

2025 State of Schengen Report



Anna Pinggen

News

On 23 April 2025, the European Commission presented the [2025 State of Schengen Report](#), reviewing the functioning of the world's largest area of free movement over the past year and outlining the priorities for the year ahead. It is the fourth annual report (for the 2024 report → [euCRIM 1/2024, 8](#); for the 2023 report → [euCRIM 2/2023, 114-115](#)) and comes ahead of the celebrations on the 40th anniversary of the Schengen Agreement, which was signed on 14 June 1985.

The Commission highlights that the Schengen Agreement has grown into a vital framework for freedom, security, and cooperation across Europe, now encompassing 29 countries with over 450 million residents.

The report emphasises Schengen's evolving role as a strategic asset: supporting the Single Market, strengthening EU-wide security coordination, and fostering unity. In a rapidly changing geopolitical environment, the Schengen area has been described as indispensable for safeguarding both mobility and resilience. The main findings of the 2025 Schengen Report are as follows:

Schengen governance strengthened through new tools and cooperation structures

The 2024–2025 Schengen Cycle introduced several reforms to consolidate political oversight and improve the monitoring of Schengen compliance: The Schengen Barometer+ and Scoreboard were refined to better identify implementation gaps. A Schengen Senior Officials Meeting format was launched to support regular, high-level coordination, focusing on alternatives to internal border controls and reinforcing external border protection. Notably, a common framework for enhanced policy alignment across Member States gained momentum.

Schengen expanded with full accession of Romania and Bulgaria

On 1 January 2025, Romania and Bulgaria fully joined the Schengen area, completing an 18-year process since their EU accession (→ [euCRIM 4/2024, 266-267](#)). The move is expected to reduce logistics costs for businesses in both countries and eliminate delays caused by internal border checks. The Commission praises this as a milestone for EU integration and a step toward a more cohesive Schengen zone.

Progress toward integration also continued in Cyprus, while Ireland's ongoing evaluation process is expected to be concluded toward the end of 2025, with partial participation in Schengen cooperation already underway.

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Call for faster digitalisation of borders and visa procedures

The report identifies digital transformation as a key priority for enhancing Schengen's efficiency and security. Several initiatives are already being implemented or awaiting approval:

- The Entry/Exit System (EES), with a phased roll-out starting October 2025;
- The European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS), expected in late 2026;
- The EU Digital Travel Document proposal and a unified visa application platform, both planned for 2028.

Tightened internal security and return policies

With threats ranging from organised crime to hybrid warfare, the EU adopted ProtectEU, a new Internal Security Strategy in April 2025 (→ [eucrim news of 29 April 2025](#)). The Commission plans to enhance operational police cooperation and improve access to data for security services.

Meanwhile, a thematic evaluation of Member States' return systems has revealed uneven implementation, prompting the Commission to [propose a new legal framework for returns](#) in March 2025. In 2024, nearly 123,400 individuals without legal residence were returned from the EU, a 12% increase from the previous year. Frontex supported over 56,000 of these cases, reflecting growing reliance on joint EU mechanisms.

Schengen countries facing pressure to end internal border checks

Although the Schengen Borders Code was revised in July 2024 to restrict internal border controls, ten Member States—including Germany, France, and Sweden—reintroduced or prolonged such controls (by April 2025). Germany, for instance, extended checks to all internal borders. The Netherlands has also introduced controls at land and air borders for the first time.

The Commission expresses concern that some checks may be disproportionate and highlighted alternatives, such as enhanced police cooperation in border regions. It is conducting structured dialogues to assess these measures and promote better coordination.

Persisting operational gaps

Evaluations conducted in 2024 in countries like Poland, Croatia, and Hungary revealed both improvements and shortcomings in border management. While external border surveillance has improved, serious deficiencies remained in some Member States—particularly in Hungary and Greece—regarding fundamental rights in return procedures and underuse of IT systems like the Schengen Information System.

Only half of the countries evaluated included photos or fingerprints in security alerts, weakening collective efforts to detect threats. The Commission urges Member States to prioritise investments and align national reforms with available EU funding.

Future priorities to focus on governance, security, and digital systems

Looking ahead, the 2025–2026 Schengen Cycle will prioritise three areas:

- Consolidating governance through stronger political oversight and clearer national coordination;
- Strengthening police cooperation to address transnational threats using a "whole-of-route" approach;
- Accelerating digitalisation of border management and visa systems to ensure timely and effective roll-out.

The Commission called on the Schengen Council to endorse these priorities at its next meeting in June 2025.

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