Security Union: Commission delivers on interoperability of EU information systems

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The Commission is today delivering on its commitment to ensure interoperability and address the existing shortcomings of EU information systems for security and border management, as set out by the Commission in its 7th Security Union Report on 16 May and endorsed by the European Council of 22-23 June. As a first step, the Commission is proposing to strengthen the mandate of the EU Agency for the operational management of large scale IT systems (eu-LISA), enabling it to develop and roll-out the technical solutions to make the EU information systems interoperable. In addition, the Commission is also proposing further improvements to the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) to allow Member States to exchange criminal records of non-EU citizens more efficiently.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Our border guards, law enforcement and immigration officers need to have access to the right information at the right time to do their job. The security of our citizens depends on the quality and availability of this information. With the stronger mandate we propose today, eu-LISA will become the EU's digital centre of excellence, to make our vision for the interoperability of our information systems a reality."*

Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said*: "We have a range of databases to help us fight terrorism and manage our borders but our systems can only be as strong and effective as the data with which they are fed. With today's proposals, we are addressing the current limits to the way our systems provide information, delivering on our commitment to ensure strong and smart systems for borders and security."*

Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra **Jourová**, said: *"Bringing the operational management of EU information systems under one roof and centralising the information exchange of criminal records of non-EU nationals is an important step forward. With today's proposals we are giving police, prosecutors and judges stronger tools against cross-border crime and terrorism."*

Ensuring interoperability: A stronger mandate for eu-LISA

To address the current limits of EU information systems, eliminate information gaps and enable information to be shared between the systems, the Commission is today proposing to strengthen the mandate of eu-LISA. Today's reform will give the Agency a mandate to **develop the necessary technical solutions to achieve interoperability**. The Agency will also now be responsible for **developing and managing future large-scale EU information systems**.

The reformed eu-LISA Agency will:

- **Provide centralised operational management of EU Information Systems.** The eu-LISA Agency, currently responsible at a central level for the operational management of the Schengen Information System (SIS), the Visa Information System (VIS) and Eurodac, will also be responsible for the **preparation, development and operational management of the new information systems** proposed by the Commission; namely the Entry/Exit System (EES) and the EU Travel information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) as well as the upgraded European Criminal Records Information System for Third Country Nationals and Stateless Persons (ECRIS-TCN) proposed by the Commission today.

- **Develop the main technical features of the Commission's approach towards interoperability** – once the relevant legislative instruments have been adopted – consisting of a **European Search Portal**, a **shared biometric matching service** and a **Common Identity Repository** to make sure all EU information systems interact efficiently and are readily accessible to police and customs officers on the ground.

- **Improve the quality of the data** by developing automated data quality control mechanisms. These will ensure that incorrect or inconsistent data are automatically identified. The Member State which input the data will then be alerted so they can remove or update the data.

Exchanging non-EU nationals' criminal records: upgrading the 'ECRIS'

System

After proposing to reform the current system in January 2016 to include fingerprints of non-EU citizens, the Commission is today presenting a supplementary proposal to:

- **Create a centralised ECRIS-Third Country National system:** a centralised database will make it possible to quickly verify if any Member State holds conviction information on a non-EU citizen. The proposed improvements will enable Member States to request the detailed conviction information through the ECRIS system directly from the identified Member States.

- **Help establish the identity of convicted non-EU citizens**: ECRIS-TCN will contain information on names, addresses, fingerprints and facial images where available, significantly contributing to improving the reliability of identity information on non-EU citizens, which can often be less reliable than on EU citizens, given the uncertainty on identity documents presented.

- **Improve the exchange of information between Member States on convicted non-EU citizens:** easier and faster access to criminal records will help law enforcement authorities become more efficient in their fight against terrorism and organised crime.

- **Allow for interoperability with other EU databases:** with a centralised system, ECRIS will be part of the systems developed and managed by the eu-LISA Agency, enabling information to be shared with other EU systems as part of the Commission's approach towards achieving interoperability.

Background

President Juncker's State of the Union address in September 2016 and the European Council conclusions of December 2016 highlighted the importance of overcoming the current shortcomings in data management and of improving the interoperability of existing information systems. Recent terrorist attacks have brought this into even greater focus, highlighting the urgent need for information systems to be interoperable, and to eliminate the current blind spots where terrorist suspects can be recorded in different, unconnected databases under different aliases.

In April 2016 the Commission presented a Communication on stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security, initiating a discussion on how information systems in the European Union can better enhance border management and internal security. In June 2016, the Commission set up a High-Level Expert Group on Information Systems and Interoperability to take this work forward and to address the legal, technical and operational challenges to achieve interoperability. The High-Level Expert Group held its last meeting on 25 April 2017 and presented the final report on 11 May 2017.

Established in 2012, the **European Criminal Records Information system** (ECRIS) enables national judicial authorities to receive information on previous criminal convictions in other Member States. Member States currently send around 288,000 information requests per year through ECRIS on previous criminal convictions across the EU. The upgrade of ECRIS is a key priority of the Commission's European Agenda on Security, which calls for the inclusion of non-EU nationals within ECRIS to improve the fight against cross-border crime and terrorism. On 19 January 2016, the Commission took the first legislative step to improve the exchange of information on non-EU citizens via the ECRIS system, as the system currently in place is cumbersome and inefficient. Today the Commission proposes to further upgrade this tool.

The EU Agency **for the operational management of large-scale IT systems, eu-LISA**, successfully started operations on December 1, 2012. It fulfills the operational management tasks for SIS II, VIS and EURODAC. The main operational task is to ensure that these systems are kept functioning 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Its other responsibilities include adopting the necessary security measures and ensuring data security and integrity as well as compliance with data protection rules.

For More Information

Factsheet: A Europe that protects

Factsheet: Security Union: Interoperability

Factsheet: Existing EU Information Systems

High-level expert group on information systems and interoperability — Final report

Communication: Stronger and smarter information systems for borders and security

eu-LISA

Proposal for a Regulation on the Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in

the area of freedom, security and justice

Report on the functioning of the European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA)

Commission Staff Working document - eu-LISA evaluation: Executive summary

Commission Staff Working document - eu-LISA evaluation: Full report

European Criminal Records Information System

Proposal for a regulation on ECRIS for non-EU nationals

Security Union

Press release: Security Union: Commission accelerates measures to prevent radicalisation and the cyber threat

Communication: 8th Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union

Factsheet: Security Union

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