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ORION EU project on border security kicks-off in Athens

(Paris, 21 November 2025) The EU funded project ORION (*Optimized Risk-based Intelligence-driven Operations for Next-generation Secure, Reliable and Privacy-preserving Border Management*) officially started with a two-day Kick-off Meeting on 21 – 22 October 2025 in Athens, Greece.

The hybrid event brought together more than 40 representatives from 21 partner organisations across Europe, including European Commission representatives. ORION is a 36-month Horizon Europe-funded initiative dedicated to advancing secure, intelligent, and privacy-preserving border management. The project is co-funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101225611.

Coordinated by Ubitech (Cyprus), the ORION consortium brings together a multidisciplinary alliance of border authorities, research institutions, technology developers, and policy experts. Together, they aim to deliver a modular and interoperable system that enhances the EU's border control capabilities. By integrating biometric identity verification, intelligent vehicle screening, and AI-powered risk assessment, ORION seeks to strengthen operational efficiency while upholding the highest standards of legal, ethical, and societal responsibility.

The two-day meeting provided a comprehensive overview of ORION's strategic direction, with a strong focus on its technical foundations and operational ambitions. The consortium explored the project's conceptual architecture, which integrates biometric identity verification, intelligent vehicle screening, and AI-driven decision support into a unified, privacy-preserving border management framework. These discussions were anchored in the project's commitment to interoperability with existing EU systems and alignment with legal and ethical standards.

“ORION addresses the increasing complexity of border control by delivering a modular, scalable and ethically grounded solution,” said Aslihan Kagnici (UBI, Project Coordinator). *“Our ambition is to empower border authorities with next-generation tools that are not only effective but also fully aligned with European values on data protection and privacy.”*

Throughout the sessions, partners delved into the operational needs assessment and gap analysis, laying the groundwork for a user-centric system design. Technical work packages focused on the development of advanced biometric enrolment methods, morphing attack detection, secure digital identity devices, and scalable vehicle screening technologies. In parallel, the consortium examined how AI can enhance risk assessment, resource allocation, and queue management at border crossings, while ensuring transparency and explainability in decision-making processes.

The meeting also introduced the four pilot demonstrations that will validate ORION's solutions in real-world environments: from managing embarkation and disembarkation processes at Ro-Ro ferry terminals, to improving risk profiling at land borders and enabling seamless identity verification at train stations. *“These pilots are critical to validating ORION’s technologies in operational environments,”* explained Milan Tarman (Institut Za Korporativne Varnostne Studije Ljubljanaica, WP7 Leader). *“They will help us ensure that our solutions are practical, user-friendly, and tailored to the real needs of border authorities and travellers alike.”*

In addition to the technical and operational focus, the consortium addressed essential governance aspects, including data protection, ethics, and the handling of EU Classified Information (EUCI). A dedicated session on security protocols and access procedures will be convened by the Project Security Officer in coordination with national authorities. *“ORION places a strong emphasis on legal compliance and societal responsibility,”* noted Olena Zabrodska (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Ethics and Data Management Lead). *“We are committed to upholding the highest standards of data protection and aligning our work with the GDPR, the EU AI Act, and the EU’s ethical guidelines for trustworthy AI.”*

ORION can be followed on [LinkedIn](#) and on the project website once it will be available.

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UIC’s role in the project

In ORION, UIC will act as the main railway end-user representative, providing sector needs and co-organizing the pilot on *“Enhanced seamless identity verification at train stations”* with Eurostar. As Dissemination Manager, UIC will lead communication, knowledge transfer, and outreach through its Security Department, ensuring strong stakeholder engagement and long-term impact. UIC will ensure ORION’s solutions meet railway operational needs, support multimodal interoperability, and leverage its global expertise and network for visibility and impact.



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CONTACTS

UIC Communications Department: com@uic.org

Grigore Havârneanu, Deputy Director of the Security Department: havarneanu@uic.org

Paula Fernández Díaz, ORION Dissemination Manager: fernandez@uic.org