

MEPs give green light to Croatia's Schengen accession

- Croatia fulfils the necessary conditions
- Council should now decide to lift border controls
- Respect of fundamental rights at external borders should be continuously assessed

On Tuesday, Civil Liberties Committee MEPs approved the lifting of internal border controls between the Schengen area and Croatia.

In a report adopted with 45 in favour, 8 against, and 5 abstaining, the Civil Liberties Committee approves Croatia's full membership of the Schengen area. On 9 December 2021, the Council [confirmed](#) that Croatia has fulfilled all the necessary conditions for the full application of Schengen rules. Now, MEPs urge the Council to continue with the process and adopt a final decision to lift border controls.

Fundamental rights must be respected

To ensure the respect of fundamental rights at EU external borders, MEPs urge Croatia to inform the Parliament and Council of its action plan for managing EU external borders, and particularly of an independent mechanism for monitoring the actions of police officers. Also, MEPs want the Commission to include in its Schengen evaluation programme evaluations of external border management, including fundamental rights aspects. They note that there have been allegations of mistreatment and pushbacks of migrants at the external borders, and encourage the Commission to include on-site visits to Croatia in its evaluations.

Background

The European Parliament has long advocated for the completion of the Schengen free-travel area, which today includes 26 states (all EU member states except Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland and Romania, plus non-EU members Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein).

In 2018, MEPs [stated](#) that Croatia should be admitted into Schengen as soon as it fulfils the necessary criteria. On 18 October 2022, they also [voiced their support](#) for admitting Bulgaria and Romania into Schengen without delay.

Quote

After the vote, rapporteur [Paulo Rangel \(EPP, PT\)](#) said: "Croatia underwent the most comprehensive evaluation for Schengen membership of any EU country so far. It has met 281 recommendations in 8 areas of the Schengen acquis. The Commission and the Council have confirmed the country's readiness to fully apply the Schengen rules. LIBE Committee fully agrees: lifting internal border controls must happen by the end of this year!"

Next steps

The full house of the European Parliament will now discuss the report. The final decision to lift internal controls can then be taken by the Council of the EU, acting unanimously.

Further information

[Procedure file](#)

[Paulo Rangel \(EPP, PT\)](#)

[Draft report, amendments tabled in committee](#)

[EP written question to the Commission on Croatia's border monitoring mechanism](#)

[Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs](#)

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