Asylum: deal to update EU fingerprinting database

• EURODAC to include more data on asylum seekers and irregular migrants
• Safety of refugee children to be improved
• Europol access to EURODAC made more efficient

It will be easier for migration and asylum authorities to identify persons entering or staying irregularly in the EU, under new rules informally agreed with EU Council.

Updated rules aiming to reinforce the EURODAC system, designed to store and search data on asylum applicants and irregular migrants, were agreed on Tuesday by Parliament and Council negotiators.

The new system would help immigration and asylum authorities to better control irregular immigration to the EU, detect secondary movements (migrants moving from the country in which they first arrived to seek protection elsewhere) and facilitate their readmission and return to their countries of origin.

It will also improve the safety of refugee children. At least 10 000 migrant and refugee children have gone missing since arriving in Europe, according to Europol.

Parliament and Council negotiators agreed on the following reforms:

• More data: in addition to fingerprints, the facial images and alphanumerical data (name, ID or passport number) of asylum seekers and irregular migrants will also be stored.
• **Fingerprinting of minors:** the age for obtaining fingerprints and facial images of minors will be lowered from 14 to 6 years, to help identify and trace missing children and establish family links.

Force should never be used on minors to take fingerprints or facial images. However, as a last resort, and where permitted by relevant EU or national law, a “proportionate degree of coercion” may be applied to minors, while ensuring respect for their dignity and physical integrity.

• **Europol access:** the EU police agency Europol will be able to query the database in a more efficient way in order to detect and prevent terrorist offences and other serious crimes.

The negotiators also reached a preliminary agreement that data should be registered in the EURODAC system before a decision on admission is made through the resettlement procedure. The technical details of this part of the agreement still need to be discussed further.

**Quote**

Rapporteur Monica Macovei (ECR, RO) said: "Today’s provisional agreement will ensure that people do not submit asylum applications in multiple countries, while respecting the commitments to EU and international law. It will also address fears of threats to internal security by registering and storing the data of irregular migrants. Obtaining the fingerprints and facial images of minors aged 6 years old and above will be crucial to help identify and trace missing children and establish family links, while preventing them from ending up in the hands of human traffickers and smugglers."

**Next steps**

The agreed text now needs to be formally approved by the Civil Liberties Committee, Parliament as a whole and the Council of the EU before entering into force.

The parts of this legislation relating to other instruments of the Common European Asylum System, such as the so-called Dublin rules, will need to be updated once a reform of those
instruments is agreed.

Background

The proposal for an update of the EURODAC regulation was part of the first package of proposals to reform the Common European Asylum System put forward by the European Commission in May 2016.

The EURODAC database holds and makes it possible to compare fingerprints of asylum seekers in the EU. It was established in 2003 in relation to the Dublin system, to enable EU member states to determine if an asylum seeker had already applied for asylum in another country. All EU counties, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland use it.

Further information
Procedure file:
EP Research Service briefing: Eurodac system (March 2017)

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The update of the EU fingerprinting database will help authorities better control irregular immigration to the EU. © AP Images/EU-EP