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Cyprus becoming a member of the Schengen area

Starting, July 25, Cyprus is joining the Schengen Information System (SIS) that has been built to ensure safe passage as well as freedom of movement of those who have the right to move freely within the EU's Schengen Area.

As a result, the state's national security will be upgraded, including dealing with illegal immigration, crime and missing persons.

Cyprus' accession to SIS, is the outcome of a 2019 statement of readiness for inclusion in the Schengen area, submitted by the foreign minister at the time and current President Nikos Christodoulides.

Since 2019, the state underwent an evaluation process, covering five areas, the last of which concerns the operation of SIS.

The inclusion of the island in the information system does not mean that Cyprus becomes a full member of Schengen and EU border controls will not be immediately abolished.

What will change, as of July 25, is that authorities on the island will now be privy to the files of 90 million people. Among them are persons who are wanted, have disappeared, are vulnerable, or against whom an extradition order has been issued (third-country nationals).

Access to information on items confiscated, such as stolen, lost, or forged documents, will also be enabled.

This means that wanted or missing persons will be able to be immediately located in Cyprus, from the moment of their registration in SIS, with the customs, road transport, deputy shipping ministry and civil aviation departments gaining visibility.

SIS is the fastest data transfer system in Europe and will reduce processing time, from days to minutes, for information shared between the authorities of different states.

As a prerequisite for gaining access, Cyprus created a national SIS database; established a SIRENE bureau; and created a data protection supervisory authority, to ensure the legality of personal data processing.

As far as cases of missing persons, SIS is an important tool giving authorities the capacity to place the person under protection as soon as requested to do so.

To qualify for the lifting of controls at common borders with the other Schengen states, the cycle of Schengen evaluations in all areas must be completed.

The SIS/SIRENE introduction is the last area to be evaluated and the country must implement all recommendations made during the evaluation period. Subsequently, the matter will be brought before the EU ministerial council.

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