

**Press Release - Carlos Coelho**  
**29.11.2011**

It has been approved today by a large majority (x votes in favour, y against and z abstentions) the Report of Carlos Coelho on the establishment of an evaluation mechanism to verify the application of the Schengen acquis.

The vote that took place today on the LIBE Committee gives a mandate to the Rapporteur, allowing him to initiate immediately negotiations with the Council and the Commission in order to try to reach an agreement between the three institutions.

On the Rapporteur's opinion, the correct and effective implementation of the Schengen acquis is still the basis of any effort to guarantee internal security and a comprehensive policy to manage external borders.

That is the reason why the evaluation mechanism has a crucial role in order to monitor how the Member States implement the common standards.

The Rapporteur doesn't have any doubts that the efficiency of the actual evaluation process needs to be improved. The new mechanism should help to reinforce the free movement of persons, be able to monitor effectively any attempt to introduce illegal border controls at internal borders, and to help to reinforce mutual trust, by ensuring an effective control of the external borders by each Member State.

In order to guarantee a proper implementation and application of the Schengen acquis by the Member States after their accession, we should follow a step-by-step approach:

- reinforcing the existing mechanism of evaluation, by making it a EU system;
- monitoring and evaluating in an effective and efficient way
- helping the Member States facing some problems, at early stage, to solve their deficiencies (with an increasing role of Frontex, in terms of support)
- Establishing the possibility of having follow-up measures at the external borders, that could lead to the closing of a specific border crossing point for a limited period of time if the deficiencies persist and they might put in stake the overall security of the Schengen area.

The increasing migration flows, evolving threats and risks and the enlargement of the Schengen area has required a rethinking of how the external borders of the EU can best be protected.

Any attempts to restrict the freedom of movement, a core symbol of Europe, are unacceptable. However, it is clear the need to strengthened Schengen governance, to help to ensure that each Member State can control effectively its part of the EU's external borders, to reinforce mutual trust and to build trust in the effectiveness of the EU system of migration management.

***Background Information:***

In the spirit of bringing the Union closer to its citizens, the creation of the Schengen area, in the late 80s and early 90s was one of European history's greatest successes. Characterised by the absence of controls at shared borders between participating countries and the introduction of freedom of movement within this area, can be considered as one of the most tangible and perceivable results of EU membership.

In parallel, it was created a single external border and various compensatory measures were implemented, in particular the strengthening of controls at external borders and of police, customs and judicial cooperation, the creation of the Schengen Information System (SIS) and of a common visa policy.

Over the last 25 years, the successive Schengen enlargements have shifted the physical location of the Schengen external borders. At this moment 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.

Removal of checks at internal borders makes the controls at external borders crucial, since one Member State is responsible for carrying out the checks on behalf of the other Schengen countries it requires full mutual trust between the Member States in their capacity to fully implement the accompanying measures allowing those controls to be lifted. Indeed, the security of the Schengen area depends on the rigour and effectiveness with each Member State carries out controls at its external borders, as well as on the quality and speed through which information is exchanged through the SIS. The fragility or inadequate functioning of any of these elements poses a risk to the security of the European Union and to the efficiency of the Schengen area.