

Fingerprint search

Data files aid cross-border police cooperation

The European Commission has adopted measures that now allow law enforcement agencies across the European Union to use the Eurodac fingerprint database to fight terrorism and serious crime.

The database, the European Dactyloscopie, already gives EU nations access to the fingerprints of applicants for asylum and people who have entered the union illegally. But the new measures aim to make the database more efficient by integrating the suggestions of the European Parliament and the European Council, a commission news release stated.

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— Jacques Barrot
European Commission Vice President

“Problems relating to cross-border law enforcement cooperation cannot be effectively dealt with at a national level, or on the basis of bilateral arrangements between member states,” said Jacques Barrot, the commission’s vice president responsible for justice, freedom and security. “Only coordinated action at an EU level can ensure such cooperation.”

Barrot said not allowing law enforcement authorities Eurodac access to combat terrorism is a shortcoming the commission wants to correct with this proposal.



The Eurodac system protects personal data and safeguards the right to asylum.

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The release also states the commission’s measures regulate the procedures through which law enforcement authorities can consult the database and each other, and the conditions under which to make such requests. At the same time, the measures have guarantees aimed at ensuring the protection of personal data and safeguarding the right to asylum.

Even though law enforcement officials in many EU nations may access their national databases, which contain the information of applicants for international protection, it is very difficult — and burdensome — to exchange such information with other EU nations. There are several union-level methods in place to facilitate exchanges. But the new measures avoid multiple cooperation requests by identifying, directly at the EU level, the nations that hold the fingerprints in question. Comparison of fingerprints can then take place between the requesting country and the nation with the file.

The Eurodac database also allows EU nations to identify asylum applicants and people apprehended trying to illegally cross their borders. By comparing fingerprints, member states can determine whether an asylum applicant, or an illegal foreign national, has previously claimed asylum in another country, or whether an asylum applicant entered a union nation unlawfully. □

This article includes information from the European Commission Web site.