



Schengen reloaded

by Raoul Ueberecken
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The 2016 migration crisis put huge strains on the Schengen borderless area, exposing shortcomings in one of the EU's most popular achievements. Schengen – or more accurately the area of freedom, security and justice, which includes features such as the Europol agency for police co-operation – may not need the complete overhaul some European politicians have suggested, but there are things the new European leadership should do to tackle its weaknesses. That is the key message in a new Centre for European Reform paper, '[Schengen reloaded](#)' by Raoul Ueberecken, who as Director Home Affairs at the Justice and Home Affairs department of the Council of the EU has been at the forefront of EU co-operation in combating crime and irregular migration for the last three years.

The Schengen area survived the challenge posed by the unprecedented influx of migrants from war-ravaged and poverty-stricken areas of the Middle East and North Africa in 2015-16. But the crisis showed the benefits and burdens of Schengen have not always been shared equally, and not all member-states have the same administrative capacity or resources to implement the system. These issues represent the biggest test yet for Schengen: if member-states cannot trust each other to meet their obligations, the system will no longer function.

The new CER paper argues that while the foundations of Schengen are sound, there are several things EU policy-makers should do to strengthen the system and ensure it remains a boon for Europeans for years to come. The system needs a peer review mechanism to evaluate compliance with obligations and ensure all member-states are regularly and objectively tested to the same benchmarks. Where shortcomings and pinch-points are found, the EU should provide financial, technical and legal support to members that need it. The EU also needs to continue its work to improve co-operation between national law enforcement agencies – the previous Commission's priority to improve the interoperability of national crime and migration databases is still a long way from being achieved.

The paper argues that the EU needs a fully-fledged migration management system, with real-time monitoring and a single point of decision-making, based on robust intelligence gathering. These improvements will require investment, but also greater co-operation with neighbouring countries including those that are members of Schengen but not the EU, and third countries, like the UK after Brexit.

"Europe can proudly look back on nearly 25 years without internal frontiers. But to keep the borders open, the EU will have to tighten Schengen's nuts and bolts," said Raoul Ueberecken, Director of Home Affairs at the Justice and Home Affairs department of the Council of the EU (2016-19) and author of the report.

Note for editors:

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