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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	9329/25
Subject:	40 Years and Beyond - Schengen Declaration - A Joint Commitment to Freedom, Security and Justice

Delegations will find in annex the Schengen Declaration as approved by the Council on 12 June 2025.

**40 Years and Beyond – Schengen Declaration –
A Joint Commitment to Freedom, Security and Justice**

The Council of the European Union, after having discussed the future of Schengen in the context of the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Schengen Agreement, hereby issues the following declaration, in the presence of the Schengen Associated Countries and the European Commission.

In 1985, the governments of Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands laid the foundations for one of the most emblematic and tangible European cooperation and integration initiatives, the Schengen area. We have travelled a long way since then. Supported by ever-closer European cooperation and governance, the Schengen area without internal border controls underpins freedom of movement, fostering social cohesion and economic growth. What has become the largest area of free movement in the world facilitates the daily lives of more than 450 million Europeans, including two million people who commute daily across internal borders. Boosting competitiveness, Schengen facilitates intra-EU trade, which exceeded EUR 4 100 billion in 2024, with the share of intra-EU exports being significantly higher than the share of international exports in most Member States. Hundreds of millions of people legally cross our external borders every year, making the Schengen area the world's most visited destination, attracting 40 % of international tourism.

Through our united action, Schengen has demonstrated its resilience and the benefits it brings to our society, our economies and our prosperity.

Today, in times of geopolitical instability and an evolving security landscape, we face complex threats which include foreign information manipulation and interference, the instrumentalisation of migration and other hybrid activities. Due to rapid digitalisation, criminals and terrorists are increasingly taking advantage of emerging technologies and tools. We are determined to address current and future threats together using enhanced tools and capabilities, and to make Schengen our strategic and operational asset.

Driven by our common EU values, we are committed to continuing to invest in a common area without internal borders, ensuring strong external border management and a high degree of internal security. We recognise the essential role of information exchange. We commit to supporting Schengen cooperation with resilient and innovative IT systems and technologies, and to using artificial intelligence with vision, responsibility and determination. We will focus our efforts on addressing deficiencies and on developing preparedness for and adaptability to current and future challenges: rapidly developing geopolitical, technological, economic, social, migratory and climate contexts resulting in a new freedom and security environment.

We take note of Cyprus' accelerated efforts to fulfil the criteria for integration in the Schengen area.

We reaffirm the goals set out in the strategic agenda for 2024-2029 and in the strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning within the area of freedom, security and justice, which underline the importance of the free movement of persons and recall that a well-functioning Schengen area underpins the freedom and security of citizens.

On the basis of the following seven commitments, the Council will preserve and consolidate the functioning of the Schengen area:

1. Our Schengen actions will be centred on the freedom and security of our citizens. We will promote and protect the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights in a single area of freedom, security and justice.
2. To preserve the benefits that Schengen brings to our citizens, including for our safety and prosperity, we will take all appropriate measures to ensure an attractive and secure Schengen area for mobility, trade, competitiveness and tourism, and to ensure it remains a fundamental enabler of the single market. We will defend the unfettered free movement of persons, which lies at the core of our Schengen policies, by ensuring that the reintroduction of internal border controls remains a measure of last resort. We will take all appropriate measures, whether they are Schengen instruments or otherwise related to them, with respect to external border management, secondary movements, migration, the return of those illegally staying as well as the prevention and combating of off-line and on-line cross border crime, terrorism, as well as emerging threats.
3. We recognise Schengen as the backbone of European security cooperation and the security of our citizens is a paramount objective. We will use Schengen policies and tools as assets to address known and emerging threats and challenges, such as hybrid threats and cybercrime in the age of artificial intelligence.

In doing so, we will anticipate, prevent and combat effectively terrorism and serious and organised crime, including online criminal activities, trafficking in human beings, migrant smuggling, drug trafficking and firearms trafficking.

We will further enhance the development, interconnection and use of our large-scale IT systems, with a high level of protection of personal data.

We will develop and deepen law enforcement and interagency cooperation for the benefit and in support of Member States and of the Schengen area as a whole.

4. We decide who may enter Europe, not smugglers or hostile external actors instrumentalising vulnerable people. We will refuse entry and prevent unauthorised border crossings to those who have no right to enter, and return those who have no right to stay, in a humane and dignified manner. We recognise that the protection of external borders using all available tools contributes to the security of the entire Schengen area.
5. We will reinforce the external dimension of Schengen through a comprehensive approach, including an effective visa policy, border management and effective cooperation with third countries on return and readmission, with the aim of fostering mutually beneficial partnerships.
6. We commit to upholding a high level of mutual trust, and to addressing jointly, through coordinated efforts, the challenges faced by the Schengen area. We recognise the importance of the implementation of the relevant legislative and regulatory framework. To support this endeavour, we will further consolidate Schengen governance at EU and national levels, enhancing the role of the Schengen Council and its preparatory instances as political steer, and ensuring the coherent evolution of the acquis.
7. We will invest in a solid and well-functioning Schengen, now and for the future. We will develop proactive action, investing in human-centred innovation and new technologies, and prioritising European solutions. Appropriate funding, including at EU level for structural investments and developments and for addressing identified priorities, vulnerabilities and deficiencies is key. Stepping up our investment in a well-functioning Schengen area is considered of great importance for its potential expansion, which must result in strengthening the Schengen area as a whole and should be built on a merit-based process, grounded in common, objective and transparent criteria, comprehensively reflecting today's and tomorrow's realities.

Guided by the above commitments, we remain steadfast in our will to protect the founding principles of Schengen — freedom of movement, security, and mutual trust —, thus ensuring that Schengen continues to serve European citizens in the decades to come.
