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Europe Denies 2 Nations Entry to Travel Zone

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BRUSSELS — Preoccupied with fears of increased migration from the south, the [European Union](#) told its two newest members, Romania and Bulgaria, on Thursday that they would have to wait to join the bloc's passport-free travel zone.

Finland and the Netherlands objected to [admitting Romania and Bulgaria](#) to an offshoot of the bloc known as the [Schengen zone](#), whose members agree to trust one another's border security and to allow travelers to cross their mutual frontiers without having to show a passport, like moving from state to state within the United States.

Romania and Bulgaria, which joined the European Union in 2007, say they have met the technical standards for joining the Schengen zone, but the two objectors said that was not enough.

“It is also a matter of trust and confidence that our collective external borders will be safe and secure,” said [Gerd Leers](#), the Dutch [immigration](#) minister. “At the moment, it is clear that there are still significant shortcomings in the field of anticorruption and the fight against organized crime.”

Tsvetan Tsvetanov, the Bulgarian interior minister, said in a televised interview that his country was in a “Catch-22,” with new requirements put in its way each time it satisfies the old ones.

The two excluded countries plan to appeal the decision at a summit meeting of European Union leaders next month, but no change is likely before a report is published next February on the progress of the two countries on law enforcement issues.

Increasing public friction over immigration in Europe is starting to fray support for the Schengen zone in countries that already belong. Denmark said it planned to restart passport checks at its borders, and the refugees fleeing unrest in North Africa set off a dispute between France and Italy this year.

While the refusal to admit Romania and Bulgaria will make little or no practical difference to most of their people, who can still travel easily within the European Union, it is a political blow for the two governments, which are sensitive about being seen as second-class member nations.