



**Joint Declaration on the 40th Anniversary of the Schengen Agreement
From the Police Unions of Germany, France, and Luxembourg, as well as the European
Federation of Police Unions
Schengen, June 16, 2025**

Schengen at 40 – A Commitment to Freedom, Security, and Cooperation

Forty years ago, on June 14, 1985, five European states signed the Schengen Agreement in the small village of Schengen. It was a historic act of trust and unity – one that created the world's largest area of border-free travel. For us as police, it also marked the beginning of a new era: an era of responsibility without borders, of cooperation across jurisdictions, and of a shared commitment to upholding freedom and security.

Since its practical implementation by seven member states in 1995 and its integration into EU law in 1999, the Schengen area has expanded to 29 countries, uniting EU and non-EU members within a unique legal and operational framework. It has opened borders, strengthened the European economy, and brought citizens closer together.

Schengen is not just a legal or operational achievement – it is a foundational pillar of European identity. By enabling free and secure mobility, it builds trust in the European project and brings the Union closer to its citizens in their daily lives.

However, Schengen has also demanded enormous adaptations from law enforcement agencies. With the dismantling of internal border controls came mobile surveillance, international patrols, common data systems (such as SIS II, SIENA, and Eurodac), and cross-border units like the German-French Operational Unit "Daniel Nivel" (DFEE). European police work is more interconnected than ever before.

The real implementation of Schengen's ideals remains fragile. In recent years, internal border controls have been repeatedly reintroduced – initially in response to crises such as terrorism, irregular migration, or pandemics, but increasingly normalized. These controls are often poorly coordinated and strain operational resources, particularly at the EU's internal borders.

In this context, it is particularly alarming to observe the recent development of private individuals taking responsibility for conducting unauthorized border controls and stopping vehicles to check alleged asylum seekers. Such actions have been particularly noted in recent days at the German-Dutch and German-Polish borders.

We wish to emphasize strongly that maintaining public safety and conducting border controls are the sole responsibility of the competent state authorities. Unauthorized controls by private individuals pose significant risks to public order, the safety of all involved, and social cohesion.



Especially now, it is essential to strengthen European cooperation between police and customs forces. The challenges we face at our borders do not stop at national borders. Only through close, trusting, and adequately resourced cooperation can we ensure effective and lawful border management. We call for sustainable European solutions that respect the principles of the Schengen area, protect human rights, and guarantee the security of all citizens.

As police, we stand for a strong rule of law that offers security and protection to all people – regardless of origin or status. We urge all citizens to maintain trust in legitimate institutions and to leave border controls exclusively to the competent authorities.

We therefore appeal to the European Union and its member states to intensify joint efforts, develop robust cross-border strategies, invest in the future of a secure and united Europe, and address the major obstacles to successful cross-border police cooperation:

- **Diverging legal frameworks and operational mandates** hinder joint actions.
- **Lack of digital interoperability and standardized systems** make coordination slow and inefficient.
- **Insufficient staffing and equipment**, especially in border regions, impair effectiveness.
- **Linguistic, cultural, and technical barriers** continue to complicate joint operations.
- **Insufficient political support** exposes officers to public and operational pressure without adequate institutional backing.

Schengen Depends on the Police – And the Police Need Support

The Schengen area does not sustain itself. It relies on the daily work of thousands of police officers who patrol mobile units, operate common databases, staff Centres for Police and Customs Cooperation, and maintain public safety without the buffer of fixed borders.

This work is demanding. It requires intercultural skills, legal understanding across multiple jurisdictions, and a high degree of adaptability. Officers need trust – from their institutions, from citizens, and from political leadership. Schengen is not just a legal zone; it is a zone of trust, upheld by those who enforce it.

To preserve and strengthen the Schengen model, we call on European institutions and national governments to:

- **Ensure sustainable political support** and public recognition for cross-border police and customs work.
- **Provide adequate resources, personnel, and modern equipment** for border and mobile units.
- **Standardize training and operational mandates** to enable legal and tactical coordination in cross-border contexts.

- **Invest in digital infrastructure** and ensure the interoperability of all information systems and communication platforms.
- **Expand and support operational cooperation**, including Centres for Police and Customs cooperation (CCPD) and bi-/multinational patrol units.
- **Facilitate the formation of additional binational operational units**, analogous to the DFEE “Daniel Nivel”, to enable international operational cooperation outside of border areas.
- **Treat temporary border controls as exceptional measures**, not as a substitute for long-term European security policy.
- **Strengthen the Schengen evaluation mechanism** and ensure fair oversight and accountability.

We warn against a creeping normalization of internal border controls. These measures must remain legal exceptions, proportionate, and data-driven – not political.

A Call for Deeper Institutional Integration of Police Work

Schengen has helped remove borders for citizens – but not for the police. While criminals can move freely, police officers are still too often restricted by fragmented legal, institutional, and operational frameworks. **The next step for Schengen must be a deeper institutional integration of European police work.**

We therefore propose:

- Promoting a Common European Police Culture based on trust, shared values, and democratic accountability.
- Expanding Erasmus+ and bilateral exchange programs for all police functions, including local and urban forces.
- Introducing joint training and integrated EU-wide curricula, for example, through common modules at police academies.
- Enabling transnational career mobility and harmonized working conditions for police officers across Europe.
- Funding multilingual and intercultural training as part of professional development.

Involving All Levels of Police Work: From Border to Community

A secure Schengen area requires more than just well-equipped borders and federal units. Everyday security in a border-free Europe equally depends on **municipal and regional police forces** – those who act as first responders in communities, towns, and municipalities.

Therefore, we emphasise:

- The **integration of state and local police services into EU-wide cooperation structures**.
- Full access for all police levels to tools such as SIS II, Prüm, and common situational awareness platforms.
- Strengthening the role of **community policing** in detecting and combating cross-border crime patterns.
- Promoting **joint operations** and **co-training exercises** between urban and cross-border police units.

EU Agencies as Pillars of a Resilient Schengen

Similarly, EU institutions play a key role in enabling a secure Schengen area. Frontex, Europol, and Eurojust must evolve from supportive services into strategic institutions at the heart of a resilient internal security framework:

- **Frontex** must be adequately resourced and made a central pillar for securing the EU's external borders. A strong Frontex can reduce the burden on internal border police and preserve the free movement of people.
- **Europol** should lead common threat analyses and information merging with real-time access.
- **Eurojust** must expand its capacities to support cross-border investigations and ensure efficient judicial cooperation.

Additionally:

- Establishment of a European technology and equipment pool for rapid deployment in times of crisis.
- Promotion of standardized procedures and common operational models.
- Creation of a European Police Charter defining fundamental rights, responsibilities, and working standards for officers.

A secure Schengen depends not only on operational readiness but also on legal reliability. **We call on all member states to conscientiously apply Schengen law and to resist national measures that threaten to fragment our common legal area.**

Schengen remains one of the EU's greatest achievements. However, it must be continuously renewed – through actions, not words.

The police unions of Germany, France, and Luxembourg reaffirm their commitment to a Schengen that is open but not unprotected, free but not fragile.

We call on all actors to give Europe's police and customs forces the tools, trust, and respect they need to protect what Schengen stands for.

Because Schengen does not work by itself. It works because we do.

Signed in Schengen, Luxembourg,
16 June, 2025

