

EP Sees Functioning of Schengen Area Critically

Thomas Wahl



News

On 30 May 2018, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution on the first annual report on the functioning of the Schengen area](#).

The resolution first points out the progresses made in strengthening the Schengen area over the last several years:

- The creation of the European Border and Coast Guard;
- The introduction of mandatory, systematic checks against relevant databases at the external borders on entry and exit for third-country nationals and for EU nationals;
- The new entry and exit registration system.

However, MEPs also identified a series of critical shortcomings and deficiencies. In particular, they criticize the continued reintroduction of internal border checks, as this undermines the basic principles of the Schengen area. They hold that the prolongation of internal border controls is not in line with existing rules, deeming it unnecessary and disproportional. The construction of physical barriers, including fences, between Member States is also considered incompatible with fundamental Schengen principles.

MEPs, *inter alia*, call for the following actions to be taken:

- Addressing the identified, critical shortcomings without delay in order to return to the normal functioning of Schengen without internal border controls;
- Reforming the Schengen Information System on the following issues: protection of children who are at risk or missing; the immediate, obligatory exchange of information on terrorism; and the mandatory exchange of information on return decisions;
- Allocating sufficient resources to the external borders through staffing, equipment, and expertise in order to ensure a high level of control while fully respecting fundamental rights – including matters relating to international protection and non-refoulement;
- Developing a permanent, robust, and effective Union response in search and rescue operations at sea to prevent the loss of life;
- Collecting information and statistical data more efficiently by EU member state authorities on how resources are managed at the national level and on capabilities related to border control;
- Ensuring swift and effective return procedures in Member States, with full respect for fundamental rights under humane and dignified conditions;
- Ensuring adequate infrastructure, accommodation, and living conditions for all asylum seekers.

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The resolution also reiterates that Bulgaria and Romania are ready to join the Schengen area. The Council is now called on to approve their accession.

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