

Schengen Information System: Council adopts new rules to strengthen security in the EU

The Schengen Information System is being reinforced through updated rules which will address potential gaps in the system and introduce several essential changes on the types of alert entered. This will contribute to strengthening the fight against terrorism and serious crime, ensuring a high level of security across the EU, and help migration management.

The Council today adopted three regulations on the use of the Schengen Information System:

- in the field of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters
- in the field of border checks
- for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals

The Schengen Information System has already been a success story in EU cooperation on security. The updated SIS rules will allow us to build on this even further. By introducing new categories of alerts we will be able to adapt to changing needs and close gaps.

Herbert Kickl, Minister of the Interior of Austria

Alert categories

The draft regulations introduce additional categories of alerts to the system:

- alerts issued for the purpose of **inquiry checks**, an intermediary step between discreet checks and specific checks, which allow for individuals to be interviewed.
- alerts on **unknown suspects or wanted persons**, which provide for the introduction into the SIS of fingerprints or palm prints discovered at the scenes of serious crimes or terrorist incidents and which are considered to belong to a perpetrator.
- preventive alerts for **children at risk of parental abduction**, as well as **children and vulnerable persons who need to be prevented from travelling for their own protection** (for example, where travel might lead to the risk of forced marriage, female genital mutilation, trafficking of human beings).
- alerts for the **purpose of return**, an alert in relation to return decisions issued to illegally staying third-country nationals, thereby improving the exchange of information in relation to return decisions.

They also **expand the list of objects** for which alerts can be issued, including false documents and high-value identifiable objects, as well as IT equipment.

In addition, the introduction of alerts in the SIS as regards **entry bans for third-country nationals** becomes compulsory.

Types of data

The regulations introduce the possibility of using **facial images** for identification purposes, in particular to ensure consistency in border control procedures. It also allows for the inclusion of a **DNA profile** to facilitate the identification of missing persons in cases where fingerprint data, photographs or facial images are not available or not suitable for identification.

Access to data

Europol will be able to access all categories of data in the SIS and to exchange supplementary information with Member States SIRENE Bureaux. In addition, member states must inform Europol of any hits when a person is sought in relation to a terrorist offence. This will allow Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre to check if there is any additional relevant information available in Europol's databases.

For the purposes set out in its mandate, the **European Border and Coast Guard Agency** will also have access to the alert categories in SIS.

Next steps

The Council and the European Parliament now need to sign the adopted regulations. The signed texts will then be published in the EU Official Journal and will enter into force 20 days later. However, the new features of the SIS will only be fully operational at a later date, once all the legal and technical preconditions have been met.

Background

The Schengen Information System is the most widely used and efficient IT system of the EU in the area of freedom, security and justice. The system contains more than 76 million alerts. In 2017 it was accessed more than 5.1 billion times by member states, triggering more than 240 000 hits on foreign alerts (alerts issued by another country).

The European Commission presented a legislative package to improve the SIS from a technical point of view and to respond to the development of certain forms of serious crime, including terrorism, in December 2016.

- [Regulation on the establishment, operation and use of the Schengen Information System in the field of police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters](#)
- [Regulation on the establishment, operation and use of the Schengen Information System in the field of border checks](#)
- [Regulation on the use of the Schengen Information System for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals](#)
- [SIS II - 2017 statistics](#)

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