
AUSTRIA EXTENDS DURATION OF BORDER CHECKS FOR HUNGARY AND SLOVENIA

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Austria will extend its border controls for fellow EU members Hungary and Slovenia until at least November, Austrian news agency APA reported on Sunday (7 April), citing a letter from the countrys interior minister to the European Commission.

In the letter to the EU Commission, Austrian Interior Minister Herbert Kickl cited a persistently high number of illegal migrants and a latent threat of terrorism related to the prospect of fighters returning from former Islamic State strongholds in Syria and Iraq, APA reported.

Kickl, of the far-right Freedom Party, said he expected an increase in the number of migrants apprehended along the so-called Balkan route into the European Union, APA reported.

Austrias interior ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The controls had been due to expire on 11 May.

Austria, Germany and other countries in Europes normally control-free Schengen zone introduced what were meant to be emergency border checks in 2015 after more than 1 million refugees and migrants entered Europe.

While the EU Commission has called for solutions to remedy weaknesses at the zones external borders and restore freedom of travel, six countries within the zone, including France and Sweden as well as Austria and Germany, have continued extending controls citing security and immigration threats.

Kurz pledges to shield Schengen as border dispute unfolds

Austrian Prime Minister Sebastian Kurz prioritised the protection of the external borders during his countrys EU Presidency stint, in order to safeguard the Schengen area, as a recent deal between Germanys conservative parties could lead to a resurrection of the blocs internal borders.

Kaynak/Source: