FACTSHEET #11 MIGRATION CONTROL TECHNOLOGIES

WHY DO YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MIGRATION CONTROL TECHNOLOGIES?

European member states are interconnected by **large-scale IT systems**. These allow the circulation of relevant information among national authorities (e.g. police forces, internal security agencies, border guards, migration authorities) as well as European Agencies such as Europol and Frontex. Since the stored data is also used to process visa applications from third countries, these infrastructures expand European borders beyond their geographical perimeter. While they are useful for security purposes, they also raise issues about misuse, power imbalances and discrimination. This factsheet explains what you need to know about migration control technologies.

KEY MESSAGES

- Several migration-related databases are used in the EU already.
    - The EURODAC database manages the registration of fingerprints of asylum seekers and helps determine which state should process each application.
    - The Visa Information System (VIS) allows officials at the consulates and embassies of the EU member states in third countries to create digital files on people applying for short-stay Schengen visas before travelling to the EU.
    - The Schengen Information System (SIS II) issues alerts on individuals convicted (or suspected) of crimes or terrorist activities. It also issues alerts on re-entry bans on people who irregularly entered the Schengen Area.
    - The forthcoming Entry-Exit System (EES) will detect those staying in Europe after their visa expires.
- According to a 2019 EU regulation, these large-scale IT systems should eventually become interoperable with one another, allowing national authorities to access multiple databases simultaneously through a common interface.
- Many of these use biometric data, which are considered reliable and precise by definition, but if authorities make some mistakes when digitising them, future identifications may fail.

VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND MIGRATION CONTROL TECHNOLOGIES

People fleeing from war and poverty are, by definition, vulnerable. Making them more trackable for national security reasons raises important ethical questions: are we actually helping them, or simply making them more vulnerable? Risk assessments that are based on aggregated profiling of whole groups (as happens now), or those based on AI and automated

decision-making systems (as could happen in the future) could put individuals in danger - simply because they come from a troubled region or country. How can we develop systems that provide the personal data we need to keep borders secure - without compelling people to provide sensitive personal data when they are facing a humanitarian emergency?

HOW PERSONAL DATA IS REPURPOSED
The [Passenger Name Records (PNR) Directive](#) oversaw the development and implementation of a system that gathers, processes and shares airline passengers' data (e.g. name, email, telephone number, credit card details, and other flight and booking-related information). These data are collected by airlines as part of booking procedures - but are then repurposed to produce security-relevant information. While this has helped to counter security issues, it also means [passengers' data is stored for at least five years](#).

WHAT YOU CAN DO
- Keep yourself informed on what happens in the field of migration control technologies. Associations like [EDRi](#) and [Privacy International](#) do a great job in producing investigations, reports and other useful material to raise citizens' awareness.
- There is a lot of misinformation on migration in Europe. [InfoMigrants](#), a collaborative project among publishers in different countries, aims to counter this.
- Follow the work of the European Commission's [Migration and Home Affairs Department](#).

FIND OUT MORE

READ:
- The Panelfit Guidelines have a section dedicated to biometric data, with useful definitions of biometric systems and types of biometric data.
- 'Technological Testing Grounds: Border tech is experimenting with people's lives', a report by EDRi: https://edri.org/our-work/technological-testing-grounds-border-tech-is-experimenting-with-peoples-lives/
- This pool of documents focuses on cross-border access to data for law enforcement: https://edri.org/our-work/cross-border-access-to-data-for-law-enforcement-document-pool/
- This article looks at how Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh have been forced to provide data - while facing a humanitarian crisis: www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/15/un-shared-rohingya-data-without-informed-consent

WATCH / LISTEN:
- This PANELFIT monthly chat with researcher Georgios Glouftios was dedicated to the digitisation of Europe's borders
    - Listen: www.spreaker.com/user/obctranseuropa/monthly-chat-15-def
    - Watch: https://youtu.be/YmogxmHJ9t4