

Commission Strategy for a Stronger and More Resilient Schengen Area



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European Law Forum: Prevention • Investigation • Prosecution

Anna Pinggen

News

On 2 June 2021, the Commission presented its new [strategy for a fully functioning and resilient Schengen area](#). With this strategy, the Commission is aiming to make the Schengen area – the largest visa-free zone in the world – stronger and more resilient, accentuating that the free flow of people, goods, and services is at the heart of the European Union. The Commission acknowledged that the Schengen area has been under a lot of pressure in recent years, facing new challenges stemming from the 2015 refugee crisis, persistent terrorist threats and terrorist attacks on European soil, and the Covid-19 pandemic. These new challenges have led some Member States to reinstate internal border controls.

In order to successfully face these challenges and continue reaping the benefits that the Schengen area provides, the strategy aims to achieve the following goals:

(1) Improve the EU's external border management

The Commission will present:

- A proposal for a Regulation on digitalisation of the visa procedure;
- A proposal for a Regulation on digitalisation of travel documents and facilitation of travel by 2023;
- A recommendation to Member States on the exchange of information/on situational awareness to be used in bilateral and multilateral agreements with third countries (model provisions).

(2) Reinforce the Schengen area internally

The Commission will:

- Improve police cooperation with an EU Police Cooperation Code that will provide a coherent EU legal framework to ensure that law enforcement authorities have equal access to information held by other Member States;
- Reinforce the automated exchange of important data categories relating to Prüm Council Decisions;
- Expand the use of advance passenger information (API) to also cover intra-Schengen flights;
- Update the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) Handbook.

(3) Increase preparedness and enhance governance

The Commission will:

- Continue to organise regular Schengen Forums in order to discuss the situation of Schengen at the political level and to foster continued reflection and cooperation;

AUTHOR

Anna Pinggen 

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

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- Relaunch the adoption of the “State of Schengen Report”;
- Propose an amendment to the Schengen Borders Code by the end of 2021 in order to address the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis (e.g., the reintroduction of internal border controls) and to deal with any future Schengen-wide challenges.
- Codify the guidelines and recommendations developed in relation to COVID-19 in the Practical Handbook for Border Guards.

The Commission calls upon the Council:

- To take the necessary steps for Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia to become part of the Schengen area without controls at the internal borders of Member States.

On the same day the new strategy was presented, the Commission also [proposed a regulation on the establishment and operation of an evaluation and monitoring mechanism to verify application of the Schengen acquis and repealing Regulation \(EU\) No 1053/2013](#), in order to foster common trust in implementation of the Schengen rules.

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