

# Commission Report on the Functioning of the Schengen Area over the Past 5 Years

## News

**Thomas Wahl**

Ahead of the newly created Schengen Forum (→ separate news item), the Commission published a report on 25.11.2020 on the [implementation of the Schengen acquis rules and the functioning of the Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism](#) between 2015 and 2019. The current Schengen Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanism is operational since 2015; as a peer review tool, it aims to ensure an effective, consistent and transparent application of the Schengen rules.

The Commission report includes the following:

- An outline of the Schengen evaluation process and the actions taken within the First Multiannual Evaluation Programme (2015-2019);
- The main findings and progress made during the First Multiannual Evaluation Programme;
- Specific finding in the various policy fields of the Schengen regulations, e.g. external border management, police cooperation, the Schengen Information System (SIS), and data protection;
- Shortcomings identified when having carried out the multiannual evaluation programme.

The report also proposed a number of operational measures to improve the Schengen evaluation mechanism, *inter alia*:

- Simplifying internal workflows and set benchmarks to reduce the length;
- Developing new trainings in the area of visa policy;
- Updating checklists to focus on the main elements that may affect the Schengen area as a whole;
- Making more strategic use of unannounced evaluations and thematic evaluations;
- Improving synergies and cooperation with EU agencies and national quality control mechanisms;
- Elaborating and up-dating catalogues with best practices;
- Adopting the annual report to facilitate political discussion.

Based on the results of more than 200 evaluations carried out between 2015 and 2019, the report finds that Schengen states implemented the Schengen rules adequately overall, with serious deficiencies identified only in a limited number of countries and promptly corrected. However, recurring deficiencies (e.g. insufficient number of staff, technological and regulatory barriers) and diverging practices remained and could ultimately affect the integrity and functioning of the Schengen area.

According to the Commission, a higher level of harmonisation should be ensured in the coming years. The effectiveness of the evaluation mechanism must be enhanced while some shortcomings could be solved by

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operational measures, others need legislative changes. The Commission finally stresses that it will establish a more regular and structured political dialogue among the actors involved in the functioning of the Schengen area, which is considered a key factor to make the Schengen area stronger and more resilient.

The tabled report will feed into the discussion of the Schengen Forum that aims to discuss the future Schengen Strategy. The Commission has announced that it will present the new strategy for a stronger Schengen area in mid-2021.

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