

# Bulgaria and Romania Join Schengen Area



**euclid**

European Law Forum: Prevention • Investigation • Prosecution

**Anna Pinggen**

**News**

On 30 December 2023, the Council reached a unanimous [decision](#) with Bulgaria and Romania to eliminate air and maritime internal border controls as of 31 March 2024, marking their partial integration into the Schengen area. This measure means that travelers will no longer face checks when crossing internal air and sea borders between these countries and the rest of the Schengen zone, aligning this change with the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) seasonal schedule adjustment. A decision on the removal of checks at internal land borders is still pending and expected to be made by the Council in 2024.

Since their accession to the EU, Bulgaria and Romania have been progressively implementing the Schengen legal framework, with a particular focus on managing external borders, enhancing police cooperation, and utilizing the Schengen Information System (SIS). In 2011, the European [Commission deemed both countries ready](#) to join the Schengen area, based on their compliance with the necessary conditions for membership:

- Adhering to the Schengen acquis;
- Managing external borders on behalf of the Schengen zone;
- Issuing uniform Schengen visas;
- Effectively participating in law enforcement cooperation and the SIS.

National short-stay visas issued by Bulgaria and Romania before the integration date will retain their validity. These visas will allow for transit or stays in other Member States for up to 90 days within any 180-day period, as per Decision No 565/2014/EU, provided that these states have agreed to recognize such visas for these purposes.

Bulgaria's and Romania's full entry into the Schengen zone had been blocked particularly by Austria fearing an increase of illegal immigration. In early December 2023, Austria agreed to the lifting of air and maritime borders as a precursor to the opening of land borders.

## AUTHOR

**Anna Pinggen** 

Researcher

Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law

---

Published in  
2023, Vol. 18(4) *euclid* p 312  
ISSN: 1862-6947  
<https://euclid.eu>

---



---

## About euclid

euclid is the leading journal which regularly informs about current developments in European criminal and "criminative" law.

All news items are freely accessible at: <https://euclid.eu/news/>

Stay informed by emailing to [euclid-subscribe@csl.mpg.de](mailto:euclid-subscribe@csl.mpg.de) to receive alerts for new releases of issues.

The project is co-financed by the Union Anti-Fraud Programme (UAFP), managed by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**