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E.U. Pressures Denmark on New Border Controls

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BRUSSELS — Concerns that [Denmark](#) may be undermining Europe's free travel zone intensified on Monday when the Danish authorities were told that they had failed to justify extra customs controls.

The announcement, by the [European Commission](#), followed a two-day visit to Denmark last week by European officials.

“In a first assessment, the experts reported that they were unable to get sufficient justifications from the Danish side for the intensification of the controls at the internal borders,” the [European Union](#)'s commissioner for home affairs, Cecilia Malmstrom, said in a statement. “It is incumbent on Denmark to demonstrate factually that the gravity of the situation justifies putting in place controls which might affect the exercise of free movement of goods, services and persons at the internal borders with Germany and Sweden.”

The Danish measures have upset officials in Germany and provoked debate about the free movement of people and goods within the Schengen zone. All this follows the political upheaval in North Africa and the Middle East, which has prompted thousands of migrants to flee for Europe, heightening tensions over [immigration](#) policies.

Significantly, Monday's statement questions the entire rationale for Denmark's additional customs checks, rather than criticizing any specific measures that could be easily amended. It essentially asks for the Danes to present an assessment of the increased risk that justifies their measures.

The Danish Ministry of Taxation said that it was aware of the comments critical of Denmark's increased customs controls but that an official notification had not yet been received. “In the press release, a letter to the Danish authorities is mentioned,” the ministry said. “However, the Danish authorities have not received the letter yet and therefore they don't know the specific criticism and cannot comment on that.”

It added, "However, the Danish authorities look forward to continue the constructive dialogue with the commission."