

PODCAST ETIAS

Voice 1: Sarah

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JINGLE to open intro to podcast

VOICE 1

You're listening to the European Parliamentary Research Service podcast on a new European Travel Information and Authorisation System.

VOICE 2

Recent terrorist attacks and uncontrolled migration flows have led the Commission to propose the introduction of a new electronic pre-screening programme for visitors intending to visit the EU.

VOICE 1

It follows the US and Canadian models, but how will it exactly work? Stay with us and we'll walk you through the proposal! **END OF JINGLE**

VOICE 2

The EU Agendas on migration and security are a direct response to the need to better secure the EU's external borders and manage migration flows. But there are still many gaps to be addressed...

VOICE 1

One such gap concerns the lack of information about a specific category of travellers arriving in the Schengen area: third-country nationals who are exempt from holding a visa. But who makes up this group?

VOICE 2

Well, currently, citizens of around 60 countries around the world do not need a visa to enter the EU, that is about 30 million people... and it may rise to 39 million in 2020, as the EU concludes more and more visa liberalisation dialogues with third countries. So, how are these travellers screened when they enter the EU?

VOICE 1

Well, both visa-obliged and visa-exempt travellers are subject to border controls when entering the Schengen area and need to comply with the conditions for short-term stay. These include not being a threat to public order and holding valid travel documents.

VOICE 2

However, in the case of visa-exempt nationals, there is nothing like the advanced transfer of detailed information required for the visa application procedure for travellers obliged to hold a visa. What does this mean?

VOICE 1

Well, essentially, it means that border agents don't know much about them and the security, migration or public health risks they could pose...

VOICE 2

This is especially true for travellers arriving in the EU by land, with a passport as their only travel document. So very often border agents need to trust their own intuition when deciding whether to allow or refuse them access into the Schengen area.

VOICE 1

In 2015, nearly 300.000 non-EU citizens wanting to enter the EU were forced to turn back, mainly because they were thought to pose a migration and/or security risk. So, what is the Commission planning to do?

VOICE 2

The short answer is ETIAS. Want the long answer? Stay with us!

MUSIC JINGLE

VOICE 1

In April 2016, the Commission proposed a new system for registering the entry and exit of non-EU nationals (including from visa-exempt third countries) crossing the external borders of the EU-28.

VOICE 2

With the new system, manual stamping of passports at border checks would be replaced by registration in a database and travellers would have their data verified, their picture or fingerprint taken and they would need to answer a set of questions.

VOICE 1

If you have travelled to the US recently you were probably required to fill in an ESTA application before crossing the ocean... In fact, the US, Canada and Australia all have similar systems in place, but what changes would the new European system introduce? Let's take a closer look...

VOICE 2

In terms of its architecture, ETIAS would consist of an information system for processing applications, a central unit to manage the data stored in the application files and national units responsible for making the risk assessment and making individual decisions on specific applications.

VOICE 1

Before travelling to the Schengen area, all travellers would need to fill in an online application form and give information on their biographical and passport data, criminal record, etc.

VOICE 2

A central system would then check these data against security databases, such as Europol, the Schengen Information System and Eurodac, in order to grant or refuse travel authorisation to the EU.

VOICE 1

Without a valid ETIAS authorisation, travellers wouldn't be allowed to board a plane or enter the Schengen area by sea or land and, according to the Schengen Borders Code, border guards will always have the final word...

VOICE 2

Europol would play a big role in ensuring proper screening of applicants, and will also be granted access to the ETIAS central system for the prevention, detection and investigation of terrorist offences and other serious crime.

VOICE 1

But the new system won't come for free... according to the Commission, developing ETIAS could cost around 212 million Euros, and operating it, another 85 million a year... So, how have MEPs and Member States received the proposal? Let's find out! **MUSIC JINGLE**

VOICE 2

The European Parliament has long recognised the need to improve screening of third-country nationals intending to travel to the EU, provided this is properly explained to citizens and the right balance is struck between security and data privacy.

VOICE 1

So rather than massive collection of data, the Parliament favours close cooperation between intelligence services... but what's been the member states' reaction?

VOICE 2

Actually, they are rather enthusiastic about the proposal and believe it may help close the information gap on visa-exempt travellers. Drawing on the positive experiences in the US and Canada, they have called on the Parliament and the Council to give it the green light before the end of 2017!

VOICE 1

To pave the way for its approval, the European Commission has already carried out two feasibility studies on ETIAS, and involved experts and stakeholders in assessing how to maximise the effectiveness of the system while minimising the negative impacts on travellers, carriers, border guards and national administrations...

VOICE 2

National parliaments and the EU's advisory committees have yet to issue their opinions. But airline and tourism associations, while welcoming the proposal, have warned not to turn travelling to the EU into a bureaucratic nightmare...

VOICE 1

The proposal is now being discussed by co-legislators, including MEPs in the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs committee. If they all give it the green light, the new European Travel Information and Authorisation System could become operational by 2020.

VOICE 2

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MUSIC JINGLE TO CONCLUDE