

Schengen Information System: putting into effect of the remaining provisions of the Schengen acquis in Bulgaria and Romania

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The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted, following the consultation procedure, the report by Monica MACOVEI (ECR, RO) on the draft Council decision on the putting into effect of the remaining provisions of the Schengen acquis relating to the Schengen Information System in the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament approve the Council draft.

The draft Council Decision aims to lift the remaining restrictions concerning the use of the Schengen Information System (SIS) by Bulgaria and Romania. The checks performed by Bulgaria and Romania at their external borders and in their territory should become more effective by issuing SIS alerts for the purposes of refusing entry or stay and by executing such alerts introduced by other Member States.

As recalled in the explanatory memorandum accompanying the report, in June 2011 the European Parliament gave its approval for Bulgaria and Romania to join the Schengen area, stating in a legislative resolution that Bulgaria and Romania were ready to join the Schengen border check-free area.

Since 2011, the European Parliament has repeatedly called for the enlargement of the Schengen area to these two countries and has asked the Council to take the final decision authorising the abolition of internal border controls with Bulgaria and Romania.

In October 2017, the Council adopted Decision (EU) 2017/1908 concerning the application in Bulgaria and Romania of certain provisions of the Schengen *acquis* relating to the Visa Information System (VIS).

Bulgaria and Romania play a key role in surveillance operations in the Black Sea and on the Danube river. These two countries share borders with Turkey, Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which constitute important buffer zones for entry into the Schengen area. Romania is a main contributor to the logistics operations of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

In the light of these elements, the proposed Council Decision would represent a positive development in the participation of Bulgaria and Romania in the Schengen *acquis* and would enhance the level of security of the Schengen area.

In view of all above-mentioned elements, the current Council Decision aiming at lifting the remaining restrictions concerning the use of SIS by Bulgaria and Romania is a welcomed development for the participation of these two countries in the Schengen *acquis*. It will increase the level of security in the Schengen area and make the fight against serious crime and terrorism more effective.