

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0234/10
by Baroness Sarah Ludford (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Body scanners for use in airports

The European Commission is working on a report with a view to a possible regulation on the use of body scanners in European airports, which raise serious issues regarding personal privacy. Commissioner-designate Viviane Reding said in her hearing in the European Parliament that body scanners must (as well as being voluntary in Member States and involving no health implications) be a proportionate response to the threat and provide for immediate destruction of images.

But according to the leading American privacy organisation EPIC, which has based its report on documents obtained through freedom of information requests, the Transportation Security Administration, part of the US Department of Homeland Security, has included in tender specifications and vendor contracts a requirement that body scanners have the capacity to store, record and transfer images. This could lead to deeply damaging unauthorised disclosure of sensitive personal data and apparently contradicts public pledges by the US administration that images would be destroyed.

How will the Commission ensure, whether through regulation or through physical specifications, that any body scanners used in Europe really will bar the storage and transfer of images? Whom is the Commission consulting with regard to data protection issues for its forthcoming report? Will the Commission pledge that any EU regulation on the use of body scanners would include a provision that the specifications for tender include a requirement that there should be no facility to store, record or transfer images?