

## Visa Information System

In May 2018, the European Commission submitted a proposal to upgrade the Visa Information System, to better respond to the evolving security and migratory challenges and improve the EU's external border management. The aim is to allow more thorough background checks on visa applicants, close security information gaps through better information exchange between Member States, and ensure full interoperability with other EU-wide databases. Parliament is expected to vote its position on this proposal during the March I plenary session.

### Background

The Visa Information System (VIS), based on [Regulation 2008/767](#) and operational since 2011, is an EU database which connects border guards at the EU's external borders with Member States' consulates across the world. It provides visa, border, asylum and migration authorities with key information on applicants for a short-stay Schengen visa, while allowing border guards to detect third-country nationals that may pose security risks. [Data](#) for 2017 show that Schengen states processed more than 16 million visa applications (6.3 % more than in 2016) and issued 14.6 million visas. In 2015, the Commission carried out an [evaluation](#) according to which the new challenges in visa, border and migration management, as well as the new opportunities provided by significant technological developments, mean the VIS requires upgrading.

### European Commission proposal

On 16 May 2018, the Commission adopted a [proposal](#) to amend the VIS regulation. The aim of the proposal is to facilitate and strengthen the security of the short-stay visa procedure by including in the VIS database a digital copy of the biodata page of the travel document, and a list of travel documents which entitle the holder to cross the external borders. Furthermore, the scope of the VIS would be extended to include long-stay visas and residence permits, while the records in the VIS system would be automatically checked against all other EU information systems for security and migration, for example [Eurodac](#), [Entry-Exit System](#), [Interpol's](#) stolen and lost travel documents database, and [ECRIS-TCN](#). Europol and law enforcement authorities would be given rapid access to the database to identify victims of crime, including children, whose fingerprints could be taken from the age of 6, instead of 12.

### European Parliament position

Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) adopted its [report](#) on the proposal on 4 February 2019. According to the report, there should be a possibility to transfer data from VIS to the Schengen Information System (SIS) as regards missing children, children at risk of gender violence and vulnerable adults. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency would have broader access to non-personal data and statistics, stored in VIS, whereas access for teams involved in returns of illegally staying third-country nationals would be restricted. The system would also be consistent with other systems, notably the European Travel Information and Authorisation System ([ETIAS](#)), and include proper safeguards when conducting specific checks and deciding on the follow-up actions, in order to protect the rights of third-country nationals and ensure the confidentiality of information. The system would become operational within a maximum of two years after the entry into force of the regulation. Moreover, the Commission would have to produce an evaluation of the VIS every two years. The report is expected to be voted during the March I plenary session, setting Parliament's position for trilogue talks.

First-reading report: [2018/0152\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: LIBE; Rapporteur: Carlos Coelho (EPP, Portugal).



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