

# UPDATE: EU Plans To Fingerprint, Record Entry Of All Visitors

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BRDO PRI KRANJU, Slovenia (AP)--The European Union's top justice official proposed Friday to replicate U.S. border security measures in Europe with plans to fingerprint and electronically record the entry and exit of all visitors to the 27-nation bloc.

The measures would ensure more secure borders and prevent visitors from illegally entering Europe, or overstaying the three-month stay given to tourists and E.U. visa holders, Franco Frattini said.

"The electronic register should include viable biometric identifiers," Frattini told reporters during two-day talks of E.U. justice and interior ministers. He said visitors overstaying their welcome "are the No. 1" cause of illegal immigration.

The plan, which will be presented in detail next month, was seen as retaliation for Washington's recent moves to expand its fingerprinting of most international visitors, including those from countries that it considers close European allies.

Also, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff recently said that Europeans could soon be required to register online for authorization to enter the U.S. before traveling, similar to an electronic visa system already being used by Australia.

Frattini said his new security measures would also include such an "electronic travel authorization" for those wishing to enter the E.U.

The E.U. security chief, however, called on both the E.U. and the U.S. to work together to set up a compatible system.

"We do want interoperability instead of two separate systems," Frattini said.

The new proposals came as E.U. ministers sat down to discuss whether they should back separate plans to collect detailed data on airline passengers flying into the 27-nation bloc amid warnings that the threat of new terror attacks remains high.

Such a data system, modeled after one adopted by the U.S., would store 19 pieces of sensitive passenger data for 13 years, including e-mail addresses, telephone numbers and payment details of flight tickets.

Several E.U. nations have expressed reservations, however, over how all 27 E.U. governments could process the vast amounts of data that would be gathered from thousands of flights entering and leaving the bloc each day. Privacy advocates also have criticized the plan, saying it could infringe on passengers' rights to privacy.

Frattoni urged them to put their doubts aside, saying the data-storage system was "absolutely necessary."

"We have been dealing with the security of Americans, (and) now the time has come to deal with the security of Europeans," Frattoni said. "Terrorism remains threat No. 1."

Luxembourg's Justice Minister Luc Frieden said more study was needed before the bloc moved to set up such a system.

"We must evaluate what the advantages are," Frieden said. "The European Union has the right to know who enters, but I am not sure that a large amount of information that would be collected can be examined by each member state...we need more information on the effectiveness of the system."