

SCHENGEN IS DEAD? LONG LIVE SCHENGEN!

Jacques Delors, António Vitorino, Yves Bertoncini, and the participants of the Jacques Delors Institute 2015 European Steering Committee

The participants of our 2015 European Steering Committee underline that we need both to safeguard and to strengthen Schengen in the face of international crises (terrorist attacks and massive influx of asylum-seekers), in a declaration entitled: “Schengen is dead? Long live Schengen!”.

Articles directly inspired by this tribune have already been published in the European press by the following outlets: [Le Soir](#) (Belgium), [Hospodářské noviny](#) (Czech Republic), [Jyllands-Posten](#) (Denmark), [Le Monde](#) (France), [Handelsblatt](#) (Germany), [To Vima](#) (Greece), [La Repubblica](#) (Italy), [Luxemburger Wort](#) (Luxembourg), [EurActiv.pl](#) (Poland), [Publico](#) (Portugal), [Dennik N](#) (Slovakia), [El Pais](#) (Spain), [Le Temps](#) (Switzerland) and [EurActiv.com](#).

The shocking and cowardly terrorist attacks in Paris and the massive influx of asylum-seekers in the EU have raised major questions regarding our ability to ensure the effective monitoring of what are now our common external borders.

We call on the heads of state and government to address these unprecedented crises on the basis of a clear political vision. We should be united to fight effectively against the threat of terrorism, in Europe as well as abroad. The refugees are victims, not a threat, and the European people are sufficiently strong to face in the longer term the challenge of taking them in and integrating them. We call on the heads of state and government to develop a more proactive diplomacy to stabilize our neighbourhood, and to extend their aid to those countries currently taking in the majority of Syrian asylum-seekers (Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon) in order to allow the asylum-seekers to remain in their region of origin. We also call on them to strengthen the monitoring of our borders, in particular by stepping up the struggle against terrorists, human traffickers and organised crime, including through increasing the exchange of information at the police and intelligence services level.

To achieve these aims, the heads of state and government have the good fortune of having available to them numerous European police and judiciary cooperation tools (the Schengen Information System, Europol, Eurojust, Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office and so forth) which they need to use and expand to diversify in order to tackle the crisis. It is crucial that they mobilise these tools both for reasons of efficiency (a country acting on its own is powerless) and

also in order to bolster mutual confidence among the member states, which must all be convinced of the fact that no single one of them is neglecting its duty to monitor our common borders.

Full use needs to be made of the “Schengen” tool in order the better to address the challenge of terrorism.

The deep emotion we have felt after the recent terrorist attacks undoubtedly rekindles a need for reassurance which may tend to a return to domestic border monitoring in view of those borders’ importance in our collective imagination. But our desire for security can be more effectively met within the framework of the Schengen Area.

We should indeed remember that an overwhelming majority of the 141 articles in the convention regulating the Schengen Agreement’s implementation are designed to organise police and judiciary cooperation among the member states’ national authorities - a form of cooperation so useful that even non-Schengen countries such as the United Kingdom have decided to opt into it. “Schengen” means at once more freedom and more security, two areas of progress which need to be consolidated in parallel.

Terrorist attacks are often perpetrated by nationals, both in Europe and elsewhere, but they have international roots, so they call for European and international responses. Terrorists are often people known to the police, to the legal system, and to the intelligence services, so we will be able to combat terrorist attacks more effectively by earmarking additional legal, human and financial resources to these services, including through the adoption of a European PNR [Passenger Name Record], rather than by allocating

those resources in an inefficient manner to the monitoring of internal borders within the Schengen area, squandering them on pointlessly checking the hundreds of millions of European citizens who cross them every month. Schengen is the precondition for our security: if we are to defeat terrorism, our strength lies in unity, and disunity leaves us defenceless.

The recent creation of European centres for the identification and handling of asylum-seekers (“hotspots”) in Greece and in Italy also falls within that European rationale. We must show solidarity with these countries for the sake of generosity, of course, but also in order to resume control over the situation on “our” borders. Furthermore, we must extend this move towards Europeanisation without delay: by setting up a European coast guard and border guard corps; with operations at sea under the banner of the United Nations; by bolstering Frontex, including with procedures for the expulsion of illegal immigrants; by creating European routes for legal immigration, and so forth.

While the Schengen regulations do indeed allow for the temporary reintroduction of national border monitoring in the event of a crisis, it is in no one’s interest for such a situation to last forever on account of the exorbitant economic and financial cost that it

entails. While the return to national borders’ monitoring may be an option, it is certainly not a solution! The Schengen Agreement was signed thirty years ago, and subsequently extended to benefit 400 million Europeans, precisely in order to allow lorry-drivers, border workers and companies that export their goods throughout Europe to stop wasting time – and as everyone knows, time is money! Costly and falsely reassuring fixed border monitoring was replaced by mobile border checks, by the development of European police cooperation and by a strengthening of monitoring on our external borders precisely in order to bolster our customs and police officers’ effectiveness. A step back into the past would be tantamount to losing sight of the wood for the trees. While all the Europeans – workers, small and medium businesses, taxpayers, etc. – would unquestionably suffer from the move, who would actually benefit from it?

We need both to safeguard and to strengthen Schengen in the face of international crises, shirking the dangerous temptation to fall back on national borders – a move which would damage the people of Europe without in any way bolstering their security. Let’s get more united in the face of new challenges, in a spirit of cooperation and of solidarity, so that Schengen may live – long live Schengen!

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