

# SECURITY UNION

## Closing the information gap

The current EU information systems for security, border and migration management do not work together – they are fragmented, complex and difficult to operate. This risks pieces of information slipping through the net and terrorists and criminals escaping detection by using multiple or fraudulent identities, endangering the EU's internal security and the safety of European citizens.

Over the past year, the EU has been working to make the various information systems at EU level interoperable – that is, able to exchange data and share information so that authorities and responsible officials have the information they need, when and where they need it. Today, the Commission is completing this work by proposing new tools to make EU information systems stronger and smarter, and to ensure that they work better together. The tools will make it easier for border guards and police officers to have complete, reliable and accurate information needed for their duties, and to detect people who are possibly hiding criminal or terrorist activities behind false identities.

### WHAT IS INTEROPERABILITY?



Interoperability is the ability of information systems to exchange data and to enable the sharing of information. It is about a targeted and intelligent way of using existing data to best effect, without creating new databases or changing the access rights to the existing information systems.

### HOW WILL INTEROPERABILITY WORK?

The Commission proposes four main elements to improve interoperability of the EU information systems and information sharing. These new tools will allow border guards, police officers, visa and immigration officials to have faster, more reliable and more complete information on people posing a security threat:



- ▶ **European search portal** – a one-stop shop carrying out a simultaneous search of multiple EU information systems, in line with the users' access rights.



- ▶ **Shared biometric matching service** – a tool cross-checking biometric data (fingerprints and facial images) and detecting links between information on the same person in different EU information systems.



- ▶ **Common identity repository** – a shared container of biographical and biometric information, such as name and date of birth, stored in relevant systems about non-EU citizens.



- ▶ **Multiple identity detector** – automatic alert system detecting multiple or fraudulent identities.

**Effective identity checks** – the proposals establish rules for police officers to query the identity data of third-country nationals in the common identity repository to identify a person during a police check.

**Access for law enforcement** – the proposal streamlines the rules for police officers to access information on third-country nationals in non-law-enforcement databases (such as the Entry-Exit System, Eurodac and the future ETIAS) where necessary to prevent, investigate, detect or prosecute terrorism and other serious criminal offences, in full respect of fundamental rights and data protection and without broadening the scope of access beyond current rules.



The EU Agency responsible for the management of information systems, eu-LISA, is set to play a crucial role in the technical implementation and the development of interoperability of EU information systems. In order to enable eu-LISA to bring this work forward, the Commission proposed in June 2017 to strengthen the mandate of the Agency.

## WHAT SYSTEMS ARE INVOLVED?

The EU information systems that will become interoperable and able to work together, include three already existing systems and three future systems, proposed by the Commission to be developed in the coming years.

### Existing systems:



- **the Schengen Information System (SIS)** a broad range of alerts on people and objects related to criminal activity and missing persons.



- **the Eurodac** – fingerprint database of asylum applicants and third-country nationals irregularly crossing EU borders or irregularly staying in the EU.



- **the Visa Information System (VIS)** information on short-stay visas.

### New systems proposed by the Commission but not yet developed:



- **Entry/Exit System (EES)** – electronic register of entry and exit information of third country nationals crossing EU borders.



- **European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)** – pre-travel security and irregular migration screening of visa-exempt non-EU nationals.



- **European Criminal Record Information System for third-country nationals (ECRIS-TCN system)** system for exchanging information on non-EU nationals convicted in the European Union.

## STRONG DATA PROTECTION SAFEGUARDS

Privacy and security are two sides of the same coin. The proposed measures will **not** lead to the interconnectivity of the individual systems. Each system will keep its specific purpose limitation, access rules and data retention rules. The proposed measures will also **not** lead to an increase in the collection of new data. They provide a targeted and intelligent way of using existing information held in EU systems to best effect.