

Tanja Fajon: "If we lose Schengen, we will lose the European project"



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Temporary internal border checks within the Schengen area have been in place for four years. MEPs are pushing for clearer conditions for their use as a measure of last resort.

Six [Schengen countries](#) - Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway and Sweden - have had internal border checks in place due to exceptional circumstances since 2015, although the current limit is two years.

Parliament wants to allow the temporary reintroduction of border controls only as a measure of last resort. MEPs want a revision of the current rules to reduce the initial period for border controls from six months to two months and to limit any extension to a maximum period of one

year, rather than the current maximum limit of two years.

Parliament formulated its position on the revision of the Schengen rules in a [resolution](#) adopted on 4 April 2019, but negotiations with the Council did not result in an agreement. Following the European elections in May, the Parliaments' position needed to be reconfirmed. This happened on 24 September when the [civil liberties committee](#) voted in favour of starting negotiations again. Before the talks can resume, MEPs will need to support it.

Learn more in our interview with [report](#) author [Tanja Fajon](#), a Slovenian member of the S&D group.

A temporary suspension of the Schengen rules has been in place in some Schengen countries for more than three years, although the limit is two. Why was this allowed to happen?

Six countries in the Schengen area have extended interior border controls beyond three years. They are using different legal grounds to extend them because there are, I would say, some grey zones in the current legislation

The current rules are clearly ambiguous. What do you see as the main areas that should be adapted and why?

We need to have very clear conditions under which countries can temporarily reintroduce border controls. We need stricter safeguards to make sure that it is really seen as a last resort.

Which circumstances would justify internal border controls?

Extraordinary situations, like major sport events or migration flows, as we experienced some years ago. Nowadays, there are no foreseeable serious threats that justify internal border controls, contrary to the claims of some EU governments.

The six Schengen countries applying internal border controls have said they will extend them: is it justified?

These prolongations are not justified and there is no evidence to prove they are. Over the last few years, national governments have pushed the limits of the current rules, extending controls for political purposes rather than out of necessity.

What are the main areas of disagreement with the European Commission and Council?

The Council has showed no flexibility in negotiations and was not willing to compromise. Despite the agreement, the main differences are what the safeguards are and the conditions for these prolongations.

I think that some Schengen countries do not wish to reform the rules since they benefit from the status quo. This is highly dangerous.

If we lose Schengen, we will lose the European project. The current situation damages our economies and makes our lives less convenient.

This interview was first published in November 2018 and updated in September 2019.

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