

# SECURITY UNION

## Closing the information gap

The current EU information systems for security, border and migration management do not work together – they are fragmented, complex and difficult to operate. This risks information slipping through the net, endangering the EU's internal security and the safety of European citizens.

In recent years, the EU has been working to make the various information systems at EU level interoperable — that is, able to exchange data and share information so that authorities and responsible officials have the information they need, when and where they need it. In December 2017, the Commission proposed new tools to make EU information systems work better together in a smarter and more targeted way. The tools will make it easier for border guards and police officers to have complete, reliable and accurate information needed for their duties, and to detect people who are hiding criminal or terrorist activities behind false identities.

### WHAT IS INTEROPERABILITY?



**Interoperability** means the ability of information systems to talk to each other. It is about a targeted and intelligent way of using existing data to best effect, without creating new databases or changing the access rights to existing information systems.

### HOW WILL INTEROPERABILITY WORK?

The interoperability tools include four new elements which will allow border guards, police officers, visa and immigration officials to have faster, more reliable and complete information on people in front of them:

- ▶ **European search portal** – a one-stop shop carrying out a simultaneous search of multiple EU information systems, in line with the users' access rights.  

- ▶ **Shared biometric matching service** – a tool cross-checking biometric data (fingerprints and facial images) and detecting links between information on the same person in different EU information systems.  

- ▶ **Common identity repository** – a shared container of biographical and biometric information, such as name and date of birth, stored in relevant systems about non-EU citizens.  

- ▶ **Multiple-identity detector** - automatic alert system detecting multiple or fraudulent identities.  


**Effective identity checks** – clear rules for police officers to query the identity data of third- country nationals in the common identity repository to identify a person during a police check.

**Access for law enforcement** – streamlined rules for police officers to access information on third-country nationals in non-law-enforcement databases (such as the Entry-Exit System, Eurodac and the future ETIAS) where necessary to prevent, investigate, detect or prosecute terrorism and other serious criminal offences, in full respect of fundamental rights and data protection and without broadening the scope of access beyond current rules.



The EU Agency responsible for the management of information systems, eu-LISA, is set to play a crucial role in the technical implementation and the development of interoperability of EU information systems. In order to enable eu-LISA to bring this work forward, the Agency's mandate has been significantly strengthened.

## WHAT SYSTEMS ARE INVOLVED?

The EU information systems that will become interoperable and able to work together, include three already existing systems and three future systems, to be developed in the coming years.

### Existing systems:



**Schengen Information System (SIS)** a broad range of alerts on people and objects related to criminal activity, terrorism and missing persons.



**Eurodac** - fingerprint database of asylum applicants and third-country nationals irregularly crossing EU borders or irregularly staying in the EU.



**Visa Information System (VIS)** information on short-stay visas. In May 2018, the Commission proposed to extend the scope of the system to include long-stay documents.

### New systems proposed by the Commission but not yet developed:



**Entry/Exit System (EES)** - electronic register of entry and exit information of third-country nationals crossing EU borders.



**European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)** - pre-travel security and irregular migration screening of visa-exempt non-EU nationals.



**European Criminal Record Information System (ECRIS-TCN system)** system for exchanging information on non-EU nationals convicted in the European Union.

## STRONG DATA PROTECTION SAFEGUARDS

Privacy and security are two sides of the same coin. The proposed measures will **not** lead to the interconnectivity of the individual systems. Each system will keep its specific purpose limitation, access and data retention rules. The proposed measures will also **not** lead to an increase in the collection of new data. They provide a targeted and intelligent way of using existing information held in EU systems to best effect.