

SCHENGEN – ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS

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Dubrovnik, Croatia

- Conclusions -

- Free movement - of goods, services, capital and people - is at the core of European integration. Without them, the single market cannot function.
- The Schengen area is the essence of the EU's progress and the lack of internal border controls is the essence of Schengen.
- In the last 3 years, Schengen has faced a series of unprecedented challenges in its history, generating pressure on the functioning of the Schengen mechanism itself.
- Faced with internal and external challenges, significant efforts, many of which ongoing, have been made in order to find the appropriate answers - improving the Schengen Borders Code, strengthening EU information systems and making them interoperable, establishing new information systems to address deficiencies in external border management, reforming the Common European Asylum System.
- Many have continued to express readiness to sacrifice the achievement of free movement as a response to a failure to find a better common approach in policies such as security and migration.
- From 2015, free movement without border controls has been restricted in some Member States. The introduction - and even more so the perpetuation - of internal border controls, as well as the indefinite postponement of the full accession of candidate countries, undermines the solidarity between Member States and has a negative effect on the economy and on EU citizens.
- There must be shared responsibility for common borders, and trust between Member States is a fundamental aspect in this process. Only together, in an inclusive legal framework, we can efficiently tackle new security risks and threats.
- In the long run, the only viable solution is the strengthening of external borders, not the maintenance or (re)introduction of more borders that separates and divides states and citizens.

- The lifting of internal border controls and the full accession of candidate countries are necessary to create a stable security environment and to consolidate the European project. Removing these last obstacles will reduce the disparity between regions and encourage cohesion.
- Maintaining or reintroducing internal border control is related to direct operational and investment costs for cross-border workers, tourists, road freight transporters and public administrations, with crippling effects on the economies of the Member States. The estimations of the costs linked with the reintroduction of border controls could range between EUR 0.05 billion and EUR 20 billion in one-off costs and EUR 2 billion in annual operating costs.
- Romania and Bulgaria met all the technical criteria for accession in 2011, as confirmed on multiple occasions by the Council in the conclusions and verified by the Commission and Parliament. Romania and Bulgaria apply most of the provisions of the Schengen acquis and act - de facto - as members. Croatia fulfilled most of the criteria and is expected to fulfil the remaining few by the end of this year. All three countries provide a significant contribution to the security of the Schengen Area.
- The opposition to the entry of Romania and Bulgaria into the Schengen area is strictly political and undermines solidarity within the Union at a time when solidarity between Member States is essential.
- Full accession of Bulgaria and Romania without delay, and of Croatia as soon as it fulfils the necessary criteria, is absolutely necessary. It will improve interoperability and the Schengen area will work better.
- As history has proven, more cohesion and more Europe is to the advantage of peace and security on the continent, to the advantage of European citizens and this is the core objective of all those who believe in European unity.