

EU Enlargement and Checks at the Internal Borders

On 1 May 2004 10 new states became members of the EU. For Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Malta and Cyprus this meant the successful conclusion of their integration into the European Union. Accession to the EU however did not automatically entail full integration of the New Member States into the Schengen Area. The most visible sign of this is the fact that border controls remain in place at the internal borders towards the EU Member States.

The Schengen Acquis

The abolition of checks at the internal borders is subject to the implementation of the so called Schengen Acquis, a set of rules and regulations covering control at the external borders and cross border police cooperation at the internal borders. The Schengen Acquis consists of:

- The Schengen Agreement of 1985
- The Convention on the implementation of the Schengen Agreement of 1990
- A set of decisions adopted by the Schengen Executive Committee
- The EU Border Code adopted in March 2006 that replaces the Common Manual
- The Common Consular Instructions for the issuing of Visa
- The SIRENE Manual that regulates the operation of national SIS contact points.

Control of Implementation

The Schengen Acquis is complemented by the Schengen Evaluation Reports that issue recommendations to the individual Member States on how to improve their implementation of the Schengen Acquis. The evaluation is carried out in a peer evaluation system where Member States take consecutive turns in evaluating the other Member States. The reports are dealt with in a special intergovernmental committee within the EU Council. The results of the Evaluation reports are not published.

The Process

During the accession process of the New Member States the Schengen Acquis was divided into two Categories: Items in Category 1, such as the application of the Common Consular Instructions, have to be implemented immediately after accession but do not affect the suspension of the free movement of persons. The implementation of items in Category 2, such as the application of the EU Border Code, and the participation in the SIS will be subject to a decision in the EU Council.

Lifting Borders in 2007?

The Council will take its decision on the basis of an evaluation of the ability of the New Member States to implement the Schengen Acquis. These implementation visits have started in 2006 and are due to be completed in early 2007. The Council is set to decide on the lifting of the internal borders in Autumn 2007.

Support for the New Member States

The New Member States receive support from the EU in order to implement the Schengen Acquis. The EU's Budget for 2004-2007 contains a specific title of 860 Million Euro that is available to help the 10 New Member States to achieve 'Schengen Standards' with respect to:

- Police Cooperation
- Data Protection
- Visa Handling
- Protection of External Borders (Land, Sea and Air)

SIS II Key Requirement for Enlargement

The key challenge for the EU to make the enlargement of the Schengen Area possible is to develop the second generation of the Schengen Information System SIS in time. The current SIS does not have the technical capacity to handle the increased number of Member States. The SIS II is still under development.

Where does EuroCOP Stand?

EuroCOP has followed the process towards the enlargement of the Schengen Area from 2004 onwards with a series of conferences. EuroCOP's position towards the finalisation of the enlargement has been clearly outlined by the EuroCOP Committee in November 2005:

The Social Dimension

EuroCOP has highlighted the vast gap between the high professional standards introduced by the Schengen regime and the social and economic situation of a significant number of police officers in the EU.

Standards and Integrity of Police in Europe

Police Services in a number of EU Member States still are characterised by the lack of:

- an adequate level of income
- basic provisions for social protection and health care
- internal regulations that protect police officers from arbitrary decisions of superiors
- transparent promotion schemes that work on the basis of professional merit
- a framework for the information, consultation and participation of staff in decisions affecting the police service

Common Professional

The EuroCOP Committee has concluded that the severe social situation of police officers in a number of EU Member States is not only detrimental to the integrity of police services, it is also a severe threat to the success of cross border police cooperation within the Schengen Area.

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Social Standards

EuroCOP has called upon the EU and its Member States to address these issues by establishing a social dialogue on the European level and by agreeing common minimum standards based on the European Code of Police Ethics.

Key dates in the Schengen Enlargement Process during 2006 and 2007

06 / 2006:	Interim Report to the Council
12 / 2006	Results of Evaluation Reports to the JHA Council
04 / 2007	Final Report to the Council
09 / 2007	Council Decisions on Lifting Borders