



EU Proposes Schengen Rules

The European Commission has recently put forward proposals to strengthen the free movement of the thousands of EU citizens travelling passport-free within the Schengen Area.

The Schengen Area represents a territory with no internal borders. It is made up of 25 European countries, most of which are EU Member States, plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. Within the EU two Member States - the United Kingdom and Ireland - have opted out of the Schengen Agreement; while Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus are not yet fully-fledged members.

The new proposals were prompted when Denmark, France and Italy took action to reverse visa-free travel. They provide for a stronger EU-based evaluation and monitoring system to verify and ensure the correct application of the Schengen rules, and for a more structured mechanism that could allow for the temporary reintroduction of internal border controls in case of a serious threat to

public policy or internal security.

Under the proposals, a Member State:

- needs prior permission from the European Commission and an expert team from the other Schengen Area States for planned introduction of border controls;
- can take unilateral action to reintroduce border checks for a maximum period of five days when faced with unforeseen emergencies. An EU-level decision would then be required for an extension.

The proposed Schengen rules strike a balance between the right to the free movement of EU citizens and their family members and the sovereignty of the Schengen Area States to introduce border checks when necessary. The European Commission will be undertaking different monitoring visits in the context of the Schengen evaluation mechanism and will report on the outcome of these visits to the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

For further information MEUSAC may be contacted by email on info.meusac@gov.mt or by calling on 22003300