

(English version)

Question for written answer E-005639/18
to the Commission
Judith Sargentini (Verts/ALE)
(7 November 2018)

Subject: Use of lie detectors (iBorderCtrl) at EU borders

The Commission is funding a project (iBorderCtrl) whose aim is to screen incoming travellers at EU borders by means of lie detector tests ⁽¹⁾. Using artificial intelligence, the computer system involved assesses whether a person arriving at the border is lying and whether for example the person is an illegal migrant. So far, there is absolutely no scientific evidence that this is a practicable and reliable method. Moreover, no renowned lie detector expert has worked on the project ⁽²⁾.

1. On what scientific evidence is the Commission basing this pilot project, and what is its assessment of the scientific evidence from various studies showing that lie detectors are not accurate?
2. What is done to safeguard the fundamental rights of people who are questioned using this system, and what is done with the personal data (such as the answers to the questions)?
3. What is the situation with regard to individuals who apply for asylum at the border, and what rights and remedies are available to people who are wrongly turned away at the border because border guards are guided (entirely) by the outcome of the lie detector test?

Answer given by Mr Avramopoulos on behalf of the European Commission
(13 March 2019)

Research and innovation in the field of security are only one element of a much more comprehensive approach to protecting Europeans. As the EU works to improve its border management, the Commission is also investing in research about how to make border controls quicker and more efficient.

iBorderCtrl is an ongoing research project under EU Horizon 2020 research programme. The project aims at testing new technologies in controlled border management scenarios that could potentially increase the efficiency of the EU's external border management, ensuring faster processing for bona fide travellers and quicker detection of illegal activities. As such, it is not a pilot project, targeting the actual implementation of a working system with real customers, but aims to deliver a prototype demonstration. It is up to the Member States to eventually endorse further developments.

The Commission gives highest priority to ethics and respect of fundamental rights in EU funded research, which must comply with established ethical principles and applicable law in full respect of all EU Charter of Fundamental Rights provisions. Particular attention is paid to privacy and data protection as well as the right to asylum and the right of an effective remedy. The ethical aspects of the project were evaluated by independent experts, and their recommendations were fully implemented. The project has therefore appointed an external ethics advisor and a detailed ethical plan has been integrated in the project activities.

The project's plan is to test the system at border crossing points in realistic conditions, but the system is not used for border checks. All travellers will cross the borders using the currently established systems and procedures. Some of those who have passed are then selected at random and invited to join the trial on a voluntary basis. The volunteers are informed how their personal data will be used and are asked to sign an informed consent prior to their participation. Their personal data are not stored in any operational or law enforcement database and are securely gathered, anonymised, stored and then destroyed immediately after the evaluation of the system performance.

⁽¹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article_en.cfm?_sp=75a4f944-1983-4eee-971d-b03b2c5a02c7.1541419266526&artid=49726
⁽²⁾ <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/eu-zet-omstreden-ai-leugendetector-in-bij-grenscontrole~b169bb03/>