

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2929/04
by Barbara Kudrycka (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Schengen cooperation

The Member States which joined the European Union in 2004 were the first to have to meet extensive requirements as regards protection of the EU's external borders. During the accession negotiations, these efforts were highly commended by the EU, including the Commission. Since 1 May 2004, ten new states have been participating in Schengen cooperation. However, the main obstacle to full participation in joint actions by the new Member States is the lack of access to the Schengen Information System. This is making it difficult to meet mutual treaty obligations as regards legal assistance in criminal matters (e.g. the European arrest warrant), police cooperation, the common visa policy (the new Member States are not allowed to issue the uniform Schengen visa), and, most important of all, it is excessively prolonging the maintenance of controls at the EU's internal frontiers. In 2003, the Commission and the Member States set the end of 2006 as the deadline for the introduction of the second generation Schengen Information System. Now there is talk of postponing it until 1 May 2007.

What steps will the Commission take to ensure that the original deadline of 31 December 2006 is met for the introduction of SIS II? How will it ensure that by that date the new Member States' IT systems are integrated into SIS II and data transferred from the old system to the new? What instruments are being used to coordinate work on the development of IT systems and on mutual evaluation - within the Council - of compliance with the Schengen requirements, so that the Council can take a reasoned decision to end controls at the EU's internal frontiers by the end of 2006?

For the purposes of mutual evaluation, will the Commission provide the Council with the favourable reports and assessments by EU experts concerning controls at the EU's external borders where these coincide with national EU frontiers?

Will the Commission make use in its information strategy of the assessments, based on objective indicators such as CIREFI, pointing to the current high level of protection of the EU's external borders in the East?

Regrettably, press reports are continuing to perpetuate the myth that the new Member States are failing to exercise proper controls at common frontiers. Surely a proper Commission information policy should not only encourage recognition of the efforts made by the new Member States to develop external border control systems, but should also commend their positive effects.