by the Commission in December 2015 and a specific Action Plan on terrorist financing in February 2016. In April, the Commission proposed the establishment of the Entry Exit System (EES) and presented a Communication paving the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union. In addition, a single EU certification for aviation security equipment was adopted in September.

Most recently, on 14 September 2016, the Commission presented its Communication 'Enhancing security in a world of mobility' which confirmed the need to strike the right balance between ensuring mobility and enhancing security, while facilitating legal entry into the Schengen area without the need for a visa. In addition, on 6 October the European Border and Coast Guard became operational, only 9 months after the Commission's proposal in December, showing a clear commitment to reinforce the management and security of the EU's external borders.

The creation by President Juncker of a specific Commissioner portfolio for the Security Union in August 2016 shows the importance the Commission has attached to stepping up its response to the terrorist threat.

For more information

Proposal for a Regulation establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System

Annex

Feasibility study on a European Travel Information and Authorisation System

MEMO: European Travel Information and Authorisation System: Questions & Answers

FACTSHEET: A European Travel Information and Authorisation System

Press release: European Agenda on Security: Second report on progress towards an effective and sustainable Security Union

European Agenda on Security

Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 of 15 March 2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement

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