

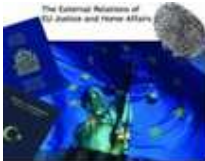


Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Sectoral Committee
Weekly Update
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Contents



Children's rights: public consultation Pg 2



Schengen Pg 3 – 4



TFTP Agreement Pg 4





Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

Commission's public consultation on children's rights

"Children often find themselves in difficult situations in today's world – whether as internet users, migrants or as witnesses at a trial. Their rights must be protected and promoted"
- Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship.

Today (11th June 2010) the European Commission launched a public consultation on a new EU children's rights strategy. Protecting the rights of children in daily life requires a different approach than for adults. To know what their rights are and to have them respected, an EU-wide strategy can provide good guidance and useful input. The EU and its Member States want to ensure that children get care and protection and that their voice is heard. The answers will be used to find out how EU policies can do more to promote children's rights.

In 2006 the Commission launched a strategy on the rights of the child to make sure EU policies promote children's rights. Today's public consultation aims to improve and find new potential actions for the re-launch of the strategy for the period 2011-2014.

The consultation focuses on specific areas – identified by people working in the field at the Forum for the Rights of the Child – where children might face problems such as:

- Child-friendly justice and children's participation in the justice system (as witnesses, for example);
- Justice policies safeguarding children's rights, such as in the framework of family mediation;
- Protecting vulnerable groups of children (victims of violence, sexual exploitation or trafficking, or children living in poverty);
- Child participation in the development of policies affecting children.

The Commission will publish a report summarising all the contributions received through this consultation. It will use the results when drafting a new Communication on the Rights of the Child to cover the period 2011-2014.

In parallel with this public consultation, the Commission is conducting a study especially targeted at getting feedback from children themselves (such as through focus groups), which will be published in October.

The consultation is open until 20 August 2010 and may be accessed at:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/consulting_public/news_consulting_public_en.htm



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Schengen: the EU celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Area

On June 14 the European Union celebrates the 25 anniversary of the Schengen Agreement providing for a gradual abolishment of controls at the common borders.

The Schengen agreement was signed on the 14 June 1985 by Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The agreement, and the subsequent convention adopted in 1990 to implement it, agreed to abolish systematic border controls between the countries, allowing free movement of persons. With the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999, the Schengen cooperation was integrated into the EU legal and institutional framework.

The Schengen Convention abolished checks at the internal borders of the signatory states and created a single external border with common rules on external border controls, a common visa policy, police and judicial cooperation and the establishment of the Schengen Information System (SIS). Schengen also inspired to look to a future of common policies protecting our collective security. It drove collective action against criminal activity with EU police and judicial cooperation policies such as information exchange systems, agencies like Frontex, Europol and Eurojust. Financial solidarity has also taken a concrete form through the External Borders Fund.

The freedom of movement between national borders and the abolition of controls at internal frontiers is fundamental for the development of the internal market.

The Schengen area without border controls currently consists of 25 Schengen Member States i.e. the EU countries Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia as well as the three associated non EU countries, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus only partially apply the Schengen acquis at the moment and checks are therefore still carried out at the borders with these three Member States.

The free movement is guaranteed on a territory with 42,673 km of external sea and 7,721 km of land borders, covering 25 countries and 400 million citizens.

More info:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/10/249&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

Schengen: A step towards lifting border controls with Bulgaria and Romania

Bulgaria and Romania have moved a step closer to having their border checks with the borderless Schengen area lifted. On Thursday 10th June 2010 the European Parliament approved the Council decision that the two states comply with data security requirements for joining the "Schengen Information System" (SIS) border control database used by border control agents to exchange information in the fight against crime and illegal immigration.

The report by Carlos Coelho from the Civil Liberties Committee approving the Council decision, which is the first step towards lifting the border checks, was approved in committee with 36 votes in favour, 1 against and 3 abstentions.

The report will be debated on Tuesday 15th June, and put to a plenary vote on Wednesday 16th June, in Strasbourg.

More info:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/024-75791-161-06-24-902-20100610IPR75790-10-06-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm

EU-US Agreement on the Terrorist Financing Tracking Programme

Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner responsible for Home Affairs, gave a statement to the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament on the state of play of the negotiations of the draft agreement on the the Terrorist Financing Tracking Programme (TFTP) Agreement.

The Commissioner said that the Commission is very close to finalising a draft EU-US TFTP Agreement adding that the draft Agreement is very much in line with the Council Mandate and takes account of the key points of the Parliament's Resolution.

The Commissioner said that the draft Agreement has considerable improvements compared to the interim agreement that was rejected in February. Amongst others, it:

- contains significantly stronger data protection guarantees;
- provides for rectification, erasure or blocking of data in the case of inaccurate data;
- sets out a comprehensive mechanism according to which Europol will verify that US requests for data are within the mandate and that they meet the conditions of the Agreement;
- contains significantly more detailed prerequisites for sending lead information (and not the data as such) to third countries;
- provides for a possible EU mechanism on TFTP;
- provides for the Commission to appoint an independent EU person who will monitor the activities of the "scrutineers" and the independent auditors.