



## Security Union: Commission closes information gaps to better protect EU citizens

Strasbourg, 12 December 2017

**Today, the European Commission has proposed to close information gaps by upgrading EU information systems for security, border and migration management and making them work together in a smarter and more efficient way.**

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The measures will enable information exchange and data sharing between the different systems and ensure that border guards and police officers have access to the right information exactly when and where they need it to perform their duties, whilst ensuring the highest data protection standards and full respect of fundamental rights. In the context of recent security and migratory challenges, the proposal will ensure greater safety of EU citizens by facilitating the management of the EU's external borders and increasing internal security.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"Speed counts when it comes to protecting our citizens against terrorism and saving lives. At this moment our EU information systems for security and border management are working separately which slows down law enforcement. With our proposal they will become fully interoperable. That means that law enforcement anywhere in the EU will be able to work directly and instantly with all the available information."*

Commissioner for Migration, Citizenship and Home Affairs Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Today we are delivering the final and most important element of our work to close gaps and remove blind spots in our information systems for security, borders and migration. From now onwards, border guards, immigration and police officers should have the right information at the right time to do their job. This is a flagship initiative for this Commission, and I urge the co-legislators to also make it their priority and complete their work within 2018."*

Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: *"Terrorists and serious criminals should not be able to slip through the net or under the radar. This is an ambitious new approach to managing and using existing information: more intelligent and targeted; clamping down on multiple identities and reinforcing effective police checks; connecting the dots to protect EU citizens while also protecting data by design and by default."*

Currently, EU information systems do not talk to each other – information is stored separately in unconnected systems, making them 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 making border and migration management more challenging. The measures proposed today will plug those gaps and make sure that information provided to border guards and police is complete, accurate and reliable. The new tools will help better detect people who pose a threat not only when crossing EU borders, but also when travelling within Schengen. By simultaneously cross-checking information in different databases and streamlining access by law enforcement, the new tools will quickly alert border guards or police if a person is using multiple or fraudulent identities. It will also help to better identify vulnerable people such as unaccompanied minors, while making sure that fundamental rights and data protection are fully respected.

### Connecting the dots and removing blind spots

Today's proposal introduces new elements to make a more intelligent and targeted use of the information available in the existing and future systems. This will allow national authorities:

- **to make best use of existing data. A European search portal** will provide a "one-stop shop" on a computer screen when border guards or police officers are verifying identify documents. Rather than having to decide which database to check in a particular situation, officers will be able to simultaneously search multiple EU information systems. This will put an end to information gaps and ensure that officers have a complete picture of a person without delay.
- **to detect multiple identities and counter identity fraud. A shared biometric matching**

**service** will use biometric data, such as fingerprints or facial images, to scan existing databases and enable detection of information in different EU information systems. A **common identity repository** will provide basic biographical and biometric information, such as names and dates of birth of non-EU citizens, so that they can be reliably identified. Building on these, a multiple-identity detector will immediately flag to border guards and police cases of fraudulent or multiple identities.

- **to carry out rapid and effective checks.** When carrying out checks within a country, police officers will be able to query the identity data of third-country nationals and confirm who they are, including for the purpose of detecting multiple identities.

The Commission is also proposing a two-step approach for those law enforcement officers preventing, investigating, detecting or prosecuting serious crime or terrorism to **access the information** they need on third-country nationals in non-law enforcement systems. In full respect of data protection, the approach clarifies that as a first step searches will be carried out on a "hit/no hit" basis. As a second step, if a "hit" is generated, law enforcement officers can request access to the information needed in line with the respective rules and safeguards. To ensure that border guards and police officers have complete and accurate information at hand, data **quality control mechanisms** will also be created.

## Building resilience on all fronts

Today, the Commission has also reported on the progress made on other security related priority files including the ongoing legislative proposals to strengthen information systems and the correct implementation and full application of existing legislation and instruments. The **12th Security Union report** takes stock of actions taken to deny terrorists the means to act, strengthen cyber resilience, counter radicalisation online and offline, and build up the external security dimension.

## Background

President Juncker's [State of the Union address](#) in September 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 European Commission presented a Communication on stronger and smarter information systems initiating a discussion on how to make EU information systems work better to enhance border management and internal security. As part of an inclusive and transparent process 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 presented its [final report](#) in May 2017 setting out a range of recommendations. Building on those recommendations, the Commission proposed a [new approach](#) to achieve interoperability of EU information systems for security, border and migration management by 2020 and announced its intention to present, as soon as possible, a legislative proposal on interoperability. This was followed by a joint discussion between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on the way forward on interoperability.

In [June 2017](#), the European Council reiterated the need to act and invited the Commission to prepare, as soon as possible, draft legislation enacting the recommendations made by the high-level expert group. In the context of 2018 Work Programme, the Commission announced that a proposal on the interoperability of information systems will be presented by the end of 2017.

## For More Information

[Proposal for a Regulation establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems \(police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration\)](#)

[Proposal for a Regulation establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems \(borders and visa\)](#)

[Commission Staff Working Document: Impact Assessment \(part 1\)](#)

[Commission Staff Working Document: Impact Assessment \(part 2\)](#)

[Commission Staff Working Document: Executive Summary of the Impact Assessment](#)

[12th Progress Report towards an effective and genuine Security Union](#)

[Q&A: Interoperability of EU information systems for security, border and migration management](#)

[Factsheet: Security Union - Closing the information gap](#)

[Factsheet: EU Information Systems](#)

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