



Press release 12 July 2018: For immediate release

Statewatch launch new Observatory as interoperable Justice and Home Affairs databases morph into a centralised Big Brother database

"The time to ring the alarms bells is not when Big Brother is in place but when there are the first signs of its construction." (Tony Bunyan, Statewatch Director)

This Observatory covers the so-called "interoperability" of EU JHA databases which in reality will create a centralised EU state database covering all existing and future JHA databases – through combining biometrics and personal data in a single search. [1]

The Statewatch: [Observatory on "point of no return"](#)

Quote

Tony Bunyan, Statewatch Director comments:

"The intention is to bring together in one place the biometrics of millions – non-EU citizens now and EU citizens later – directly linked to the Common Identity Repository with personal details. In my view the proposals on the table are unamendable.

The European Data Protection Supervisor says that the measure would mark a "point of no return" with all the inherent dangers that over time function creep will build up a highly detailed personal file attached to biometrics. For example when the EU-PNR (Passenger Name Record) comes into effect this will contain details of all travellers in and out of the EU and inside the EU as well.

To make matters even worse as EU data supervisors have observed it is very unfortunate that the discussions on this complex process is being rushed and have turned into a democratic shambles – it should be abandoned forthwith.[2]

The time to ring the alarms bells is not when Big Brother is in place but when there are the first signs of its construction."

Background

The Commission's proposal for interoperable centralised EU databases is justified on the threat posed to internal security by migration and terrorism. This conflation of threats based on fear of the "other" is a classic case of institutionalised state racism.

Building on the above the message is that as the plans only affect 218 million non-EU citizens, so there is no reason for EU citizens to be concerned as it will not affect them. The assumption that EU citizens are not concerned with the rights and freedoms of non-EU citizens is insulting.

Furthermore, the above assertion is untrue – it will cover all existing and new databases. The present plans would mainly affect non-EU citizens but once the centralised EU database is set up it will be extended to include Prüm (vehicle registration, DNA and fingerprint data),

ECRIS (criminal records) and the EU Passenger Name Record system (PNR, which will cover internal flights as well as those in and out of the EU) – affecting millions and millions of EU citizens. It is yet another step in EU state-building.

Due to the decision-making being rushed through before the European Parliament elections next year the process is in a mess with five underlying Regulations still to be discussed – the content of which needs to be taken into account in the two overriding Regulations.

The widespread and discriminatory use of police checks inside the EU under Article 20 of the Regulation threaten to affect non-EU citizens and EU citizens alike.

The four components in the creation of a centralised EU database are described as:

European search portal (ESP) - this will enable authorised users (for instance an authorised police officer) to carry out a single search.

A shared biometric matching service (BMS) - this will allow users to search and cross-match biometric data (currently primarily fingerprints and facial images) stored in the systems that they are authorised to access.

Common identity repository (CIR), which would contain biographical and biometric identity data of non-EU nationals and later EU nationals held in EU Justice and Home Affairs databases.

A multiple identity detector (MID) - this will verify whether the biographical data that is being searched exists in multiple systems, helping to detect multiple identities.

The description of the role of the CIR in the Commission press release hides its crucial role. The Impact Assessment describes its significance as follows for stage one – covering non-EU nationals:

*“The common identity repository (CIR) would be the **shared component for storing biographical and biometric identity data** of third-country nationals recorded in Eurodac, VIS, the future EES, the proposed ETIAS and the proposed ECRIS-TCN system.”*

In stage one the following existing databases are to be included: **Schengen Information System (SIS)** including surveillance, alerts on persons **Eurodac** fingerprint database of asylum applicants . **Visa Information System (VIS)** data on short-stay visas. Plus three new databases adopted or under discussion: **Entry/Exit System (EES)**, **European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)** automated system covering visa-exempt nationals ahead of travel to the Schengen area **European Criminal Record Information System for third country nationals (ECRIS-TCN)** convictions handed down in national courts.

[1] See Statewatch Analysis: [The “Point of no return”: Interoperability morphs into the creation of a Big Brother centralised EU state database including all existing and future Justice and Home Affairs databases](#)

[2] [New interoperable, centralised, Justice & Home Affairs database: Adoption of Regulations a democratic shambles](#) (26 June 2018)

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