

European travel information and authorisation system (ETIAS): Council Presidency and European Parliament provisionally agree on rules for accessing relevant databases



The Council presidency and European Parliament representatives today reached a provisional agreement on the rules connecting the ETIAS central system to the relevant EU databases. The agreed texts will next be submitted to the relevant bodies of the Council and the Parliament for political endorsement and, following this, for their formal adoption.

The adoption of these rules will be the final legislative step required for the setting up of ETIAS, which is expected to be operational by 2022.

The introduction of ETIAS aims to improve internal security, prevent illegal immigration, protect public health and reduce delays at the borders by identifying persons who may pose a risk in one of these areas before they arrive at the external borders. ETIAS is also a building bloc of the interoperability between JHA databases, an important political objective of the EU in this area, which is foreseen to be operational by the end of 2023.

The provisionally agreed rules will allow the ETIAS central system to perform checks against the Schengen Information System (SIS), the Visa Information System (VIS), the Entry/Exit System (EES), Eurodac and the database on criminal records of third country nationals (ECRIS-TCN), as well as on Europol and Interpol data.

They allow for the connection of the ETIAS central system to these databases and set out the data to be accessed for ETIAS purposes, as well as the conditions and access rights for the ETIAS central unit and the ETIAS national units. Access to the relevant data in these systems will allow authorities to assess the security or immigration risk of applicants and decide whether to issue or refuse a travel authorisation.

Background

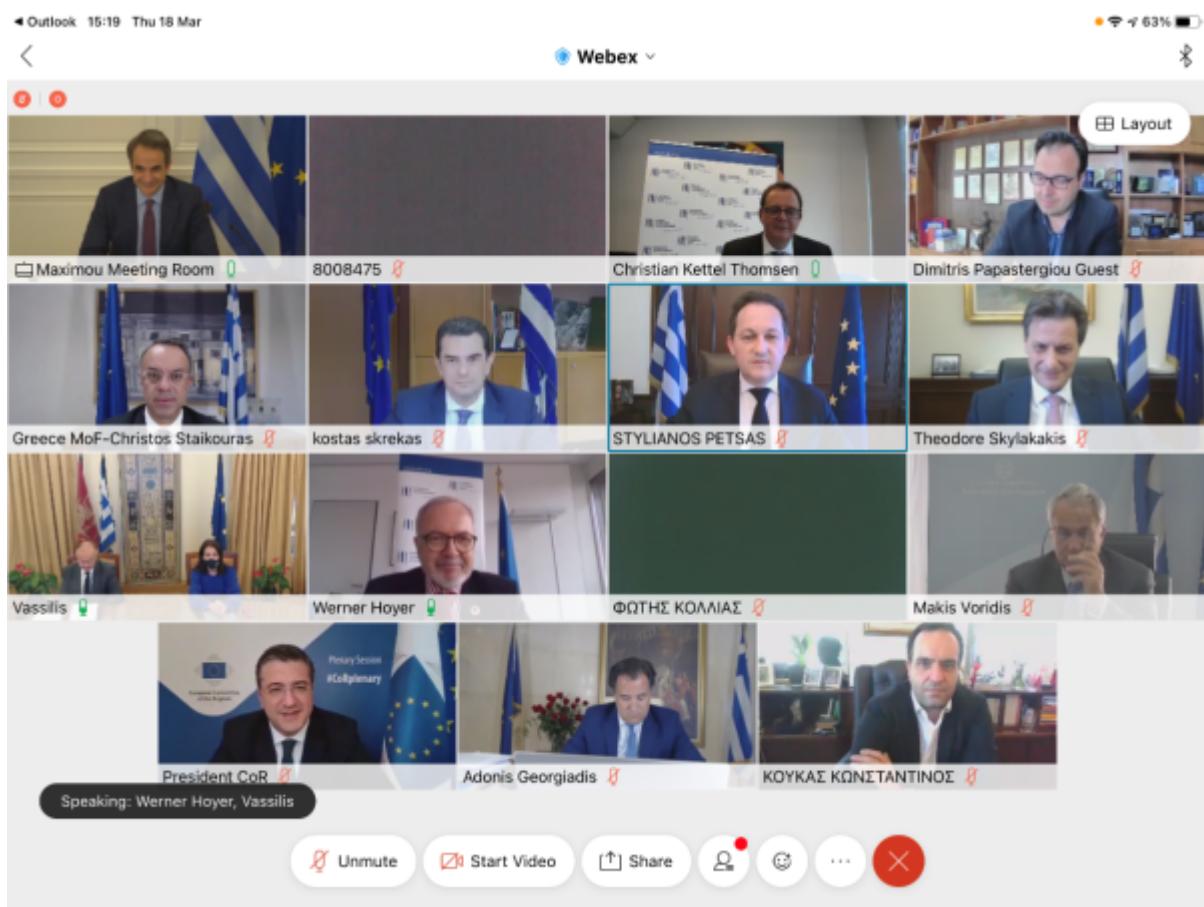
ETIAS is the new EU travel information and authorisation system. It will apply to visa-exempt third country nationals, who will need to obtain a travel authorisation before their trip, via an online application.

The information submitted in each application will be automatically processed against EU and relevant Interpol databases to determine whether there are grounds to refuse a travel authorisation. If no hits or elements requiring further analysis are identified, the travel authorisation will be issued

automatically and quickly. This is expected to be the case for most applications. If there is a hit or an element requiring analysis, the application will be handled manually by the competent authorities.

A travel authorisation will be valid for three years or until the end of validity of the travel document registered during application, whichever comes first. For each application, the applicant will be required to pay a travel authorisation fee of 7 euros.

Greece: Prime Minister Mitsotakis welcomes EIB backing for EUR 3 billion urban development and energy efficiency investment across Greece



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- EUR 875 million new long-term EIB financing to accelerate nationwide implementation of Helektra energy efficiency programme and Antonis Tritsis sustainable urban investment scheme
- New investment to cut energy bills, reduce carbon emissions, improve road safety, enhance water and waste services, and strengthen climate

- Local schemes to upgrade schools, hospitals, public building and sports facilities
- EIB President confirms support for climate action and sustainable investment in Greece following record EUR 2.8 billion support for high-impact private and public investment in 2020

Implementation of hundreds of local sustainable urban investment schemes and energy efficiency projects in towns and cities across Greece will start following agreement for EUR 875 million of new long-term European Investment Bank financing confirmed today by Prime Minister Mitsotakis and EIB President Werner Hoyer.

"As we see the end of the pandemic in sight, as vaccinations pick up in pace, I think it is very important now to step up our effort to design the future in this post-pandemic world. Greece, as you know, has already submitted its plan for the Recovery and Resilience Fund, which has received very positive reviews by the European Union. And I am sure there will be numerous opportunities above and beyond the two agreements that will be signed today for our cooperation to further strengthen, to further deepen and for the EIB to be an integral part in Greece's success," said Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic.

"The EIB Group is committed to accelerating climate action and sustainable urban investment across Greece. The new EUR 875 million long-term financing agreed today will back EUR 3 billion of new investment in high-impact local projects under the pioneering Helektra energy efficiency and Antonis Tritsis sustainable urban investment schemes in the coming years. The new agreements represent the largest EIB support for energy efficiency and urban investment in 58 years of engagement in Greece. This reflects the scale and vision of our Greek partners to scale up priority investment and the close cooperation with the EIB's dedicated Investment Team for Greece in Athens and Luxembourg." said Werner Hoyer, President of the European Investment Bank.

The latest EIB support for climate action in Greece will enable EUR 3 billion of new investment to reduce energy use, cut carbon emissions, improve public health, earthquake protection, water and waste services under two initiatives led by the Ministry of Environment and Energy and Ministry of the Interior. The Helektra programme will improve energy efficiency in public buildings nationwide and the Antonis Tritsis scheme will strengthen sustainable urban investment.

Financing agreements for the first EIB loans for the two initiatives were signed between the President of Consignment Deposits and Loans Fund Mr Dimitrios Stamatidis and EIB Vice President responsible for Greece Christian Kettel Thomsen, in a virtual ceremony with the presence of Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and European Investment Bank President Werner Hoyer.

The importance and impact of the two new investment programmes were highlighted by Deputy Interior Minister Stelios Petsas, Finance Minister and Governor of the European Investment Bank Christos Staikouras, Alternate

Finance Minister Theodoros Skylakakis, Development Minister Adonis Georgiadis, Environment and Energy Minister Kostas Skrekas and Interior Minister Makis Voridis, as well as the presidents of the Association of Regions (ENPE) and Central Union of Municipalities (KEDE) Apostolos Tzitzikostas and Dimitris Papastergiou.

Christina Giovani, Alternate Chair of Consignment Deposits and Loans Fund also participated.

EUR 500 million for sustainable urban development across Greece

The EIB will provide a EUR 500 million 25 year loan to support the Antonis Tritsis scheme aiming to strengthen sustainable urban investment in town and cities across Greece.

This will include schemes to improve water and wastewater, waste management, road safety and climate resilience, smart city schemes, flood protection, earthquake protection in schools and improving public health measures against COVID-19.

The new sustainable urban investment initiative will scale up priority investment including urban regeneration and increase renewable energy use to improve the quality of life of local residents and attractiveness for business and tourism.

The overall scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of the Interior and eligible investment projects will be managed by the Consignment Deposits and Loans Fund

EUR 375 million to cut energy costs and improve energy efficiency in public buildings

The EIB also formally agreed to provide EUR 375 million to back the Helektra programme to improve energy efficiency in public buildings, schools, hospitals and sports facilities.

The new investment will improve insulation, replace obsolete heating and cooling equipment and increase use of renewable energy. This will ensure that energy costs are reduced and carbon emissions cut for public buildings, and contribute to Greek and European energy efficiency targets.

The Helektra programme is expected to generate energy savings in public buildings of at least 30%, reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

This scheme is being led by the Ministry of Environment and Energy and will be managed by the Consignment Deposits and Loans Fund.

Building on record EIB Group engagement in Greece

Ahead of the announcement Prime Minister Mitsotakis, European Investment Bank President Werner Hoyer and Vice President Christian Kettel Thomsen discussed the record EUR 2.8 billion of new support for high-impact private and public

investment in Greece agreed between the European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund and Greek partners last year, as well as priorities for future engagement.

Niger: Team Europe welcomes opening of scheme to ensure drinking water for 400,000 people in Niamey



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- Goudel IV drinking water project highlighted as model for climate action in Africa
- The Dutch Government, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the French Development Agency (AFD) have provided 60.4 million euros in financing for this transformative project. This financing is provided in the form of a grant by the Netherlands and long-term loans by the EIB and AFD.
- New water treatment plant inaugurated this week will expand drinking water supply, improve public health and cater for growing population

Supply of drinking water to more than 400,000 people, including first time access for 200,000 people, living in Niamey, capital of Niger and one of the hottest and fastest growing cities in the world, will be secured following

the successful completion of the Goudel IV water treatment plant and water distribution network expansion. The project was officially inaugurated by H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of Niger, this morning.

More than 15,700 additional households have been connected to the water network and 170 new water access points built under the transformational project supported by European partners, the European Investment Bank, French Development Agency and the Dutch government.

The importance of new investment to provide drinking water in Niamey, increase water supply to match a growing urban population and better protect public health was highlighted at the inauguration of the Goudel IV water treatment plant attended by the Ambassador of the European Union in Niger.

“The Goudel 4 project to strengthen the drinking water supply in the city of Niamey will be inaugurated by the President of the Republic of Niger, Head of State, on March 18, 2021. The scheme will allow us to meet the water needs of an increasingly large and demanding population in the years ahead.” said Amadou Mamadou Sekou, Directeur Général of the Société de Patrimoine des Eaux du Niger (SPEN).

“Team Europe is committed to tackling the impact of climate change in Africa and strengthening sustainable investment in Niger. The financial and technical cooperation of the European Investment Bank, French Development Agency and the Dutch government with Société des Patrimoine des Eaux du Niger will improve public health and unlock economic opportunities for hundreds of thousands of people in Niamey for the future.” said Denisa-Elena Ionete, European Union Ambassador to Niger.

“Today marks a milestone in cooperation between Niger and European partners. The European Investment Bank is pleased to provide long-term financing and technical support for the Goudel IV plant and to secure supply of drinking water to thousands of people in Niamey as part of Team Europe. Construction and successful operation of the new clean water project will contribute to protecting public health and livelihoods during future droughts and floods.” said Ambroise Fayolle, European Investment Bank Vice President.

“France welcomes the commissioning of the Goudel IV drinking water treatment plant. Extending the supply of drinking water to Niamey will accelerate the achievement of the sustainable development goals in Niger,” said Alexandre Garcia, French Ambassador to Niger.

“Team Europe congratulates Niger and Société des Patrimoine des Eaux du Niger for the successful completion of the Goudel IV project that will scaling up access to drinking water for thousands of people in Niamey.” said Paul Tholen, Ambassador of the Netherlands in Niger.

Protecting vulnerable communities from climate change

Niger is one of the hottest countries on the planet, and average temperatures in Niamey are rarely below 32 °C.

The expanded Niamey water network includes 170 new water access points, and

will significantly expand supply of clean drinking water to parts of the capital city previously dependent on untreated water.

Niamey has one of the fastest growing populations in the world and the new project will cater for increased demand for drinking water in the city.

Technical and financial cooperation delivering development impact

The Goudel IV water treatment plant and wider AEP Niamey project is supported by EUR 60.4 million of long-term financing from three European partners, the European Investment Bank (34.5%), French Development Agency (30%) and the Dutch government (35.5%).

Roundtable discussion on unaccompanied children in Catalonia

The regional authorities presented the 2021 Action Plan for the protection of unaccompanied children in Catalonia. This includes measures to improve the reception conditions for unaccompanied children, transition measures for children reaching majority age, and sensitisation programmes to promote integration and positive narratives. The regional authorities also mentioned the decision to voluntarily receive 40 unaccompanied children from the Canary Islands. The transfer of unaccompanied children to other regions of Spain was also discussed during [FRA's Director recent visit to the Canary Islands](#).

Council of Europe prepares report on deinstitutionalising people with disabilities

It underlined that this entails a physical move to accommodation in the community. This includes a shift in how services for people with disabilities are provided, away from 'one size fits all' approaches towards individualised, user-controlled support in the community. The Parliamentary Assembly's work will lead to draft recommendations to Member States, for adoption in autumn 2021. The Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner and UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of people with disabilities also spoke at the hearing.