

Council and EU Parliament reach deal to advance police cooperation in Europe

Negotiators from the Spanish presidency of the Council and from the European Parliament have reached a political agreement on updating an EU law which facilitates automated data exchange for police cooperation.

Fighting crime is a joint interest and responsibility. Today's deal will improve European citizen's security when the police can quickly run searches for DNA, fingerprints, facial images, vehicle registration data and police records in law enforcement databases across Europe.

Fernando Grande-Marlaska Gómez, acting Spanish Minister for the Interior

Increased number of data categories

The existing framework – often referred to as Prüm I – allows law enforcement authorities to consult the national databases of other member states as regards DNA, fingerprint and vehicle registration data. If provided with a 'hit', authorities can then request the relevant data from their foreign counterparts.

The co-legislators agreed to broaden the data categories for which automated exchanges can happen. Once the updated law enters into force, police authorities will be able to also use the Prüm scheme to search for facial images and police records. Moreover, if allowed by national law, searches across all categories to find missing persons or identify human remains will also be possible.

If the database search results in a positive match, the country in question has to provide the relevant data (e.g. name, date of birth, criminal offence linked to the data) within 48 hours.

Modernisation of the IT-system

The new law also modernises the technical infrastructure that underpins the exchange of information. The new Prüm regulation will see a router put in place by eu-LISA (the EU agency in charge of large IT systems, such as the Schengen Information System) to facilitate the establishment of connections between member states (and Europol) in order to retrieve data. The router will consist of a search tool and a secure communication channel. The law enforcement authority that is searching for a match will submit its data (e.g. a fingerprint) to the router. The router will dispatch this request for a query to the databases of all other EU member states and Europol.

For automated searches of police records indexes, member states and Europol will use the European Police Records Index System (EPRIS).

Bigger role for Europol

Under the new rules, Europol – the EU agency that supports member states in the fight against organised and serious crime – will also be able to search national databases to cross-check information it has received from third countries.

Background

The proposal to update the Prüm legislation dates back to 8 December 2021. The goal is to reinforce, streamline and facilitate the exchange of information between member states and with Europol and to provide EU law enforcement authorities with enhanced tools to fight crime.

Next steps

The provisional agreement will now be submitted to member states' representatives (Coreper) for endorsement. If approved, the text will then be formally adopted by both the Council and European Parliament.

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