



European Commission - Speech
[Check Against Delivery]



Commissioner Johansson's speech on the Entry/Exit System at eu-LISA

Tallinn, 16 August 2024

Hello eu-LISA

I have come here today to say:

Thank you eu-LISA.

Thank you for all you are doing.

It is a very important job.

Managing the large-scale IT systems that keep Europe safe.

Protecting Europe, by connecting Europe.

That is your mission.

We meet at a very important time.

Very important for eu-LISA and very important for Europe.

Soon, we will switch on the most modern digital border management system in the world.

The Entry/Exit System.

Making travel easier, and Europe more secure.

And soon: fully interoperable

Linking up all existing national systems and European systems.

This is the moment you have been working towards for so long.

Legislative work started 10 years ago.

Your work on the Entry/Exit System started six years ago.

Turning legal texts into a digital reality.

Connecting an entire continent – that is a massive undertaking.

And you know that better than anyone.

Every single border crossing point.

At every single airport, every single harbour, every single road into Europe.

We will have digital border controls.

All connected.

All switched on at the very same time.

First came the groundwork.

Feasibility studies.

Talking to stakeholders.

To design the best possible system.

Then came procurement.

To find the best technologies and best partners to get the job done.

Evaluating every single part of the Entry/Exit System.

So everything works optimally.

Then you started to build the system.

Step by step.

And there were setbacks.

There were delays.

But you didn't give up.

You kept on going.

And I have been by your side every step of the way.

Reaching out to ministers, several times to get Member States to prioritise this.

Urging Member States to speed up their work.

And now the moment is finally there.

There may have been times you believed:

It will never happen.

But it's going to happen.

Everything is coming together.

But it does not come without sacrifice.

It is thanks to your hard work and each and every one of you that we are where we are today.

We're in the final testing phase.

You are doing the final tests.

As are the Member States.

There is a real momentum now.

Carriers, operators, train stations, airports.

Everyone is getting ready for the big day.

You, eu-LISA offer training and support.

So the central system and every single border crossing point will all be online.

And when that happens, it will be goodbye to passport stamping, hello to digital checks.

For all passengers from outside the EU.

Making travel easier, and border checks gradually faster.

700 million people will be affected by your work.

Because last year more than 700 million tourists travelled to Europe.

700 million! Every year.

So no pressure on you!

And 450 million Europeans will sleep safer thanks to your work.

With the Entry/Exit System we will know exactly who enters the Schengen Area, with a foreign passport.

We will know if people stay too long. Countering irregular migration.

And the Entry/Exit System will make it harder for criminals, terrorists or Russian spies to use fake passports.

Thanks to biometric identification: photos and fingerprints.

There'll be an immediate warning:

This person is not who he says he is.

With the Entry/Exit System your work will not be over. I am sorry to say this.

You will not only build the Entry/Exit System.

But also maintain it.

Not only put it online but also keep it online.

And then the next step comes quick: ETIAS.

Live in 2025.

Travel authorisation to enter 30 European countries.

For people from 60 visa free countries.

And you are also building the new Eurodac.

Essential to implement the historic migration Pact.

And you're working on interoperability:

Making sure all large-scale IT systems in the EU connect to each other.

Talk to each other.

Sharing data better.

But for now we need to get the job done.

On the Entry/Exit System.

Today I wanted to be here on the first day to welcome the Acting Executive Director Marili Männik. I am very grateful to have you here.

We had a very good talk today with you and also Luca Zampaglione who I would like to thank for having stepped in as acting ED in these circumstances.

I know that under this leadership, under Marili, you will deliver in time.

And after intense dialogues with Member States, with you, with the different stakeholders – I have decided that the Entry/Exit System will enter into operations on the 10th of November.

Different steps are legally required before the Commission could take the formal decision, but I am proud to reveal today that the 10th of November is the target day.

You designed this border management system. You built it and you will run it.

It's been a lot of hard work. And I would like to recognise that. Difficult work. Pressure. Stress. Long hours. Sacrifices.

Many of you gave up holidays, to meet the final deadline. I would like to thank you very much for that.

I want you to be proud.

It's been a marathon.

But the finishing line is in sight.

Now we're getting ready for the final sprint.

The 10th of November.

That will be a great day.

Entry/Exit System Day

And eu-LISA, it will be your day.

Thank you on behalf of a grateful Europe.