

REVIEW OF THE SCHENGEN AGREEMENT: STRICTER CONTROL FOR EU TRAVELERS



Stricter controls after the events in Paris will change the way people travel around Europe. The corridors for EU passengers at airports and ports of the Schengen area are closed.

After the recent meeting of the European Ministers of Interior and Justice, an immediate review of the Schengen Agreement, which provided for the free movement of persons within EU borders, has been decided as a result.

This means that **identity checks will be carried out on all passengers, whether they are EU or not, resulting in longer waiting times** particularly at airports and ports, in addition to the waiting time at the customs area.

Mario Morcone, the Italian government immigration chief, explained how the new Schengen Agreement will work: "In ports and airports, the corridor 'EU citizens' will not be available any more, everyone will be screened by the police. The police will have to consult the available databases and the queues will be inevitable and in some cases long."

These measures are combined with the famous PNR, the Passenger Name Record, a hypothesis that was already advanced by France after the attacks on Charlie Hebdo in January. All passenger data, including the number of travel companions, the state of health and methods of payment, will be archived and accessible by the security forces for a year. According to press sources, the procedure should be fully implemented by the end of the year.

A register for the passengers is to be shared at the European level, name tickets for the trains and metal detectors at the stations. In addition, there will be stricter controls at security gates at the airport, resulting in longer queues to access the boarding area.

This could be the scenario for travelling in the coming months, whether by air or rail.

Earlier this year, after the attacks on Charlie Hebdo, the first proposals concerning the creation of a single register of passengers, the so called PNR had already appeared in the European Parliament. To this extent then the hypothesis of name tickets for train passengers was added, a proposal which emerged during the European summit of Ministers of Transport, following the attack on the Thalys train to Amsterdam.

In addition, in 2016 the security gates may also disembark at railway stations, with the City of Light as the first test basin for SNCF.

Now, after the recent events in Paris, the security issue kicks in. And even with respect to the regularity of the operations and without affecting the punctuality of services, passengers would have to stick to the more restrictive rules on the security front.

Increased surveillance, more accurate and time consuming metal detector controls could therefore characterize the holidays of departing passengers in the coming weeks, also due

to the expected increase in traffic at airports for departing passengers during the Christmas and New Year holidays within the Schengen Agreement area.

Finally, in the coming weeks, after the explosion of the Russian jet flying above the Sinai Peninsula, British and other experts will be sent to analyze the security protocols of many airports (outside the European Union, the United States and Israel). Among the countries involved, they should now land on Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines, then to Kenya, after the checks carried out on the airports in North Africa and the Middle East.

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