

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0152/04
by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Collection of biometric data at 'Eleftherios Venizelos' airport, their processing by an external partner and the decision of the Greek Authority for the Protection of Personal Data

The Greek airport of 'Eleftherios Venizelos' is taking part in a pilot programme to collect biometric data from airline passengers. The programme is funded by the European Union and the other participants are the International Air Transport Association, Milan airport and Alitalia. In a recent decision, the Greek Authority for the Protection of Personal Data ruled that the collection and processing of biometric data was illegal, even on a voluntary basis, and prohibited the continuation of the programme.

1. Is it possible for the European Union to fund such programmes without the prior approval of the data protection authorities in the countries concerned, in this case Greece and Italy?
2. Does the Commission intend to withdraw financial and political support for such programmes immediately since the decision by the Greek Authority for the Protection of Personal Data has created a new legal framework for EU decisions on checking the identity of European citizens by means of biometric data?