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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Local Schengen cooperation between Member States' consulates (Article 48(5), first paragraph, of the Visa Code) - Compilation of annual reports covering the period 2015-2016

Delegations will find attached the annual reports drawn up in the local Schengen cooperation, as transmitted by the services of the Commission.

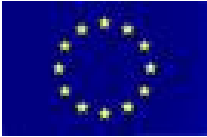
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**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION
ANNUAL REPORTS - 2015-2016**

AFGHANISTAN*
ALBANIA
ALGERIA*
ANGOLA
ARGENTINA
ARMENIA*
AUSTRALIA
AZERBAIJAN*
BANGLADESH*
BELARUS*
BENIN*
BOLIVIA*
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
BRAZIL
CAMBODIA*
CAMEROON*
CHINA*
COLOMBIA
CONGO – BRAZZAVILLE*
COSTA RICA
DJIBOUTI*
ECUADOR*
EGYPT*
ERITREA*
ETHIOPIA*
FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*
GEORGIA*
GHANA*
GUINEA BISSAU*
GUINEA CONAKRY*
HONG KONG AND MACAU
INDIA*
IRAQ*
ISRAEL
JORDAN*
KAZAKHSTAN*
KENYA*
KOSOVO*
LEBANON*
MADAGASCAR*
MAURITANIA*
MEXICO
MONTENEGRO
MORROCO*
MOZAMBIQUE*
NIGERIA*

PERU*
PHILIPPINES*
RUSSIAN FEDERATION*
SENEGAL*
SERBIA
SOUTH AFRICA*
TAIWAN
TANZANIA*
THAILAND*
TURKEY*
UKRAINE*
UNITED KINGDOM
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
UZBEKISTAN*
VENEZUELA
WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP*
ZAMBIA*

*= third state whose nationals are subject to the visa requirement.



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN AFGHANISTAN 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

The number of fully fledged consular services has remained at 4 (DE, FR, IT & ES). Some of the other 8 MS may issue locally visas for diplomatic or service passports. As of January 1, 2015 the Czech Republic opened its visa section (limited to diplomatic and service passport). The Czech Republic represents Slovakia and Hungary in the same extent. The use of an external service provider for the collection of applications remains a very delicate issue as the local circumstances do not yet provide enough assurance in terms of the validity of the requested documents.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

In the reporting period 5 regular meetings were held, their attendance varies, but in general 8 out of 12 Member States are present. The consular part was chaired by the UK representative, the Schengen part by the EU Delegation (since September at DHoD level). On two occasions the attendance of the meeting had been enlarged to other main players (like minded countries Switzerland, Norway, Canada, US, Japan, Australia) mainly to discuss the issue of forced returnees. One meeting was partially related to the draft of a HoMs report on migration finalised in November 2016. This report had been presented by the EU Delegation and discussed by political counsellors and Heads of mission.

MS draw up own reports and share with their capitals.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS and EUD are fully prepared to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code. There are no specific problems relating to the implementation of the Visa Code.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The COM Decision on the list of documents to be presented in Afghanistan of October 2016 is too recent for an assessment. At this stage there is no need to amend the existing list.

3.3 Exchange of information

The LSC includes exchange of information on monthly statistics, occasionally cases of fraud, cases of defections of local embassy staff while on mission in Europe, as well as preventive measures to avoid defections. Cases of fraud are discussed to avoid any recurrence.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

The Schengen consular group has regularly touched upon the issue of MS' Memorandum of Understanding and problems encountered with their application.

4. Challenges

The accuracy of the requested supporting documents remains a concern.

Taking into account the volatile political, economic and security environment it will remain very demanding and time-consuming to analyse and take the right decision on the numerous visa applications. The refusal rate is expected to remain high.

The report has been shared with MS and comments have been incorporated.



04/05/2015

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in Tirana
2015-2016 REPORT

1. Introduction

In addition to the EU Delegation to the Republic of Albania, there are 18 EU Member States with diplomatic representation in Tirana/Albania. Moreover, Italy has two *General Consulates* in Vlora and Shkodra and one *Honorary Consulate* in Gjirokastra while Greece has two *General Consulates* in Gjirokastra and Korca. Austria and Romania have each one *Honorary Consulate*, respectively in Shkodra and Korca.

Since the entry into force of the Visa Code in September 2009 (Art. 48) the EUD is in charge of the coordination of meetings of the Local Schengen Cooperation which usually take place every six months. Visa Liberalisation for AL nationals is in force since December 2010.

Switzerland and Malta are represented by the Austrian Embassy for Schengen C type visas. Hungary represents Estonia, Latvia and Slovakia in C type visas. Denmark is representing Iceland, Norway and Sweden for Schengen C type visas and France is representing Portugal for Schengen C type visas.

2. LSC meetings held in 2014-2015

During the reporting period two LSC meetings took place (29 September 2015 and 18 February 2016) mainly focusing on the dramatic increase of Albanian asylum seekers in EU Member States and particularly in Germany during 2015. They were well attended by EU Member States and chaired by the EU Delegation.

In addition LSC meetings were held on ad-hoc basis, to debrief EU Member States / Schengen Associated Countries (SAC) about the visits of Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs, Dimitris Avramopoulos on 17-18 March and Andrew Rasbash (DG NEAR) on 15 March. Both visits were conducted in the light of the refugee/migration crisis and its possible impact on Albania but also referred to Post Visa Liberalization Monitoring Mechanism (PVLMM).

On 9 March the EUD invited to a meeting with colleagues from United Kingdom, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to discuss migration, asylum and security matters.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

On 25 September 2014 the Visa Information System (VIS) for Schengen short-stay visas became operational in all Schengen States' consulates present in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo¹, Montenegro and Serbia) and Turkey.

EU MS did not report any particular problems related to the application of VIS in particular or the Visa Code in general.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The harmonisation of the list of supporting documents was completed before Visa Liberalisation entered into force.

3.3 Exchange of information

The level of exchange of information within the LSC was good. Overall, MS shared information on problems related to the rise of asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors to some EU Member States. Bilateral exchange of information also took place.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

A **peer review mission** on irregular migration, third country nationals seeking asylum in Albania and the “Post Visa Liberalisation Monitoring Mechanism” (PVLMM) took place from 1-5 June 2015. Two independent experts from EU Member States looked into the matter of unfounded asylum requests from Albanian citizens in EU Member States as well as irregular migrants and asylum seekers coming to Albania.

EUD shared the written summary of the reports with the EU Member States missions in Albania.

4. Challenges

The period 2014-2016 continued to mark a considerably high number of unaccompanied minors (UAM) in EU Member States/SAC whereas the number of Albanian asylum-seekers in EU Member States and in particular in Germany reached dramatic numbers in July, August and September 2015.

Regarding the period 2016-2017 the number of asylum applications from Albanian nationals in EU Member States is expected to reduce, mainly due to countermeasures introduced by the most affected EU Member States (in particular Germany).

AL should engage in more determined actions in the framework of the PVLMM to address the high number of manifestly unfounded asylum applications of Albanian nationals abroad while respecting human rights principles.

5. Other issues

Beside PVLMM primarily the refugee/migration crisis and its effects on the Western Balkans was in the focus at LSC discussions. UNHCR was invited at the LSC meeting on 18 February to debrief

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

EU Member States/SAC on recent developments in Greece, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and on Albania's preparedness towards a possible mass-influx of refugees/migrants.



UNION EUROPEENNE

DELEGATION EN ALGERIE

COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) EN ALGERIE RAPPORT¹ 2015-2016

1. Introduction

18 Etats membres de l'espace Schengen ont une présence diplomatique/ consulaire en Algérie: AT, BE, CH, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, SE, MT.

Accords de représentation pour les questions de visa: AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES, HU, PL représentent respectivement SI, LU, SK, LT, EE, LV, SE. NO représente DK et IS. En cas d'urgence et sur la base d'une demande expresse BE peut également délivrer des visas pour NL.

Recours aux prestataires de service extérieurs pour la réception des demandes de visa: EL, ES, MT (le prestataire VFS Global); FR, IT (le prestataire TLS Contact).

La coordination des réunions LSC est assurée par la Délégation de l'UE en Algérie.

Les spécificités locales relatives à la délivrance des visas:

- l'Algérie figure parmi les Etats tiers les plus importants par rapport au nombre de demandeurs de visas Schengen. En 2015, 735040 demandes de visas uniformes (6^{ème} place au niveau mondial) ont été déposées auprès des missions diplomatiques des Etats membres à Alger, tandis que 529658 visas uniformes ont été délivrés (dont 77.5 % par FR) aux ressortissants algériens.

- dans le cas des certains Etats membres, les délais de rendez-vous peuvent dépasser parfois même 2 mois en raison du grand nombre de demandes, notamment pendant la haute saison. Cette situation semble être à l'origine d'un phénomène de "visa shopping" qui affecte occasionnellement les consulats où les délais de rendez-vous sont plus rapprochés (dans certains cas de quelques jours). Les échanges au sein de LSC suggèrent que les demandeurs pratiquant le "visa shopping" ont pour but de voyager en FR, ES mais aussi dans d'autres Etats membres. Les consulats FR et ES sont également confrontés au "visa shopping" pour d'autres destinations.

- plusieurs Etats membres sont confrontés à un taux élevé (qui peut aller jusqu'à 40%) de "no-show".

- de nombreuses tentatives de fraude (notamment la falsification des justificatifs relatifs à la situation socio-professionnelle des demandeurs de visa) et de nombreux intermédiaires dans l'obtention des visas Schengen qui proposent des différents services pour faciliter l'obtention de visas Schengen: des invitations aux différents salons internationaux ou pour des visites médicales, et même des services ciblés pour les personnes avec un profil migratoire ("sans travail ou avec des dossiers non-complets"; des demandeurs dont l'octroi de visa a été refusé par plusieurs missions diplomatiques). Dans certaines situations, ces services pourraient être en réalité des tentatives de facilitation de la fraude en matière de l'obtention de visas Schengen.

- pour FR, les soins médicaux représentent la première source de détournement de l'objet de visa touristique. Une procédure spécifique, instaurée en 2011 pour les demandes de visa déposées en vue des soins médicaux dans un établissement hospitalier français avec une prise en charge par les

¹ Avril 2015 – Mars 2016

organismes sociaux algériens, notamment la CNAS (Caisse Nationale des Assurances Sociales des Travailleurs Salariés), a été renforcée.

- plusieurs Etats membres ont une politique de délivrance des visas à entrées multiples aux hommes d'affaires, pour encourager les échanges économiques avec l'Algérie.

- dans le cadre d'une convention entre le Ministère de la Défense de l'Algérie et des hôpitaux belges, BE délivre plusieurs centaines de visas médicaux par an.

- certains Etats membres ont signalé une problématique spécifique liée aux "mariages blancs" avec des ressortissants UE.

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2015-2016

La coordination des réunions LSC est assurée par la Délégation de l'UE en Algérie.

9 réunions ordinaires (en avril, mai, juin, septembre, octobre, novembre 2015; janvier, février, mars 2016) ont été organisées dans la période de référence.

La participation des Etats membres représentés en Algérie aux réunions de coordination est généralement nombreuse et régulière. BG, HR, RO, UK sont invités systématiquement en tant qu'observateurs pour échanger des informations sur des questions relatives aux visas.

1 réunion sur la fraude documentaire/ visa en format "Schengen + partenaires" a été organisée en décembre 2015, avec la participation de pays-tiers non-membres de Schengen (BG, CA, HR, RO, UK, US). Les discussions ont mis en exergue le taux élevé de fraude documentaire, concernant notamment les attestations de travail, les bulletins de salaire, les attestations d'affiliation à la sécurité sociale (CNAS ou CASNOS), les relevés de comptes bancaires, bordereaux de retraits de devises, les relevés de notes ou attestations provisoires de succès concernant les longs séjours étudiants, mais également des fiches familiales d'état civil ou copies d'actes de mariage. Les faux documents ou documents falsifiés concernent majoritairement des primo-demandeurs. La fraude vise parfois l'obtention d'un visa en vue de l'émigration, cependant il y a aussi de demandeurs sans intention d'émigrer, mais en impossibilité de produire certains documents exigés par la réglementation.

1 réunion thématique conjointe "LSC et affaires consulaires" a été organisée en mars 2016 avec les représentants du CICR (le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge) en Algérie, portant sur les activités du CICR en Algérie (y compris sur les questions liées à l'analyse du risque en matière d'immigration et de sécurité), les visites des centres de détention et les activités humanitaires déroulées par le CICR.

Les rapports des réunions LSC ont été établis systématiquement par la Délégation de l'UE et partagés avec les Etats membres. Les Etats membres communiquent généralement les rapports avec leurs capitales.

La coordination LSC est assurée également en dehors de la capitale. Les rapports et les conclusions des réunions LSC sont communiquées par la Délégation aux consulats des Etats membres concernés (FR, ES) à Oran et à Annaba.

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Les Etats membres et la Délégation de l'UE ont activement collaboré afin d'assurer les tâches à accomplir dans le cadre de la coopération consulaire au titre de Schengen prévues par le Code des Visas. Dans la période de référence, l'activité de coopération a été axée principalement sur l'échange d'informations concernant:

- les cas de fraude et l'utilisation de faux documents pour l'obtention de visas;
- les statistiques des visas, le fonctionnement du système VIS, les délais de rendez-vous;
- les intermédiaires dans l'obtention des visas et les cas de détournement de l'objet de visa touristique;
- l'analyse du risque en matière d'immigration et de sécurité;
- des possibles insuffisances ou irrégularités dans la délivrance de visa en Algérie, y compris des aspects signalés par les médias;
- la réadmission des migrants illégaux algériens, la coopération avec les ambassades d'Algérie pour la délivrance des laissez-passer et l'identification des personnes.

3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.

En septembre 2014, sur la base des travaux d'harmonisation de LSC, la COM a adopté la Décision d'exécution établissant la liste des documents justificatifs devant être présentés par les demandeurs de visa en Algérie. La mise en œuvre de la Décision a été discutée régulièrement dans les réunions LSC. L'ensemble des membres LSC ont confirmé l'application de la Décision.

Dans la perspective d'une révision future de la liste, FR a proposé de supprimer toute référence à la réservation d'hôtel. Pour FR, cette disposition est une source de fraude, la quasi-totalité des réservations produites étant annulées dans les minutes qui suivent la délivrance du visa, car les ressortissants algériens vont généralement chez leurs proches/ familles. Cette situation est à l'origine de nombreuses non-admissions à la frontière ainsi que des pertes subies par les hôteliers français à cause de l'annulation des réservations. FR propose d'ajouter comme preuve alternative de l'objet du voyage touristique la possession par le demandeur de moyens suffisants de paiement pour le logement. En revanche, d'autres Etats membres insistent sur le maintien de la réservation d'hôtel sur la liste, en particulier pour les visas touristiques, car ils considèrent qu'il s'agit d'un élément important pour évaluer la fin touristique du voyage.

Les membres LSC ont agréé les modifications suivantes dans la liste des justificatifs:

- élargir la liste des preuves acceptées pour justifier l'objet du voyage à caractère touristique (limitée actuellement à la réservation d'hôtel), ajoutant comme alternative la preuve de la location ou de la propriété d'un bien immobilier dans le pays de destination.
- harmoniser les justificatifs pour certaines catégories de demandes qui ne sont pas couvertes par la liste actuelle, en particulier les voyages à des fins culturelles, sportives, d'éducation, de recherche ou de formation professionnelle (détails dans le projet joint au présent rapport).

3.3 Echange d'informations

L'échange d'informations entre les membres LSC se déroule à l'occasion des réunions de coordination ou via e-mail. Les membres LSC échangent régulièrement et/ou ad-hoc, en fonction des besoins, des informations statistiques sur les visas délivrés/ refusés, les entreprises d'assurances qui fournissent des assurances médicales de voyage conformes, les cas de fraude et d'utilisation de faux documents, l'émigration, les sources d'information au niveau local (concernant la sécurité sociale, l'assurance maladie), la situation des accords avec l'Algérie pour la suppression du visa pour les titulaires de passeports diplomatiques ou de service, les tentatives d'achat de visas Schengen, le fonctionnement du système VIS.

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

La coopération et l'échange d'information entre les membres LSC se sont renforcés davantage dans la période de référence. 9 réunions ordinaires ont été organisées en 2015-2016, contre 7 réunions en 2014-2015 et 5 réunions en 2013-2014.

4. Défis

Réponses aux défis mentionnés dans le rapport 2014-2015

Les membres LSC ont continué les travaux d'harmonisation de la liste de justificatifs (notamment par rapport aux voyages à des fins culturelles, sportives, d'éducation, de recherche ou de formation professionnelle). Une proposition de révision de la Décision d'exécution de la COM a été agréée par les membres LSC et transmise au Comité Visa.

Points à traiter au cours du prochain exercice (2016-2017)

- Communiquer de manière concertée par rapport aux autorités et aux demandeurs algériens au sujet de la réglementation Schengen (l'utilisation des visas uniformes à entrées multiples, l'État membre compétent pour examiner une demande et se prononcer sur celle-ci etc.);
- Veiller au respect des dispositions du Code des Visas par rapport aux délais de rendez-vous;
- Assurer une application harmonisée des dispositions législatives en vue d'éviter le "visa shopping";
- Renforcer la lutte contre la fraude documentaire/visa, renforcer la formation et les capacités pour l'analyse des documents au niveau des consulats;
- L'établissement par LSC d'une base commune des contacts utiles (autorités algériennes, sociétés de transport international, banques, sécurité sociale etc.).

5. Divers

Le rapport a été approuvé par tous les États membres présents en Algérie.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA

17/05/2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in Luanda 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

In Angola, there are twelve Schengen member States represented locally: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Norway. All have their consular services centralised in the capital Luanda, except for Portugal which has a second Consulate in the town of Benguela and for Sweden which for the moment is still represented in consular services by Norway.

In terms of local representation of (non-resident) Schengen members: Norway represents Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Switzerland and Sweden; Belgium represents Luxembourg; Poland represents Latvia and Slovenia; Germany represents Estonia; Italy represents Malta; and Portugal represents Austria, Greece, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Portugal also represents Italy, Austria, Slovenia and Slovakia in their consulate in Benguela.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

During 2015/2016 five regular meetings were held. These were well attended but one MS was never present. Meetings were all chaired by EUDEL, who also drew up the reports and submitted them to MS for final approval.

Most MS share the Minutes of the Local Schengen Group meetings prepared by the EUDEL with their capitals but not necessarily on a regular basis. Some MS assess the need to share it case by case.

There is no Schengen coordination in locations outside the capital as there is only one MS that is present outside Luanda.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The tasks foreseen for Local Schengen Cooperation under the Visa Code are being ensured by MS and EU Delegation.

Concerning difficulties felt by MS in the implementation of the Visa Code, some MS mentioned the need to include a function in VIS that allows users to rapidly alert other users of the name of

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

persons whose Visa requests have been denied for suspicion of, for instance, child/human trafficking. Document fraud and the reliability of certain documents were also referred to as obstacles to the proper implementation of the Visa Code.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

For the locations where work on this has been completed:

For the moment there is no need to amend the existing list of supporting documents.

3.3 Exchange of information

Within the LSC the following information is often exchanged:

- statistics;
- cases of fraud;
- useful contacts within the Angolan administration;
- contacts with relevant private sector companies who can provide additional information (namely oil companies and banks).

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

None in the reporting period.

4. Challenges

As the economic crisis deepens in Angola, it is foreseeable that the number of Visa requests will decrease. It is also likely that more fraudulent attempts will take place. One of the main challenges for the next period is to increase collaboration among MS and with Angolan authorities in the detection and prevention of frauds, falsifications and forged documents.

5. Other issues

None.



Buenos Aires, May 04, 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN ARGENTINA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

There have been no changes in the number of MS present in Argentina since the last LSC report. Of the 28 EU MS, 22 have a permanent diplomatic mission which can handle visa applications (AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SE, SK, and UK). Out of the remaining six MS, CY, EE, LT, LV and MT have an honorary consul. AT is representing MT, ES represents LT and EE while BE issues visas for LU according to a local representation arrangement. Of the four non-EU Schengen MS, CH and NO have diplomatic representations in Argentina which can issue Schengen visas. By virtue of local arrangements, NO issues visas for DK, IS and SE, while CH is competent for issuing visas for LI.

Currently, no country uses an external service provider for the collection of visa applications.

Given that Argentine citizens have the right to travel visa-free to the Schengen area for up to 90 days, Schengen visa applications are filed only by third country nationals. It is worth noting that Argentina is home to more than a million EU citizens, most of whom have double citizenship.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

During the reporting period, two regular LSC meetings were held, on September 7 2015 and on January 19 2016. Both meetings took place at the EU Delegation and were chaired by it. In September 11 MS accredited in Argentina were present, as well as Switzerland and Norway, whereas in January, despite the fact that it was during the summer holidays, 8 Member States and Switzerland were present.

On September 7 2015, MS discussed the draft harmonised list of supporting documents for Schengen visas issued in Argentina. The list was prepared by a small working group composed of DE, IT, ES, FR and the delegation. MS confirmed their approval of the draft list which was then sent to HQ for comments.

On January 19 2016, the list was approved by the MS, including the comments that had been submitted by the Visa Committee (HOME/B2/Visa Committee/41/2015), which were taken into account and incorporated.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

The EU Delegation prepared the agendas and the reports on the meetings and circulated the drafts among MS for comments before final approval. As far as we know, MS share the common reports with their capitals, and some of them draw up their own reports.

No LSC coordination was ensured in locations outside the capital because of the low sensitivity of the topic.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS are generally well prepared to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code. MS have not reported any specific problems with the implementation of the Visa Code.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

MS agreed during the last regular LSC meeting to approve a harmonised list of supporting documents needed for a Schengen visa application following the submission of comments from the Visa Committee. A draft decision of the Commission was prepared, and the final decision by the Commission is now awaited.

Since Argentine citizens do not need Schengen visas for short-term stays, work on the list of supporting documents has been progressing rather quickly.

3.3 Exchange of information

Given that Argentine citizens do not require Schengen visas for short-term stays, visa statistics and information on travel insurance or cases of fraud are only exchanged on an ad-hoc basis.

The EU Delegation shares relevant documents through Agora (e.g. agendas and reports of the LSC meetings, etc.), and coordinates the exchange of information on LSC by email whenever necessary.

At the last meeting, some MS expressed interest in receiving the "Frequently Asked Questions" on Schengen visas prepared by DG Home. The document is now freely available in several languages. MS are free to share the document on their embassies' and consulates' websites.

The EU Delegation presented the public consultation on the Commission proposals for regulations establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) and a Registered Traveller Programme (RTP) (the so-called Smart Borders Package). Further information on the public consultation and the legislative proposals can be found on the Delegation's website. MS embassies are encouraged to share the public consultation with relevant organizations in Argentina.

The EU Delegation is sharing a table with bilateral visa agreements concluded between MS and Argentina. MS are encouraged to send to the Delegation information on the existence of such arrangements.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

No other LSC initiatives have been taken.

4. Challenges

Insuring new, interesting and relevant topics for the regular LSC meetings will be a challenge after completing the harmonised list which required extensive cooperation with the MS. The moderate level of attendance can be attributed to the fact that many small embassies are a one man joint and that one of the two meetings this year was held during the summer holidays.

In 2015, a total of two regular LSC meetings were held. Two meetings are planned for 2016 as well – one in June-July and another one in November. The Delegation and MS also exchanged information fluently throughout the reporting period.

The harmonised list now needs to be adopted and communicated in time so that it can be properly promoted. The monitoring of the implementation of the harmonised list may be a challenge.

5. Other issues

None to report.

This report has been approved by all MS present in Argentina.



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in ARMENIA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

11 MS have resident embassies in Armenia; 7 - France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Czech Republic and Poland- issue Schengen visas. All visa-issuing consular sections are located in the capital, Yerevan.

For visa purposes, apart from their own countries, France represents Portugal, Norway, Iceland; Germany represents Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxemburg, Sweden and Austria; Italy represents Finland and Malta; Lithuania represents Spain, Denmark, Hungary, Latvia, Estonia. Poland represents Slovenia, Slovakia, and Switzerland. Czech Republic issues Schengen visa for the Czech Republic only. The embassies of Lithuania, Greece and Italy co-operate with visa support centres: VFS Global (LT, GR) and TLS Contact (IT).

In the reporting period, Schengen meetings were coordinated by the EU Delegation.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

Several LSC meetings took place in the reporting period. The implementation of the Visa Facilitation Agreement and technical issues related thereto were the main agenda points of the meetings, which were well-attended by the Schengen consuls, and Romania and Bulgaria as observers. The EU Delegation chaired the meetings and prepared reports, which were shared with the MS. The LSC meetings as usual served as a good opportunity for the consuls to have brainstorming on the topical issues related to their daily activities.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS are well prepared to carry out the tasks under the Visa Code. MSs have not reported any specific problems related to the implementation of the Visa Code. However, there are some issues related to the implementation of the VFA.

3.2 Exchange of information

Local consuls regularly sent visa statistics and exchanged information on possible visa fraud, refusals and returned asylum seekers. On June 23, 2015 Armenia was connected to VIS, which further facilitated access to information. While VIS is successfully operated in Armenia, still some minor technical issues are reported, which however do not pose any serious obstacle to its functioning. The exchange of information between the MS can be overall assessed as quite good.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Upon request of the Armenian side and as a follow up of the EU-Armenia Cooperation Committee meeting, the EU Delegation met with the Head of Consular Department of the Armenian Foreign Ministry to discuss the implementation of the Visa Facilitation Agreement. The Armenian official presented the concerns raised by the visa applicants - i.a. difficulties to get appointment dates, short validity of visas, etc- which were discussed at the subsequent LSC meeting. The Delegation then organized a meeting of MS with the MFA, where all the issues were addressed. The MFA official highly assessed the level cooperation with the MS.

Both the Delegation and the MS agree public awareness on Schengen visas in general and the VFA in particular needs to be raised. The Delegation suggested that one of the Youtube video series on EU-Armenia cooperation as well as one of the op-eds in a local daily, are dedicated to VFA.

4. Challenges

None of the challenges mentioned in the previous reporting period were addressed and they persisted in this reporting period too.

- fake and forged documents and provision of false information
/employment certificates, bank statements and hotel reservations and wrong information on family situation/
- Armenian citizens can legally hold two passports: biometric and "ordinary"
- High rate of asylum seekers
- Outstanding hospital bills
/applicants who had presented proof of their financial sustainability further failed to pay hospital bills/
- Absence of a unified list of contact points in ARM institutions
- Lack of awareness by general public about Schengen visas in general



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO AUSTRALIA

4 May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) AUSTRALIA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

There are 21 Schengen countries represented in Canberra who regularly participate in the LSC Group (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland). In addition the Observer Countries also attend on a semi-regular basis (Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania) with Cyprus taking part in all meetings)

We have continued to run back-to-back meetings with the Consular group, a formula which has been working well since its inception in October 2013 (and since 2014 non EU-Schengen Members also attend the Consular meeting following consent of the group).

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

There were two regular meetings of the LSC group held within the last six months of 2015 both chaired by the Head of the Political Section in the Delegation. The first meeting for 2016 took place in March 2016. The general attendance was very good for all meetings. The minutes of the meetings were prepared by the Delegation and shared with the group and submitted to HQ. We can confirm that MS share the minutes with their capitals. For the first time in many years, the LSC meeting held in November 2015 took place in Sydney which was well attended with colleagues from both consulates in Sydney and those who travelled from Canberra. The demand for regular meetings to be held in Sydney is strong and as such we have scheduled two meetings per year to be held there.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

As reported last year, the application of the Visa Code does not seem to pose any major problems in Australia. The introduction of biometrics unfolded without major apparent hiccups but issues with regards to visa applications from the Pacific Islands (which many Member States cover from Canberra) still poses some problems. In the absence of a visa waiver for the Pacific Islands the introduction of biometric requirements meant that applicants from the islands have to travel to Australia to apply for visa – which requires them to get an Australian visa first and to cover the substantial travelling costs (flights in the Pacific are expensive).

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Last year, the LSC decided that there was a need to harmonise the list of supporting documents. The EUDEL has subsequently launched and submitted to HQ our initial draft list which was returned with comments from the Visa Committee. The LSC addressed the comments and a revised draft list was sent in March 2016 of which we are still waiting to hear the official outcome.

The LSC addressed the issue of Visa fees and came to the conclusion that this was not needed.

3.3 Exchange of information

The EUDEL created an extensive spread sheet enabling us to accurately collect and record visa statistics on a quarterly basis from each of the LSC MS. This data is sent to HQ each quarter and shared with MS. It is also uploaded onto the password protected AGORA local Intranet to which member states have access, together with all other information shared.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

The LSC Group received the FAQ document from HQ and after a slight adaptation for the Australian market was put on the EUDEL website and MS were encouraged to do the same.

The LSC Group also agreed to create a spreadsheet listing the point of contact Australia wide for Schengen Visas. The data is currently being collected and collated and will be shared with the group and HQ upon completion.

4. Challenges

A majority of the MS represented in Canberra are also accredited to many of the countries in the Pacific. The introduction of biometrics for the Schengen visa has meant that people from the Pacific have had to travel to Australia (for which they will also need a visa), to apply for a Schengen Visa. The EUDEL advised the Group on the state of play of these agreements and we hope to see these issues resolved soon.

MS experience the very real problem of “**visa shopping**” sometimes based upon the time it took to obtain a visa, time delay in obtaining appointments, the distance required to travel etc.. MS also discussed existing differences of interpretation of the Visa Code when determining the Consulate responsible for issuing the visa [relating to length of stay or main purpose of visit]. MS saw no quick fix, however, agreed that a common approach by all MS was desirable and that MS should contact each other prior to controversial decisions to avoid negative impacts.

5. Other issues

No other issues at present

**This report has been shared with the Local Schengen Corporation Group.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO Azerbaijan

Head of Delegation

20 April 2016/ Baku

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN AZERBAIJAN 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

The EU Delegation has taken the chairmanship of the LSC in Azerbaijan in July 2010 and has been in charge of coordination of the group since then, organising meetings and providing support were necessary in close communication with national authorities.

There are 19 diplomatic missions of EU Member States accredited to Azerbaijan. Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Portugal have their diplomatic representations accredited outside of Azerbaijan. From non-EU Schengen Countries Norway and Switzerland have diplomatic missions in Baku.

12 LSC Member States are physically present and providing consular services in Azerbaijan: Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, and Switzerland. In the reporting period the number of Schengen MS consular posts remained the same. Netherlands has considered to open consular post in own diplomatic office. There are no LSC consular sections outside Baku.

The following Schengen countries are represented by other Member States as follows: Belgium (represented by France), Denmark (represented by Norway), Estonia (represented by Latvia), Finland (represented by Norway), Iceland (represented by Norway), Luxembourg (represented by France), Malta (represented by Italy), Netherlands (represented by France), Portugal (represented by France), Slovak Republic (represented by Latvia), Slovenia (represented by Latvia), Spain (represented by France), Sweden (represented by Norway).

Since the last reporting period the number of the LSC members (France, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Latvia and Czech Republic) which are using external service providers doubled from three to six. Lithuania, Norway and Czech Republic are using the services of VFS Global, France – TLS Contract, Italy – VisaMetric, Hungary – BRS International, accordingly. Latvia will start using outsourcing service soon.

The reporting period presents the full year when the implementation of both EU-Azerbaijan Agreements on Visa facilitation and Readmission (signed in June 2014) had to be insured from both parties (it started on September 1, 2014).

The Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements between Norway and Azerbaijan were signed on December 3, 2014.

Norway accomplished all internal procedures. No bilateral meetings were organised separately.

¹ April 2015-March 2016

As for Switzerland – the national procedures related to initialising and signing the Visa Facilitation and the Readmission agreement is still pending.

The absolute majority of all applicants are Azerbaijani citizens, but a very small group of third country nationals with temporary or permanent residence permits applied as well. In addition, diplomats of accredited embassies got Schengen visas. During this year AZ's citizens took advantage of the visa facilitation regime, however, the tangible development was with officials and business people. As a result of noticeably increased number of determined fraud cases and rapidly increasing number of multi-entry visa holders, the refusal rate by Schengen consular increased from 3.86 % up to 9.27 % and the total number of issued visas decreased from 71,889 to 63,275 C and D type visas in comparison to previous reporting year.

2. LSC meetings held in reporting period April 2015-March 2016

During the reported period LSC meetings were organised on a regular monthly basis. They are, as a rule, all held in the premises of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan (EUDEL) and occasionally held back to back with EU consular meetings.

In the reporting period, the LSC meetings were held regularly almost every month with exception of the summer holidays (June) and a meeting that had to be postponed due to other conflicting tasks (October). As a result there were in total **10 regular meetings**.¹ The meetings were all called upon and chaired by the representative of EUDEL. The LSC meetings are usually well attended, gathering between eight to twelve MS on average. Bulgaria, Romania and the U.K. participated as observers on the meetings upon the common agreement of the LSC participants.

In addition to LSC regular meetings, two ad hoc outside meetings were organised with the host country respective authorities: the demarche at Consular Department, MFA related to the implementation of VFA, carried out on 7 December 2015, and a follow up trilateral meeting together with Consular Department and State Migration Service, hold on 18 February 2016.

On 9 February 2016 EUDEL arranged a meeting for LSC members on EU projects carried out in the field of Migration - Mobility partnership initiative, together with representatives of ICMPD and IOM.

The meetings were held based on agendas shared in advance. The minutes of meetings have been shared with MS.

Meetings were mostly focused on following topics; a) analysing the trends of visa related statistics; b) practical issues related to implementation of VFA / bilateral arrangements (visa fees, outsourcing practises, lengths to issue visa, reciprocity, understanding the host nation relevant legislation and changes, etc). Consuls also addressed general issues in connection with the possible changes of the Visa Code, special visa regime for First European Games, introduction of VIS (June 2015) and forms of cooperation with host country.

The reporting practice on the LSC meetings did not change from the previous period.

¹ Seven in 2015 (30/04, 26/05, 8/07, 26/08, 30/09, 05/11, 01/12) and three in 2016 (19/01, 17/02, 16/03).

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The Visa Code is applicable since May 2010 and is being implemented by the Consular Offices of the Schengen states located in Azerbaijan.

Matters of mutual interest (refusal rate and reasons for refusal, harmonisation of visa processing time, fees and exemptions from fees) were covered in the context of the endorsement and mutual implementation of EU-Azerbaijan Visa Facilitation (VFA) and Readmission Agreements (RA). Consuls compared best and negative practices from Member States and host country sides.

- the average refusal rate for 2015 (9,27 %) in comparison to 2014 (3,86%) increased almost by 2.5 times.
- waiting time for submitting applications decreased remarkably due to external service providers and varies from 1 day to 10 working days. No lanes outdoor anymore.
- processing time for all visas is very short and is less than 10 days (between 1 and 6 working days).
- general consideration on urgent cases: the numbers of applicants who requires visas urgently increased.
- the ratio for C type multi-entry visas (MEVs) in 2015 was 33% and slightly increased in comparison to 2014 when it was equal to 31.5%.
- the number of 3-5 years MEV in view of several countries (Germany, France, Norway) increased due to the regulations of the agreement and internal instructions.

The issuing of multiple-entry visas (MEVs) with a long validity accompanied by certain procedural facilitations was considered the only win-win solution for both sides. While Schengen countries started acting in the spirit of the concluded VFA prior to its official start, it appeared to be the major obstacle for Azerbaijani side to ensure the implementation of visas longer than for one year pointing out restrictions in national legislation, as well as technical problems. To that end the demarche supported by France and Norway has been carried out in December 2015 and a follow up trilateral informative meeting with MFA and State Migration Service of AZ in February 2016 was arranged.

The processing time of visa applications in Schengen consular posts was far shorter than the time fixed in Visa Facilitation Agreement. Different approaches continue to be applied for the booking of meeting times in *Schengen consulates*. In general, it is easy to get appointments in consular posts with some minor exceptions due to (a) large number of applications, consular posts (b) some peaks prior to local public holidays.

Taking into account that in 2015 MS issued a largely increasing number of MEVs with longer validity (and this lead to the decrease of issuance of MEVs with shorter duration), the total number of MEVs slightly decreased.

Consuls are concerned that this process has not yet been reciprocated by Azerbaijani colleagues. Thought during demarche AZ side mentioned that they consider starting outsourcing services in some of EU MS from 2016.

Workload: the number of visa applications handled per full time visa section staff member ranges from one to few hundreds (for visa sections that have not outsourced the visa handling to external service providers). All consulates complained they were understaffed.

The Visa Code is implemented with maximum capacity by local consulates. All posts/consuls are well informed and trained to run local consular offices and apply common visa policies, assess migration/security risks etc. The communication and coherent cooperation between locally accredited consulates is well established and the standardisation of practices is a permanent work in progress.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Background: drafting the harmonised list of supporting documents started in 2010 autumn. LSC submitted few semi-final versions of the harmonised list of supporting documents to DG Home for onward communication to Visa Committee meetings (March, June and November 2014) and the Visa Committee approved it on November 12, 2014 meeting and the final version of the list was formally adopted by Commission on March 16th, 2015. The final version was translated by the EU Delegation into the host country language and single version is used nowadays by all EU consular posts.

LSC admitted that the implementation of this issue seems to be complicated. E.g. Germany had to change almost half the documents. It was also acknowledged that outsourcing service is very helpful to that regard.

From other non EU countries: Norway adopted the harmonised list as well; Switzerland had no information from their government that any harmonised list of supporting documents had been adopted either.

3.3 Exchange of information

The EUDEL distributed non-sensitive information via established Local Schengen distribution email list. All working documents are usually sent to capitals for instructions and comments. Major part of all Schengen MS also sent brief notes concerning issues of high importance beforehand and discussed conclusions of respective meetings with their own hierarchy in embassies (DHoMs and HoMs meetings) and in capitals.

LSC successfully utilise the system of information exchange between MS already for few years. The process has been handled relatively smoothly and the information system of LSC's is running efficiently. Consuls shared information and analysis of visa and asylum statistics, focused on relations with host country MFA consular department and distributed hotlines and emergency numbers with authorities, new system of Azerbaijani e-visas, the treatment of official notes from government bodies etc. MS exchanged data on suspicious applicants, on new consular initiatives or changes in Azerbaijan's visa policy, analysed best practices in particular Schengen countries, discussed surveys on migration and asylum topics, updated the contact list for LSC consuls etc.

- Monthly Statistics

Statistics, in line with requested format, are provided regularly to the EUDEL on a monthly basis (see attached Annex A –annual visa statistics). EUDEL then compiles these statistics into an annual overview. The absolute majority of MS provide the reports and information regularly. The process takes time and data are not always readily available. In addition, exchange of information took place a.o. on issues such as multi-entry visa statistics (how to showcase number of different multi-entry visas).

Part of locally based LSC members are collecting and exchanging statistical data on uniform visas, visas with limited territorial validity, airport transit visas issued, visas with long term validity as well as time length needed to issue a visa, as well as the number of visas refused; however not all LSC are in position to fully contribute to this process on regular basis.

- Annual statistics

In the framework of the local Schengen co-operation in Azerbaijan the compiled Schengen statistics for 2015 show that the number of visas issued amounted to 63,275, which makes a substantial decrease as compared with 2014 (71,889).

- Cases of fraud

Mutual efforts were made a.o. to ensure the exchange of information on bad practices: "visa shopping" by North-Eastern and Southern Asian country students, false proof of employment, and false proof of ticket bookings or reservations for accommodation. MS paid special attention and deeply analysed some single cases with particular "problematic" groups of individuals (top officials, business managers, car buyers, sportsman, and individuals travelling for medical treatment or tourism purposes). MS generally act in real-time to inform others of persons holding several passports, visa annulments and/or migration alerts. Few cases of fraud were identified and were related to covering the Schengen MS refusal stamps with visa issued by Egypt.

- Requests on issuance of visa's in Baku airport

LSC exchanged practises of requesting for visa's for LSC citizens in airport. On one hand, LSC acknowledged and used this opportunity on rather exceptional basis (only in case where there is no embassy of AZ). Some MS mentioned, that they decided to make an explicit reference to their bilateral agreement in such NV. This allows to ensure that the provisions of the agreement (such as e.g. exemption of fees) are being followed.

This item was also raised at the meeting with the Head of Consular unit, AZ MFA mentioning that according to presidential decree - the facilitated visa procedures will be implemented at all the international airports of Azerbaijan for the citizens of Qatar, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Japan, China, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore as of 1 February 2016. The Head reiterated that, on the other hand, the citizens of LSC can also request for visas in the airport. It was also mentioned that certain legal improvements will be made. However, up to now, there was no any development on this subject.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

- Regular meetings with MFA's Consular department

In the reporting period no meetings with host country authorities on consular affairs and implementation of Visa facilitation and Readmission Agreements were held. The next one that is envisaged shall be held in Brussels in the beginning of May, 2016.

The regular formal exchange of information between the Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and local consular shall be further improved. In order to reach a required level of mutual confidence, MS expect that AZ shall assume visa facilitation implementation in systematic and pertinent way, rather than every time based on ad hoc solutions and personal contacts.

- Observers

LSC cooperation extends to other like-minded nations (Romania, Bulgaria, UK) with regular meetings and trainings to learn from each other. It has also been helpful for Consuls in their daily work to obtain information on visas issued or refused from those embassies. Information on visa related issues is also exchanged on informal basis with US embassy.

- Migration and asylum

According to the latest reports of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) crisis in Syria and Iraq had no direct impact on the situation of refugees in Azerbaijan due to strict national migration policies. While globally the number of asylum seekers rose last year by 45%, in Azerbaijan asylum flows showed a downward trend.

Refugees: according to the data provided by AZ State Migration Service, in 2015 the refugee status was not granted in AZ. For the period of 1 January – 15 March 2016 the decision was adopted on granting refugee status for two applicants (8 individuals with family members) who applied for a refugee status at the end of 2015.

Asylum seekers¹: in 2015 the total number of applicants seeking for asylum in Azerbaijan was 146 (and respectively - the total number of individuals with family members was 255). According to the countries of origin it was as follows: 1. Pakistan - 75 (78); 2. Afghanistan - 31 (108); 3. Ukraine - 15 (33); 4. Iran - 12 (18); 5. Iraq - 1 (1); 6. Russia - 1 (1); 7. Syria - 5 (5); 8. Turkey - 2 (2); 9. Yemen - 1 (5); 10. India - 1 (2); 11. Georgia- 1 (1); 12. Turkmenistan - 1 (1).

For the period of 1 January – 15 March 2016, the total number of applicants seeking for asylum in Azerbaijan was 16 (and respectively - the total number of individuals with family members was 35). According to the countries of origin it was as follows: 1. Afghanistan – 10 (24); 2. Pakistan – 2 (2); 3. Uzbekistan– 1 (4); 4. Iran -1 (3); 5. Ukraine – 1 (1); 6. Ghana – 1 (1).

Major concerns related to foreign refugees in Azerbaijan include illegal employment, lack of education and healthcare. The second year of implementation by UNCHR for the Asylum Systems Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus (QIEE) has already positively affected the national asylum system in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan in cooperation with UNCHR is seeking amendments to refugee legislation (subsidies system).

Schengen MS consulates continued to collect statistics on asylum seekers from Azerbaijan since 2010. They concluded that AZ is posing a risk of illegal migration but not like a transit country for third country nationals, but as a country of origin where some citizens are willing to emigrate from Azerbaijan to the Schengen area using authorised entry (tourism or private visas). According to Eurostat, 2755 persons with AZ citizenship applied for asylum in EU28 during 2015 (2558 in 2014).

In general terms, Azerbaijan ranks at around 40th position for the number of asylum seekers in the EU and this rating is far beyond other CIS, Eastern Partnership and even South Caucasian countries. The most attractive European countries for asylum seekers from AZ are France, Germany, Sweden, Finland and Norway.

¹ According to the UNHCR report (dated at middle of 2015), the world top 3 groups of refugees were Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, followed by South Sudan, Sudan, DRC, CAR.

- Mobility partnership

The EU-Azerbaijan Declaration and action plan on Mobility Partnership have been signed in December 2013 and an implementation action plan was finalised in summer 2014. The Mobility partnership projects in Baku are being carried out by IOM and ICMPD. The briefing about relevant activities (namely in view of migration, visa's and work permits) within this framework was organised for MS consuls on 9 February 2016.

- Training

Some bilaterally arranged trainings have been held between MS, while visiting their visa sections.

- Information exchange tools

ACID: the presentation and demonstration on the use of ACID was held to LSC members. 13 MS have access to this tool but only 3 out of this number are fully operational. EUDEL adequate provided help for several members.

CoOL: the presentation on Information Sharing Forum on the Consular Online (**CoOL**) website was held. LSC members were encouraged to approach their relevant contact points in MFA for arranging the access.

Agora: EUDEL informed LSC about an available tool that allows sharing information locally.

4. Challenges

1. Challenges listed in the 2015-2016 report

- Ensuring the reciprocal implementation of EU-AZ VFA in terms of issuance visas with long term validity and during shorter duration, in urgent cases.
- Referring to the information exchange between AZ MFA and EUDEL / MS – unfortunately MS / EUDEL are not informed about the updates on decrees, amendments etc in the field of visa related matters. It would have been appreciated if the AZ side could have sent such information as soon, as it is available.
- MS continued to exchange information in matters of relevance to the LSC consuls to ensure standardisation of practices (for example regarding multiple visas and introduction of mandatory procedural facilitations and mandatory issuing of MEVs valid for at least three years for private visitors and subsequently for up to five years for regular travellers (defined as applicants who have previously lawfully used at least two visas that are registered in the VIS). The practises of issuing visas with long term validity for the groups established in EU-AZ VFA shall be further exchanged.
- MS made a lot of efforts towards upgrading the mechanism to address suspected cases of visa fraud or migration alerts and regular exchanges proved to be efficient.
- Enhancing cooperation between MS consular offices through exchange of personal/on the job training.
- Addressing the need for the trainings sessions to be held in Baku with participation of competent EU Commission DG, specialized agencies (Frontex) and regional MS experts meetings/seminars on LSC issues

2. *Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2016-2017).*

LSC Azerbaijan has set a number of goals for the next period. Those can be listed as follows (list non exhaustive):

- Receiving information updates on legal acts related to consular issues.
- Reaching a higher degree of reciprocity between AZ and MS on VFA. LSC via EU MS will try to reach a higher degree of reciprocity and harmonisation of practices with Azerbaijan in the process of implementation of Visa Facilitation and Readmission agreements.
- Holding dedicated discussions with MS on harmonisation of different practises and looking for a ways hot to improve it further (the issuance of multiple entry visas, visa practice in general (how to assess various applications), groups exempted of visa fee when the VFA is open for interpretation and other interpretation related matters).
- Organise training sessions in Baku with participation of competent Commission DG and MS experts on relevant to LSC issues.

5. Other issues

- EU-AZ Business Forum will be held on 18 May, 2016 in Baku. This can provide a possibility to discuss issues related to the improvement of business context in AZ and visa related issues.
- Inviting authorities to brief on Formula 1 to be held on 17-19 June in Baku arrangements (including on visa issues).
- Following Mobility Partnership initiatives related to broader migration issues.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO BANGLADESH

Dhaka, 31 March 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in Bangladesh 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

The following Schengen Member States are present in Dhaka, Bangladesh:

Schengen Member State	Also represents	Represented by
Denmark	Norway	
France	Austria, Portugal	
Germany	Estonia, Hungary	
Italy	Greece, Malta, Slovakia	
Netherlands		Sweden
Norway		Denmark
Spain		
Sweden	Belgium, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, Iceland	
Switzerland	Liechtenstein	

The main milestones where:

1. Submission to the Visa Committee of the first version of the harmonized *List of supporting documents to be submitted by visa applicants from Bangladesh*;
2. Start of the VIS in region 20 on 2 November 2015.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

EU Delegation chairs the LSC meetings. The chair person has been replaced following the rotation exercise 2015 replacing the EU Delegation's Head of Administration mid-July 2015, effective first meeting September 2015. This transition went smooth.

Meetings are scheduled on the second Monday of each month. Ad hoc meetings can be called if an urgent need arises. Meetings are generally well attended. Occasionally a Member State may be absent due to heavy workload or staffing constraints.

External speakers were invited in November 2015, (US Embassy Dhaka and German Embassy Delhi), to share information and experiences on human smuggling, visa fraud, and security features of Schengen visas. This particular meeting was very well attended.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

Meeting took place according to the following calendar:

Month	Day
April 2015	None
May 2015	12 th
June 2015	2 nd
July 2015	1 st
August 2015	None
September 2015	29 th
October 2015	19 th
November 2015	11 th
December 2015	14 th
January 2016	11 th
February 2016	8 th
March 2016	14 th

Minutes of the LSC meetings are prepared by the chair and draft version is circulated to the Member States for comments, after which the final version is circulated. All members are free to forward to their respective capitals if considered useful to them.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Member States are interested in maintaining the dynamics and momentum of the monthly LSC meetings.

The main issues encountered are not per se with the implementation of the Visa Code but rather with issues related to the specific environment, (many fake papers submitted by applicants, over-use of official passports or Note Verbale, difficulties to check bank statement validity, ...).

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Significant progress has been made:

- Submission to the Visa Committee November 2015 of the first version of the harmonized *List of supporting documents to be submitted by visa applicants from Bangladesh*;
- Submission to the Visa Committee March 2016 of Replies of the LSC Bangladesh with the second version of the harmonized *List of supporting documents to be submitted by visa applicants from Bangladesh*.

3.3 Exchange of information

Member States exchange the following information:

- Statistics of applications received, visa issued and refusal rate, (on a monthly basis by email),
- Cases of fraud or practical cases or difficulties encountered, (on a monthly basis during the LSC meeting),

- Travel Medical Insurance (TMI) has been discussed and considered still meeting the requirements; no update has been made to the current list;
- Regarding the implementation of the VIS, (since November 2015), none of the Member States raised any issue.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

LSC Bangladesh has considered the possibility to harmonize the Member State's web page. No action has been taken. The topic may surface again once the Visa Committee validates the harmonized *List of supporting documents to be submitted by visa applicants from Bangladesh*.

4. Challenges

1. Describe the response to challenges, if any, listed in the 2014-2015 report:
 - a. Not applicable, (latest report dates from 2012).
2. Describe subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2016-2017):
 - a. Implementation of Harmonized list, (after approval by Visa Committee);
 - b. Possibility for more harmonized information on MS websites;
 - c. Setting up one common accessible file for monthly statistics;
 - d. Increased regular participation of all MS.

5. Other issues

None



Minsk, 27 April 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in BELARUS 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

Ten Schengen Member States deliver visas (Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia) out of fourteen (Austria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland) present in Minsk. Bulgaria and Romania are also present and deliver visas.

Throughout the reporting period, more MS decided to open visa application centers, using external service providers:

- Since November 2013, a visa center operates in Minsk for the collection of visa applications for Denmark, Spain and Greece (responsible Consulates are located in Moscow).
- In January 2015 Lithuania in cooperation with external service provider VFS opened visa application centres in Minsk, Gomel, Grodno and Brest.
- On 2 February 2015 Latvia opened visa application centers in Minsk and Vitebsk, using an outsourcing company “Pony Express”.
- On 23 June 2015 Hungary opened visa application centers in Minsk, Gomel, Grodno and Brest operated by VFS Global.
- On 16 November 2015 Italy opened a visa application center in Minsk, on 26 February 2016 in Gomel and on 1 March 2016 in Brest. The centers are operated by TLSContact.
- On 1 March 2016 Poland opened visa application centers in Minsk, Brest, Grodno and Homel, on 16 March – in Pinsk and Baranovichy, on 17 March in Mohylew and on 18 March in Lida. The centers are operated by VFS Global.
- On 26 February 2016 Estonia opened visa application centers in Minsk, Gomel, Grodno and Brest operated by VFS Global.

As representation is concerned, please note the following:

- Estonia represents Finland and Sweden;
- France represents Iceland and Norway;
- Germany represents Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Slovenia;
- Hungary represents Switzerland;
- Italy represents Malta;
- Latvia represents Spain, as well as - in Vitebsk consular district - Estonia, France, Netherlands, Slovenia and Poland;
- Lithuania represents Greece only for official delegations and diplomatic passports, as well as Estonia and (from 1 March 2015) Czech Republic in Grodno (for Grodno and Brest regions);
- Slovakia represents Portugal.

The MS work towards the full implementation of the Council Conclusions on Belarus of 2011, 2012 and 2016.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

During the reporting period, there have been four regular LSC meetings (1 July, 9 September, 7 December 2015 and 17 February 2016) and one ad-hoc meeting convened at the request of DG HOME to collect explanations on bad quality or missing fingerprints in the Visa Information System (held on 31 July 2015).

The meetings are generally well attended; 9-10 MS were usually present in the meetings (with a core group of app. 8 always attending). Embassies of Bulgaria and Romania are always invited to the meetings and sometimes attend.

As previously, EUDEL is organising and chairing LSC meetings in its premises. EUDEL draws up the meetings' reports and disseminates the draft among LSC members for comments before their final adoption. Some MS send these reports to their capitals; others draw their own reports. EUDEL asks MS for input to the meetings' agenda before each meeting.

Four MS Consulates General outside Minsk are fully informed about the LSC meetings via e-mail (receive meetings' agenda, reports, questions by one MS to another, etc.).

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

EUDEL and MS are committed to implement tasks as per the Visa Code. Since 2016, MS share the burden of collecting visa statistics. Some MS organize side events for the LSC, both formal and informal.

Harmonization of practices under the flexibilities offered by the Visa Code is not always possible due to national instructions which do not contradict the provisions of the Visa Code, but are more detailed. Nevertheless, in the reporting period, Schengen MS identified several fields under Visa Code Art. 16-5 and 16-6, where the practices are aligned, and work further to achieve harmonization of practices in other fields. Lack of precise definitions in the Visa Code, e.g. what constitutes a cultural or sport event, make harmonization of practices more difficult.

MS noted that practices vary regarding issuing visas with overlapping validity in regular and diplomatic passports of the same applicant.

To harmonize the practice of informing about revocation of visas issued by another MS, MS in Minsk agreed to send this information to Consulates based in Minsk, using the form in Annex VI to the Visa Code.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

A Commission Decision establishing a list of supporting documents for Belarus has been approved on 29 April 2014 and is now legally binding for all the Member States. The EU Delegation monitors the implementation of the harmonized list by the Member States and the provision of unified information to the applicants. At this stage, there is no need to amend the list.

3.3 Exchange of information

In the first half of 2016, LT took over collecting visa statistics from the EU Delegation. For the second half of 2016 LV volunteered. Trends in statistics are regularly discussed in the meetings, also in relation to the economic situation in the country.

Considerable time was devoted to discussing first experiences with the Visa Information System rolled-out in Belarus on 23 June 2015.

Apart from LSC meetings, MS use e-mailing when trying to investigate questions concerning cooperation with certain travel agencies, insurance companies, cases of fraud or any other issue related to issuing of visas.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

EUDEL and MS ensured that information campaign is carried out before the VIS roll-out (a press conference, interviews, information on websites, liaising with interested organizations like travel agencies, an Association of Disabled etc.)

EUDEL organized a presentation about an EU-funded project MOST which foresees travel to the EU of app. 1500 participants – a considerable task for MS issuing visas.

On 19 February 2016 Latvia invited for a tour of the Consular Section of its Embassy which aimed at exchanging experiences and practices about the work of Consular sections. Latvian immigration liaison officer gave a presentation on immigration aspects based on his experience from working in Belarus.

LSC discussed implementation of travel bans against individuals on the list of restrictive measures against Belarus – following February 2016 Council Decision, there are still 4 individuals on the list.

4. Challenges

VIS has been rolled-out successfully on the 23 June 2015; information activities were comprehensive and adequately addressed the interest of the public.

Implementation of the list of supporting documents continued smoothly; there have been no complaints in this regard in the reporting period.

Some harmonisation of the application of visa fee waiver under art. 16(5) and (6) has been achieved, but work on that will continue.

A discussion on facilitation of issuing and harmonization of practices regarding multiple-entry visas and visas with long period of validity is to take place in the next reporting period.

Should the Visa Facilitation Agreement be signed and enter into force in the next reporting period, the LSC will be required to adjust the current list of supporting documents accordingly.

5. Other issues

EUDEL circulated a link to the EUDEL Website on Schengen issues (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/eu_travel/visa/index_en.htm).

The report was approved by the Member States on 26 April 2016



UNION EUROPEENNE

DELEGATION EN REPUBLIQUE DU BENIN

COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN (LSC) A COTONOU (BENIN) - RAPPORT¹ 2015-2016

1. Introduction

Pendant la période couverte par le présent rapport, certains changements se sont produits pour la délivrance des visas Schengen à Cotonou puisque l'Ambassade de Belgique a fermé sa section VISA le 1^{er} juin 2015. La France représente la Belgique pour les visas court séjour à partir du 1er juin et la Suisse depuis le 15 juin (la Suisse était préalablement représentée par la Belgique).

Pour rappel, depuis début 2014, l'Ambassade des Pays-Bas ne délivre plus de visas localement. Les demandes sont réceptionnées localement puis traitées par le Bureau régional des Pays-Bas au Ghana.

Par conséquent, depuis le 1er juin 2015 au Bénin, seulement deux Etats Schengen ont des représentations diplomatiques habilitées à délivrer des visas à Cotonou: l'Allemagne et la France.

Concernant le nombre de demandes traitées par les EM: la France traite environ 12.000 demandes par an et l'Allemagne environ 1.500 demandes par an (année 2015).

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2015-2016

Depuis janvier 2013, la Délégation de l'UE assure la Présidence et le Secrétariat du groupe LSC au Bénin qui se réunit deux fois par semestre.

Pendant la période d'avril 2015 à mars 2016, nous avons tenu 4 réunions Schengen (04/06/2015, 22/09/2015, 01/12/2015, 12/04/2016) avec une participation des Etats Schengen présents au Bénin (y compris la Suisse).

La Présidence et le Secrétariat du groupe est assuré par la DUE. Les rapports de réunions sont validés par les EM. Chaque EM rapporte directement à son siège.

La coordination LSC n'est pas assurée en dehors de Cotonou, car pour le moment, cela n'est pas nécessaire compte tenu des réalités du pays.

¹ Avril 2015 – Mars 2016

3. Etat des lieux

3.1. Application du Code des Visas

Les EM présents au Bénin appliquent le code des Visas en accord avec les instructions reçues par leurs autorités respectives. Les 2 EM délivrant des visas au cours de la période couverte par ce rapport utilisent le système VIS sans grandes difficultés à signaler. Cependant, et comme mentionné l'année dernière :

- Pour des contraintes liées au système sur le plan national, certains demandeurs de visa ayant déjà laissé leurs empreintes sont toujours soumis à la procédure d'enregistrement des empreintes dans une période de moins de cinq ans, quand il y a eu un refus préalable.

D'autres questions dans l'application du code visa sont:

- Les consulats continuent de constater des cas de fraude documentaire (relevés bancaires, fausses déclarations d'importation, fausses lettres d'invitation...). Les réunions LSC servent aussi de cadre d'échanges d'informations, de pratiques communes et de discussions sur des dossiers frauduleux.
- Les Etats-membres soulignent la sophistication croissante des fraudes.

3.2. Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs

Le travail d'harmonisation de la liste de documents justificatifs est terminé et appliquée par les 2 EM. Les différents EM publient les documents sur leurs sites web.

3.3. Echange d'informations

Les statistiques sont partagées dans chaque réunion avec une compilation annuelle, si bien que la circulation des informations entre les représentants des EM est régulière, avec la DUE en copie systématique.

Dans les réunions, les cas de fraudes sont mentionnés et parfois présentés pour vérification et/ou consultation entre les différents consulats.

Conformément à la demande des EM, l'entreprise SICASS qui effectue le contrôle documentaire à l'aéroport pour les 3 compagnies aériennes relayant l'espace Schengen (Air France, Brussels Airlines et Royal Air Maroc) participe une fois par semestre aux réunions pour échanger sur des cas de fraudes documentaires, la coordination et faciliter le contact.

Dans la même logique, le policier français en mission à l'aéroport est présent au cours des coordinations et informe les EM sur les éventuelles difficultés constatées.

La coordination téléphonique et/ou par mail entre les EM est active au Bénin dans le traitement de certains dossiers.

3.4. D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

N/A

4. Défis

Les défis suivant sont identifiés:

- Il convient de poursuivre la veille et la vigilance relative aux cas de fraude documentaire.
- En raison de la diminution à deux consulats délivrant des visas Schengen à partir du 1er juin 2015 (France et Allemagne), les possibilités d'échanges d'information et d'expériences seront plus limitées.
- Avec l'arrivée de passeports de service et diplomatiques biométriques et lisibles en machine, le nombre d'EM dispensant de visas les détenteurs pourrait augmenter. Or, les autorités béninoises reconnaissent elles-mêmes un faible contrôle du nombre de passeports e services en circulation et des règles d'attribution pour le moins floues (voir rapport LSC du 4 juin 2015).
- Certains EM regrettent l'absence d'informations sur des problèmes constatés à l'entrée de l'espace Schengen (voyageurs avec visa mais considérés inadmissibles sur l'espace Schengen). L'Ambassade d'Allemagne reçoit les données de la Police aux frontières mais ce n'est pas le cas de la France.

5. Divers

Rien de particulier à signaler

L'ensemble des Etats membres ont approuvé le présent rapport.



UNION EUROPEENNE

**Delegación de la Unión Europea
en Bolivia**

31 Mai 2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in
BOLIVIA
2015-2016 REPORT¹**

1. Introduction

Of the 8 Schengen Member States (MS) present in La Paz (Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Switzerland), 5 are issuing Schengen visas in La Paz and 18 are represented by another MS. The visa issuing MS are Denmark, France Germany, Italy Spain. Denmark also issues visas for citizens from Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Neither Belgium nor Sweden have ever had a consular section, while Switzerland closed down theirs in 2013.

The countries represented by another Schengen MS are: Estonia (represented by Germany), Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland, (represented by Denmark²), Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia (represented by Italy), Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland (represented by Spain). France's consular section, although represented by Spain, continues to process directly a limited number of visa applications. The General Consulate of Spain located in Santa Cruz is the only LSC consular sections situated outside the Capital city of La Paz.

All MS present in La Paz, except Germany, use an external outsourcing service provider for the collection of applications: VFS Global.

The total number of visa applications received in La Paz in 2015 (9,903) was 13,3% higher than the number received in 2014 (8,741). The average refusal rate in 2015 was 6.04% against 10,5 % in 2014 (i.e. a 40% reduction).

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

Local Schengen Coordination Meetings are held back-to-back with the Consular meetings and have been held at regular interval (approximately every other month/month and a half) at the premises of the EU Delegation. The meetings are called by the EU delegation. In February 2015, HOMs agreed Honorary Consuls will join at alternate LSC meetings. In 2015, they participated twice. Honorary consuls had joined only once in 2014.

Regular LSC meetings took place on 21 April, 23 June and 22 December 2015 and 23 February 2016. LSC meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation (Head of Political, Trade, Press & Information Section). Consular meetings were chaired by IT.

¹ April 2014 – March 2015

² Also representing Faroe Islands and Greenland.

The meetings were well-attended with an attendance rate of 100% among the 5 embassies issuing Schengen visas in La Paz. The meetings focused on current topics such as attempted fraud and travel restrictions, the need to harmonise visa practices to prevent visa shopping and diverging treatments of visa applicants. The meetings also provided an opportunity to share information to further the coordination on a number of relevant and related topics, including security and fraud issues.

During the period under review, the EU Delegation was in charge of drafting of the agenda as well as the meeting minutes both for the Consular and the Schengen part. (For the Consular agenda, close coordination with the chair MS is maintained).

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Statistics collected both centrally and locally in 2014 indicated substantial differences among MS in La Paz on:

- Refusal rates: ranging from 0,6 % to 7,8 %;
- Average waiting time to get a visa: ranging from 3 to 15 calendar days;
- Workload: the number of visa applications handled per full-time visa section staff member ranges from 227 to 1982 (including visa sections that have outsourced the visa handling to the external service providers).

These differences may in turn indicate differences in visa practices – which could result in visa shopping insofar as applicants may be tempted to request a visa at an embassy known to have low refusal rates or short waiting times. That said, the substantial reduction of the gap in visa refusal rates among embassies, will contribute to render "visa-shopping" a less interesting proposition.

Given the small number of MS in La Paz, the LSC did not establish in 2014 any "ad-hoc" working groups based on the Visa Code Art 48:

- Art 48.1a – Harmonised list of supporting documents Art 48.1b – Criteria for exemptions from paying the visa fee
- Art 48.2 – Common Information Sheet
- Art 48.3a – Exchange of information on Monthly Statistics
- Art 48.3b – Exchange of information on Fraud and Migration Risks
- Art 48.3c – Exchange of information on Transport and Insurance Companies

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

During the reporting period, the LSC did not make any substantial progress in regard to the harmonisation of the lists of supporting documents. At the meeting of 22 December 2015 MS decided to resume work in 2016. At the first meeting of 2016, MS agreed on DE to chair the working group.

3.3 Exchange of information

The LSC meetings have been an opportunity to exchange information on a number of topics relevant for the issuing of Schengen visas, such as the statistical survey, travel insurances, fraud attempts.

Statistical data on uniform visas, visas with limited territorial validity, airport transit visas issued as well as the number of visas refused is not collected locally on a regular basis. The EU Delegation together with the MS will ensure that exchange of statistics is made in conformity with Visa Code Art 48.3, compiling the data for 2014 (see point 3.1).

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Security meetings were held back to back with LSC meetings (with participation of Consular and Security attachés) on occasion of visits from the EU-RSO based in Santiago – Chile.

4. Challenges

The finalisation of the list of harmonized supporting document.

An initial draft was submitted to HQ in October 2013. The Visa committee met in December 2013 and Comments were received in January 2014. Concrete progress in discussions was hampered in 2014 by staff rotation both in the Delegation and in key MS. Work resumed in January 2016.

5. Other issues

Nothing to report.

27 April 2015

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
2014-2015 REPORT¹**

1. Introduction

Since July 2010, the EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina coordinates the Local Schengen Cooperation meetings in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The meetings are held regularly and the EU Delegation prepares agenda and minutes. EU Member States and Schengen Associated States are invited to provide input for the upcoming meetings' agendas.

There are 17 EU Member States and Schengen Associated States' diplomatic missions present in Bosnia and Herzegovina [Austria (AT), Bulgaria (BG), Croatia (HR), Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), France (FR), Italy (IT), Hungary (HU), Netherlands (NL), Poland (PL), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Sweden (SE) and Norway (NO)]. The consular section of NL covers Luxembourg (LU) and Belgium (BE) in terms of visas, while the consular section of HU covers Lithuania (LT) and Estonia (EE), AT covers Malta (MT), SE covers Denmark (DK) and Slovenia covers Switzerland (CH) and Portugal (PT). Even though BG, HR and RO are not yet part of the Schengen area, the countries have diplomatic missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and are invited to the LSC meetings².

Due to low numbers of visa applications, there is no need for external service providers for the collection of applications.

The year of 2014 was the fourth year when citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina could travel visa free to Schengen area and BG and RO. The visa free regime is also valid to Croatia, who joined the European Union on 1 July 2013. The visa free regime is applicable for citizens which are holders of a BiH biometric passport. During the first year of the visa free regime in 2011, most of the applicants were citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had not yet changed their passports to a biometric one. At the time being, the main category of visa applicants is third country nationals. Most of the third country nationals are Turks, Chinese, Russians and Egyptians with temporary or permanent residence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, visas were issued for a number of diplomats or holders of service passports from Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Iran, India and Kuwait.

2. LSC meetings held in 2014-2015

During April 2014 until March 2015, EU Delegation chaired three regular Local Schengen Cooperation meetings (3 April, 23 July and 15 December). The number of meetings remains relatively low, mainly due to the fact that most of the tasks from the Visa Code have been implemented already and things are proceeding well. In addition to the Local Schengen Cooperation meetings, an EU Member State (SI) conducts regular meetings on Local Consular Cooperation issues.

The two main topics throughout the year remained: i) the implementation of the Visa Code and ii) Post Visa Liberalisation Monitoring Mechanism (PVLMM).

¹ April 2014 – March 2015

² RO and BG are also part of the visa facilitation agreement between BiH and the EU, which is in force since 1 January 2008. In addition the visa free regime for BiH citizens is valid also in RO and BG, as agreed during their accession.

The meetings are well attended. Minutes of the meetings are drawn up by the EU Delegation and shared among all participants and relevant addressees in Brussels [DG HOME and DG NEAR]. AT, HU, NO, PL, RO and SE share the minutes of the LSC meetings with their Capitals, while CZ, EE, EL, ES, IT, NL, PL and SI report to the Capitals on certain issues. NL further shares the minutes with BE. BG and SK prepare its own information reports for the Capital. FR shares the minutes with the Ambassador, who decides whether there are issues to be shared with the Capital.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The Visa Code is in force since April 2010 and is being implemented by the Consular Offices of the Schengen states located in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Harmonisation of a list of supporting documents

LSC in Bosnia and Herzegovina has completed the list of supporting documents for a Schengen visa for specific purposes: i) tourism, ii) business, iii) private visits, and iv) medical treatment. The European Commission adopted a decision on the list of supporting documents for Bosnia and Herzegovina on 13 October 2011.

Common list of BiH health insurance companies

Article 15 of the Visa Code says that health insurance shall be valid for all EU MSs and shall be valid for the entire period of stay. A common list of health insurance companies of Bosnia and Herzegovina exists and is still relevant.

Harmonisation of visa fee

The issue was dealt with during 2010.

3.3 Exchange of information

Visa statistics

EU Delegation is collecting visa statistics from the EU Member States and Schengen Associated States, which have a diplomatic mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on a monthly basis. The table prepared by DG HOME, which asks for statistical information on visas A, C and LTV is used.

In 2014, there were 1,451 citizens who applied for a short stay visa C. There were 1,413 C visas issued out of which 1,184 were the multiple-entry visas. The highest number of applications was received by EL Embassy (218) followed by IT (212), HR (170), SI (165) and DE (149) Embassies. On the contrary, very limited number of applications was submitted to DK (1), SL (3) and NO (5).

From the total of 1,451 Schengen visas applied for in 2014 there were only 25 applications rejected going for a refusal rate below 3 %.¹ Similar as to the previous years, there were no applications for airport transit visas and only CZ (65), BG (23) and RO (15) Embassies issued visas with limited territorial validity (LTV). For further details please consult the table below.

¹ The refusal rate is counted based on a difference between the number of visa applications submitted and the number of visas issued. The accuracy of the refusal rate count might be slightly modified by the fact that not all of the applications lodged in December were processed by the end of the month.

Visa statistics in BiH in 2014 (per EU MS and Schengen Associated State)

2014	A visas applied for	A visas issued	Multiple A visas issued	A visas not issued	C visas applied for	C visas issued	Multiple-entry C visas issued	LTV issued	C visas not issued/refused
AT (incl. MT)	0	0	0	0	77	63	58	0	13
BG	0	0	0	0	113	113	56	23	0
CZ	0	0	0	0	95	88	80	65	1
DE	0	0	0	0	149	147	146	0	2
DK	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
EL	0	0	0	0	218	216	216	0	2
ES	0	0	0	0	38	38	32	0	0
FR	0	0	0	0	30	30	30	0	0
HR*	0	0	0	0	170	170	113	0	0
HU (incl. LT,EE)	0	0	0	0	44	43	26	0	0
IT	0	0	0	0	212	208	208	0	4
NL (incl. BE, LU)	0	0	0	0	34	33	28	0	1
NO	0	0	0	0	5	5	4	0	0
PL	0	0	0	0	67	67	18	0	0
RO	0	0	0	0	15	15	0	14	0
SE**	0	0	0	0	15	13	3	0	0
SI (incl. CH, PT)	0	0	0	0	165	163	163	0	2
SL	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	1451	1416	1184	102	25

Furthermore, the table below shows the situation among the Schengen States month per month on visas applied for and issued in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The average of a short stay visa applied for is 121 per month, while the average of 118 short stay visas is issued per month. Out of the visas issued, 99 were the multi-entry short stay visas. Most short stay visas were applied for in June (246), while November (65) was the month when least short stay visas applications were submitted.

Visa statistics in BiH during 2014 (month per month)

Month 2014	A visas	C visas applied for	C visas issued	Multiple-entry C visas issued	LTV issued	C visas not issued/refused
January	0	67	65	52	0	1
February	0	85	82	73	7	4
March	0	104	103	61	4	1
April	0	144	143	110	11	3
May	0	100	97	83	11	2
June	0	246	243	208	12	3
July	0	205	199	180	21	5
August	0	131	130	105	23	0
September	0	120	120	94	5	2
October	0	103	101	101	1	0
November	0	65	66	57	1	1
December	0	81	67	60	6	3
Total	0	1451	1416	1184	102	25

Comparing the figures with previous four years, 1,246 citizens applied for a short stay visa C in 2013 while 1,205 visas were issued. In 2012, 1,325 citizens applied for a short stay visa and 1,228 visas were issued. The figures could further be compared to the year 2011 when 2,161 citizens applied for a short stay visa C and 1,900 were issued. In 2010, when the visa regime was still in place, 102,234 citizens applied for a short stay visa C and 80,371 were issued.

Following the entering into force of the visa free regime there was a significant drop of short stay visas applications in 2011. During 2012 – 2013 the number of visas applied for and issued continued to decrease. In 2014, there was a slight increase in the numbers as compared to 2013. The number of applications for short stay visa was 16,45% higher in 2014 than in 2013 and the number of visas issued was 17,26% higher than in 2013.

3.4 Post Visa Liberalisation Monitoring Mechanism (PVLMM)

In November 2014, a Senior Officials Meeting in the framework of the Post-Visa Liberalisation Monitoring Mechanism (PVLMM) took place in Sarajevo. During the meeting representatives from several BiH institutions and authorities provided to the EU team an update on the implementation of the benchmarks of the visa liberalisation roadmap for BiH.

Until the end of the year, BiH has been able to meet all outstanding benchmarks including: the closure of unauthorised border crossing places at the border with Montenegro; setting up of the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption and Coordination of the Fight against Corruption; the establishment of an effective system for Police Data Exchange, also accessible to Prosecutors' offices throughout BiH; and the opening of a permanent centre for asylum seekers in Trnovo.

As far as the security of documents is concerned, it can be considered as harmonised with EU/ICAO standards and duly implemented. BiH replaced all old passports by new biometric documents of a second generation.

There has been also some progress referring to the domestic asylum and migration policy. A new Law on Asylum and a new Law on Foreigners have been drafted harmonising the national legislation with the EU *acquis*. Moreover, a permanent Asylum Centre in Trnovo was opened.

As for the number of manifestly unfounded asylum applications lodged by citizens of the Western Balkan Countries including BiH in several EU Member States and Schengen Associate Countries during 2014, it remains to be worrying.¹ Germany, the largest recipient of the Western Balkan visa-free asylum applications, adopted an asylum legislation change putting BiH together with Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on a list of "safe countries of origin". This is intended to reduce the number of asylum applications lodged by the nationals of the Western Balkan countries. The asylum legislation change entered into force on November 6, 2014.

In January 2014, amendments to the EU visa rules (Regulation 539/2001) entered into force introducing the so called Suspension Mechanism to ensure that visa free travel does not lead to irregularities or abuse. The mechanism allows, under strict conditions and after thorough assessment by the European Commission, for the temporary reintroduction of visa requirements for citizens of third countries. The aim is to address emergency situations caused by the abuse of the visa-free regime by nationals exempted from the visa obligation.

4. Challenges

Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2015 – 2016)

Following the developments of the new visa code, which was presented by the European Commission on 1 April 2014 as part of a new visa package, it is expected that the LSC will have a set of new issues to implement once the visa package is adopted. However, the proposal has to be approved by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament, which can realistically be expected in 2016 only.

The proposal aims to (1) Reduce the deadline from 15 to 10 days for processing and taking a decision; (2) Make it possible to lodge visa applications in other EU countries consulates if the Member State competent for processing the visa application is neither present nor represented; (3) Facilitate for regular travellers including mandatory issuing of multiple entry visas valid for three years; (4) Simplify application form and allow for online applications; (5) Make it possible for Member States to devise special schemes granting visas at the borders for up to 15 days in one Schengen State; (6) Make it possible for Member States to facilitate the issuing of visa for visitors attending major events; (7) Introduce a new type of visa (Touring-visa) allowing legitimate travellers to circulate in the Schengen area for up to 1 year (without staying in one Member State for more than 90 days in any 180-day period).

¹ For the analysis on the figures please consult the *Fifth Report on the Post-Visa Liberalisation Monitoring for the Western Balkan Countries in accordance with the Commission Statement of 8 November 2010* (published 25.2. 2015).

5. Other issues

VIS – roll out

The Visa Information System (VIS) became operational in BiH (being part of the so-called region 16) on September 25, 2014. The main benefits of the system are simplification of the visa application process, reduction of processing time and improved security while reading of documents containing biometric security features. In general, MSs reported no problems with the VIS going live at their consular sections.



Brasilia 13 April 2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Brasilia/BRAZIL
2015-2016 REPORT (April 2015 – March 2016)**

1. Introduction

The Delegation of the European Union to Brazil chairs the EU Schengen group meetings. The following Schengen MS Embassies (or Schengen associated MS) are present in Brasilia:

1. **Austria** (also issuing Schengen visas on behalf of Malta and Latvia)
2. **Belgium** (also representing Luxemburg in consular issues; Belgium reopened consular department at the Embassy in Brasilia, however Schengen issues are dealt with only by the General Consulate of BE in Sao Paulo)
3. **Bulgaria** (not applying the common visa policy in full, but invited to LSC meetings)
4. **Cyprus** (not applying the common visa policy in full, but invited to LSC meetings)
5. **Croatia** (not applying the common visa policy in full, but invited to LSC meetings)
6. **Czech Republic**
7. **Denmark** (all visas for Denmark are issued by Norway)
8. **Estonia** (Estonian representation in Brasilia does not issue visas and the Spanish Consulate General in Sao Paulo issues Schengen visas for Estonia)
9. **Finland** (short-stay visas for Finland are issued by Norway)
10. **France**
11. **Germany** (due to limitations of the consular department at the Embassy in Brasilia, all visa issues are dealt with by the General Consulates of DE in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Porto Alegre and Recife).
12. **Greece**
13. **Hungary** (only issues long-stay visas)
14. **Italy**
15. **Netherlands**
16. **Poland** (holds Schengen representation for Latvia at the Consulate General in Curitiba)
17. **Portugal** (also issuing Schengen visas on behalf of Slovenia)
18. **Romania** (not applying the common visa policy in full, but invited to LSC meetings)
19. **Slovakia**
20. **Slovenia** (Schengen visas for Slovenia are issued by Portugal)
21. **Spain** (issuing Schengen visas for Estonia in Sao Paulo)
22. **Sweden** (short-stay visas for Sweden are issued by Norway)
- + 23. **Norway** (also representing Sweden and Finland for short-stay visas and Denmark for all the visa-related issues)
- + 24. **Switzerland** (also issues Schengen visas for Hungary in Swiss Consulate in São Paulo)

25. One Member State present only outside the capital: Lithuania

The General Consulate of Lithuania in Sao Paulo constitutes a very special case as this Member State does not have an Embassy in the capital Brasilia.

Due to the continental size of Brazil and the very limited resources of EU DEL, it is impossible to coordinate Local Schengen Coordination in all the cities where MSs have their consular representations (Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre, Recife, Curitiba, Salvador, Belem, Fortaleza and Belo Horizonte). Since 2013 there have been no LSC meetings outside Brasilia. There has been EU Consular meetings organized by MS in preparation for the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Recife. It is a challenge for EU DEL to focus on the two most numerous and active Consulates in Brazil: Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

From April 2015 to March 2016 five LSC meetings were held in the capital Brasilia in the following dates:

May 2015, September 2015, December 2015, January 2016, March 2016 (next LSC meeting will take place in 18 May 2016)

The LSC group always meets at the EU Delegation in Brasilia and normally is well-attended by MS (around 80%). Since September 2015 there has been an increase on the number of meetings per year and online threads started. LSC meetings are chaired by the EU Delegation. Minutes are drafted by EU Delegation and shared for comments with MS. Any further follow up is dealt with by the chair. MSs draft their own reports to their capitals.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Due to the EU-Brazil Schengen visa waiver agreement, Schengen visa-related problems do not constitute a major issue in the local consular work. VIS was fully implemented in Brazil. The requirement for collecting biometric details means that in some cases, visa applicants need to travel further to ensure this requirement.

MSs apply different exchange rates and also update them with different regularity, mostly according to instructions from their capitals, which makes it impossible to have one uniform visa fee in the local currency. However, the differences in fees are not significant and they do not lead to visa shopping.

The issue of treatment of EU nationals entering Brazil is regularly the object of criticisms towards BR authorities. Specific cases of questionable refusals upon arrival in Brazil and a lack of familiarity with diplomatic, service passports and the EU laissez-passer were raised. Often these would occur due to a clear lack of training of immigration officers, however in general it can be stated that BR authorities comply with the VWA.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Work is ongoing and almost finished. After the report of the last Visa Committee in March, there were only minor clarifications left which were agreed in the last LSC in Brasilia. Hopefully the exercise has been concluded by now and only pending on internal procedures to be included in the Commission Implementation Decision.

Throughout the last year, LSC has been discussing the need to harmonise the list of supporting documents and sharing its comments with DG HOME, in preparation for the Visa Committee.

3.3 Exchange of information

The exchange of information within the LSC group is working very well. EU DEL regularly updates Member States on Schengen *aquis* and all legal developments in this area taking place in Brussels. The EU DEL has been responsible for compiling local statistics for the worldwide statistics exercise, which has been successfully finalized. EU DEL is also responsible for distributing data bases of EU MS consular offices in Brazil, as well as any other relevant Schengen information.

Almost all the MSs maintain regular working contacts between themselves (partly thanks to their close cooperation in consular issues). The EU DEL is included in the exchange of consular information between the MS, both in Schengen and in consular issues. Statistics are exchanged on an ad hoc basis.

The flow of information between MS Embassies and Consulates located outside Brasilia is not always ideal. The EU Delegation, upon request, shares information with the consular offices outside the capital.

Tentative of possible visa shopping and cases of fraud documents are also shared between all MS and EU Delegation.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

n/a

4. Challenges in 2015-2016

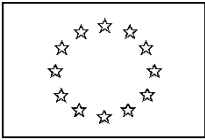
EU Delegation and the MS consular officers have been receiving numerous questions from Brazilian nationals about a possibility to remain as a tourist within different Schengen States for more than 90 days (which is not possible under the EU-Brazil Schengen visa waiver agreement). In Brazil, in principle, the period of stay of EU citizens cannot be extended either (number of EU citizens of various nationalities were denied extension beyond 90 days and the Foreign Ministry Immigration Division argued reciprocity with the Schengen Area). On the other hand, there were also cases of EU citizens, who had the initial 90-day period renewed by the Brazilian Police for another 90 days (which seems to indicate a case by case approach).

For the next reporting period, a challenge would be to coordinate better with the LSC in locations outside Brasilia. There are a large number of MS with consular offices outside the capital and some of them – Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo-, with larger numbers in terms of visas and Schengen-related issues, than in Brasilia.

5. Other issues

The Schengen group in Brasilia is composed of 24 Members and it is a very heterogeneous group in terms of acquaintance with Schengen *aquis*. Since the visa waiver programme is working fine and no major problems arise, MS tend to focus more on consular protection.

This report has been prepared by the EU Delegation in Brazil. Members of the EU Schengen group have been invited to comment on the draft and their suggestions were included in the document.



UNION EUROPEENNE
DELEGATION AUPRES DU ROYAUME DU CAMBODGE

**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS DES
ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC)**

RAPPORT CAMBODGE¹

Il faut faire la distinction entre la représentation en matière de visas et la coopération consulaire. Ce rapport porte sur la représentation en matière de visas.

1. Introduction

Au Cambodge, en matière de visas, deux Pays Schengen sont représentés : la France et l'Allemagne. Ces deux Etats représentent 15 autres Etats Membres répartis comme suit :

- France : Belgique, Estonie, Grèce, Islande, Malte, Norvège, Portugal, Slovaquie, Espagne et Suède; depuis le 1^{er} septembre 2015, FR a cessé de représenter le Suisse pour les visas².

- Allemagne : Autriche, Finlande, Italie, Luxembourg et Pays-Bas³.

Les Pays Schengen non-représentés sont: Danemark, Hongrie, Lettonie, Liechtenstein, Lituanie, République tchèque et Slovaquie.

La Suède dispose d'une Ambassade à Phnom Penh, mais elle n'est pas pourvue d'un service de délivrance de visas.

La coordination de la coopération locale Schengen (LSC) est assurée par la Délégation de l'Union européenne (EU DEL).

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2015-2016

La LSC s'articule depuis 2011 autour de l'EU DEL, qui en est le coordinateur unique. Les ambassades de FR et DE sont en contact régulier pour des problèmes spécifiques.

Il n'y pas eu de réunion spécifique Schengen pour la période considérée mais le point Schengen a été mis à l'ordre du jour des deux réunions de coordination consulaire, qui se sont tenues respectivement le 21 mai et le 4 novembre 2015. Pour mémoire, une réunion spéciale sur l'initiative de coordination consulaire (la coopération Schengen n'était pas à l'ordre du jour) a également réuni les Etats Membres présents à Phnom Penh, le 2 avril 2015. Les minutes de ces réunions sont jointes en annexe.

¹ Avril 2015-Mars 2016.

² Dans le domaine de la coopération consulaire, la France représente l'Espagne, l'Italie, la Pologne, la Grèce, la Lettonie et le Luxembourg.

³ Dans le domaine de la coopération consulaire, l'Allemagne représente l'Estonie, la Hongrie, l'Autriche, le Portugal, la Roumanie, la Slovaquie et la Slovaquie.

Pour rappel, FR et DE ont élaboré une note d'information commune sur la procédure « visa » et l'ont diffusée lors de la mise en application du code communautaire des visas le 5 avril 2010.

Les sujets abordés au cours des réunions portent sur la coopération Schengen sensu stricto (répartition des Etats Membres représentés, limite des accords de représentation), la mise en application du code communautaire des visas (pratiques de chaque EM) et le programme VIS en novembre 2013, ainsi que sur le contexte propre au Cambodge, pays où l'économie est à 70% informelle : fraude documentaire à l'état civil, pression migratoire, justification des ressources des demandeurs qui reste une question majeure.

Notons qu'il n'y a pas de coopération locale Schengen en dehors de Phnom Penh puisque les postes consulaires ne sont présents qu'à la capitale et qu'il n'existe pas d'antenne régionale.

3. Etat des lieux

La mise en application du programme VIS n'a pas créé des changements significatifs, sauf pour l'Ambassade DE qui utilise désormais la prise de données biométriques (empreintes digitales) pour d'autres Etats membres.

3.1. Application du Code des Visas

L'harmonisation des éléments suivants n'est pas encore atteinte :

- Taux de change; cette question récurrente complique le travail de coordination Schengen.
- Accord de représentation (article 8 du code des visas).

3.2. Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.

L'harmonisation sur ce point a été réalisée depuis avril 2010.

3.3. Echange d'informations

Les échanges d'information entre EM portent principalement sur :

- Les dossiers pouvant poser problème (doute sur l'authenticité des documents par exemple) ou ayant fait l'objet de refus antérieurs de la part d'un EM;
- Les statistiques (relevé mensuel);
- Les taux de change.

EU DEL transmet régulièrement aux EM, les comptes-rendus des réunions du Comité des visas qui se tiennent à Bruxelles sous l'égide de l'Union européenne.

3.4. Autres initiatives prises en LSC

Néant.

4. Défis pour 2016-2017

Les sujets suivants pourraient l'être l'objet d'une réflexion sur la possibilité d'une application harmonisée des pratiques de recevabilité des visas Schengen:

- Prise de rendez-vous systématisée dans un contexte d'augmentation importante du nombre de demandeurs

1. FR: 30% de plus en 2014 par rapport à 2013, avec 4733 visas délivrés pour 5613 demandes. En 2015, 4 925 visas délivrés pour 5927 demandés, soit une augmentation supplémentaire de 4%.

2. DE: en 2015, 1856 visas délivrés pour 1992 demandes.

- Harmonisation des taux de change.

Il avait été rappelé en 2013 déjà que la compétence d'un EM en matière d'instruction des demandes de visa Schengen est déterminée en priorité selon :

- 1) le pays où l'objet est considéré comme le plus important;
- 2) le pays où la durée est la plus longue;
- 3) le pays de première entrée.

5. Divers

L'harmonisation des taux de change est fortement souhaitée.

Les différents modèles d'attestations d'accueil peuvent poser des problèmes de compréhension pour certains EM représentés (Grèce, Norvège, Finlande, Suède) lorsque ceux-ci sont rédigés dans la langue de ces pays. Le recours à un service de traduction des ambassades concernées est requis.



Yaoundé, 12 mai 2016

COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) AU CAMEROUN RAPPORT¹ 2015-2016

1. Introduction

Six Etats Schengen sont représentés au Cameroun (Allemagne, Belgique, Espagne, France, Italie, Suisse). Tous ces Etats ont une section visas au sein de leur Ambassade ou Consulat à Yaoundé et la France dispose en outre d'une section visas au sein de son Consulat général à Douala. Certains pays Schengen ont des accords pour en représenter d'autres (la Belgique avec l'Autriche, le Luxembourg, les Pays-Bas et la Norvège; la France avec la Grèce, la Lettonie, la Lituanie, Malte, la République tchèque et le Danemark; l'Espagne avec le Portugal et la Slovénie; l'Allemagne avec l'Estonie, la Hongrie, la Slovaquie; l'Italie avec la Suède). Seules l'Italie et l'Espagne ont recours à un prestataire de services externe, en l'occurrence la société VFS Global, pour le traitement de certaines demandes de visa de court séjour sur passeport ordinaire². Au total 25894 visas Schengen ont été délivrés au Cameroun en 2015 (16439 par la France, 2581 par l'Italie, 2717 par l'Allemagne, 2492 par la Belgique, 980 par la Suisse et 685 par l'Espagne).

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2015-2016

Cinq réunions de coordination locale Schengen ont été organisées au cours de la période de référence. Les Etats Schengen participent régulièrement à ces réunions, qui sont présidées par la Délégation (Chef de section Politique, information, économie et commerce). Les réunions étaient organisées à tour de rôle par les différents Etats Schengen, ce qui a permis par la même occasion de visiter les consulats. Par ailleurs, le projet de compte-rendu était généralement préparé par l'hôte. L'effectif réduit de certaines Ambassades empêche parfois un Etat ou un autre d'être représenté ou de produire le compte rendu.

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Le déploiement du VIS au Cameroun est effectif à compter du 14 mars 2013. Les pratiques sont toujours parfois légèrement différentes quant aux procédures de refus des visas. Certains pays ont l'obligation de motiver tous leurs refus d'accorder un visa à l'aide d'un formulaire spécifique qui est joint au formulaire Schengen habituel.

Les participants des réunions LSC ont régulièrement échangé sur la pratique consistant à apposer des marques distinctives sur les passeports qui était l'un des sujets de préoccupation du Ministère

¹ Avril 2015 – Mars 2016

² Pour l'Espagne l'outsourcing concerne tous les visas de court séjour sur passeport ordinaire à l'exception des visas pour motif humanitaire ou médical; pour l'Italie les visas de court séjour sur passeport ordinaire pour motif de tourisme et d'affaires.

des relations extérieures camerounais signalé lors de la réunion du Groupe de Travail Migrations UE-Cameroun en novembre 2014. A compter du 20 novembre 2015, le VIS couvre le monde entier, le cachet apposé sur le passeport du demandeur a été par conséquent supprimé.

3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.

La liste commune a été adoptée par la Commission européenne le 29 avril 2014 et est utilisée par toutes les représentations Schengen sur place.

3.3 Echange d'informations

Les participants des réunions LSC ont rapporté des cas préoccupants dans le cadre de la délivrance des visas, entre autres:

- la fraude concernant les relevés bancaires qui constitue la majorité de cas de fraude détectés;
- problèmes liés à la légalisation des certificats/diplômes pour les étudiants. Ceux-ci devraient être délivrés par l'autorité camerounaise qui a initialement établi le certificat/diplôme, mais cette démarche semble poser problème. Par conséquent, des ambassades reçoivent souvent les légalisations délivrées par le préfet et le Ministère des relations extérieures, dont ils ne peuvent vérifier l'authenticité. Plusieurs Etats membres vérifient les certificats/diplômes par des avocats.
- l'abus de l'aide médicale en Europe. Les Camerounais qui abusent sont souvent des catégories sociales les plus élevées. Les factures impayées varient entre 1000 et 12000€. Ces frais médicaux ne sont presque jamais couverts par l'assurance Schengen, comme il ne s'agit pas d'accidents qui se sont produits dans l'Espace Schengen. L'assurance médicale n'étant pas une condition d'entrée sur le territoire, certains Camerounais présentent d'abord l'assurance à l'Ambassade et l'annulent une fois le visa établi;
- la sécurité insuffisante à l'aéroport de Yaoundé où l'on constate des échanges de passeports dans la zone de transit qui favorisent l'immigration irrégulière.

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

En avril, les participants ont échangé avec le consul de Turquie sur la délivrance des visas Schengen et tures au Cameroun.

En juin les participants ont accueilli Mme Amely James Koh Bela, Experte en matière de traite des Etres Humains de l'organisation « CIPCRE » pour un échange de vues.

4. Défis

La fraude à l'état civil constitue toujours une source de complications et de contentieux. Les vérifications s'avèrent souvent longues et malaisées notamment auprès des centres d'état civil de province et la plupart des participants font part de leur regret de ne pas bénéficier de moyens suffisants pour mener à bien ces vérifications.

Ils existent des suspicions bien fondées que certains membres de l'administration camerounaise fournissent contre rémunération de faux documents et de faux comptes à ceux qui en feraient la demande.

Les Ambassades sont confrontées aux problèmes avec certaines mairies de Yaoundé où les fonctionnaires ne répondent pas aux sollicitations.

5. Divers

Ce rapport a été préparé par la Délégation de l'UE et approuvé par l'ensemble des représentants des Etats Schengen présents au Cameroun.



11/5/2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in BEIJING, CHINA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) in China has a strong presence with representation of Schengen members encompassing a total of 64 embassies and consulates throughout China.

All 28 EU Member States and 25 Schengen members are represented in Beijing². 21 Schengen members have consulates in Shanghai, 11 have consulates in Guangzhou, and several also have consulates in Chengdu, Wuhan, Shenyang and Chongqing.

Three external service providers (TLS Contact, VFS Global, and VisaMetric) are used by several Schengen states for the collection of visa applications in cities with consular presence. 18 Schengen states³ have outsourced the collection of visa applications in Beijing. 17 Schengen states are using outsourcing in Shanghai⁴, 11 in Guangzhou⁵, four in Chengdu⁶, two in Shenyang⁷, one in Wuhan⁸ and three in Chongqing⁹. Member States also started opening Visa Application Centres (VACs) in cities without consular presence.

Demand for Schengen visas in China continues to be on a steady increase. In 2015, the number of visa applications reached 2,383,818 and increased by over 500,000 compared to 2014 (1,8 million). Schengen countries issued 2,308,591 visas. The refusal rate dropped again to 2,8% (from 3% in 2014). In 2015, China accounted for 16% of the total share of Schengen visa issued worldwide. That means that every 6th Schengen visa is issued in China.

For comparison, the US issued 2,446,917 visas in 2015 (in 2014, it was 1,650,892). The UK issued 491,000 visas, a 19% increase on the previous year. Australia's figures reached 731,882 in 2015 for a visitor visa for tourism and business (the one most comparable to Schengen). Canada's most

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

² Liechtenstein is represented by Switzerland in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

³ Italy, Czech Republic, France, Belgium, Hungary, Malta, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Spain, Norway, Greece, Portugal, Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, Lithuania, and Sweden.

⁴ Germany, Italy, Czech Republic, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Spain, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Netherlands, Hungary, Portugal, Finland, and Malta

⁵ Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Austria, Greece, Spain, Switzerland, Norway, Netherlands.

⁶ Germany, France, Czech Republic, and the Netherlands.

⁷ France and Germany

⁸ France

⁹ Denmark, Italy, and Hungary

recent information is that last year they issued 372,962 visas to Chinese nationals overall (this is in temporary resident categories including visitors, students, workers). In 2015, about 120 million Chinese travelled overseas, up from 109 million the previous year. China reported visa exemption agreements for various passports with 99 countries and 59 visa simplification agreements or arrangements with 37 countries. In addition, 36 countries and regions granted unilateral visa-on-arrival policies to Chinese citizens and another 11 countries and regions unilaterally allowed Chinese citizens to visit without a visa.

2015 was marked by the implementation of the roadmap agreed at the 2nd migration and mobility dialogue in April. The introduction of the Visa Information System (VIS) in October, the signing of the Visa Waiver agreement for diplomatic passport holders early 2016¹ and the authorisation for EU Member States to open Visa Application Centres (VACs) in up to 15 Chinese cities each were the highlights of policy development in this context.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

The LSC continued to convene approximately once a month. LSC meetings are generally well-attended. Non-EU Schengen countries: Switzerland, Iceland and Norway are regularly present, too. The calendar of LSC meetings is established at the beginning of each Presidency.

Extraordinary meetings are set up when the need arises. In September 2015, the LSC discussed the latest preparations before the imminent roll-out of the VIS. In February 2016, an informal LSC was organised with the representative of DG HOME on visit to Beijing.

The LSC is chaired by the EU delegation, which is also in charge of drawing up reports.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The work of LSC in 2015 clearly focused on three major issues linked to the roadmap agreed at the 2nd EU-China migration and mobility dialogue in April: the roll-out of the Visa Information System (VIS) in October 2015, the negotiation of an EU-China bilateral visa waiver agreement for diplomatic passport holders (VWA), and the opening of Visa Application Centres (VAC) in the authorised Chinese cities without member states' consular presence.

1. The VIS roll-out was prepared in the ad hoc working group on biometrics as well as in LSC plenary. Technical meeting took place with external service providers (TLS and VFS), to draw upon their experiences from VIS worldwide. Elements of a common communication strategy were devised and implemented around the event, including a press conference by Ambassador Schweisgut.

After the roll-out, the LSC concluded that, in general, the operation was satisfactory. Only a few countries informed about minor technical problems (quality of fingerprints, especially little fingers, also quality of data from ESP).

The Chinese applicants have adapted well to the new reality after the VIS roll-out. LSC embassies observed a drop in visa figures in the first months after the launch of the VIS in China. The trends, however, are mixed. Generally, there was an increase in year-on-year visa applications, with figures

¹ VWA between Switzerland and China entered into force on 29 January 2016.

varying to a considerable extent from MS to MS. Some MS noted increases in individual applications and decreases in ADS groups, as well as differences in applications in Beijing (decrease) and in the provinces (increase). There were only single requests for exemptions from fingerprinting of officials.

2. The LSC regularly discussed progress in the negotiations on the visa waiver agreement for diplomatic passport holders. In this context, the LSC unanimously agreed to extend the definition of "members of national governments" to representatives of State Council affiliated entities, down to the level corresponding to that of vice-minister, when they are invited by Member States' governments or by international organisation for an official purpose. Any exceptions to this definition will be strictly limited to individual cases only.

With VWA in place, the LSC noted that information on VWA was not yet widely spread. Individual problems involve air companies at boarding (including European) and hotels at check-in in China. EU diplomats also raised issues of extended waiting times at Chinese external borders.

3. The LSC also regularly discussed progress and exchanged information on Member States' ongoing applications to open new Visa Application Centres in the authorised Chinese cities. The LSC agreed to the need to act together, with a view to achieving a result in accordance with the Migration and Mobility Dialogue roadmap. Following the authorisation given by the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), MS continue rolling-out the network of VACs in the authorised Chinese cities. No concerns were raised.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Further to the October 2014 pilot project, in March 2015 a clear majority of LSC supported further facilitation measures. However, the initiative was not supported by Visa Committee.

Concerning the monitoring of the October 2014 pilot project, the LSC reached a unanimous agreement that the implementation of the pilot project was a success. The LSC looked forward to the Visa Committee on 18 November to determine that the list should continue to apply in China. Following the Visa Committee's assessment, the requirement for applications to present proof of flight and hotel reservation was waived for persons travelling for the purpose of business and family visits in view of facilitating the procedure for both applicants and consulates.

3.3 Exchange of information

Visa statistics

Submission of visa statistics remained an issue during the reporting period. While certain Member States provide regular monthly updates, others lag behind. As a result, the ability of the EU delegation to make reliable analyses did not improve over 2015/2016. The LSC encouraged better reporting of statistics and promoted a use of a standardised template.

The latest discussion on statistics in April 2016 highlighted diverging trends and lots of fluctuations between Member States compared with the 1st quarter of 2015.

4. Challenges

1. Describe the response to challenges, if any, listed in the 2014-2015 report

The implementation of the Migration and Mobility roadmap was satisfactory, with both sides showing a genuine will to make progress on the first phase of the agreement. Following the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) authorisation of (16) Member States' applications to open Visa Application Centres (VACs) in up to 15 Chinese cities without consular presence, the Council authorised the signing of the VWA for diplomatic passport holders. An expert meeting on combatting illegal migration took place in November 2015.

2. Describe subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2016-2017).

Migration and Mobility

In February 2016, the LSC held a first discussion on the 2nd phase of the migration and mobility roadmap, which shall be launched immediately following the entry into force of the VWA for diplomatic passport holders. China and EU will start negotiations on an agreement on visa facilitation covering holders of other types of passports including ordinary passports, and on an agreement on cooperation in combatting illegal migration (readmission). China will also consider positively the extension of the list of cities for opening VACs, and in particular applications in Tianjin, Qingdao and Taiyuan. The two sides will aim to conclude the whole process within 2-3-years.

Harmonised list

Any future revision of the harmonised list may be subject to progress in the negotiations on visa facilitation agreement for holders of other types of passports, including ordinary passports.

5. Other issues

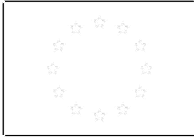
The LSC regularly noted that – for any future EU visa agreement with China – the existing visa facilitation agreements by the US, UK, Canada and Australia will likely be seen by China as benchmarks.

When travelling to the US, Chinese applicants are issued multiple-entry visas for up to 10 years for business and tourist travel.

Australia offers a multiple-entry, 10-year visa, as the result of the Australia-China free trade agreement.

Canada issues – for business travel, tourism or family visits – multiple-entry visas that are valid for up to 10 years, but not exceeding validity of applicant's passport. Each stay may not exceed 180 days.

Finally, the United Kingdom's new scheme includes the extension of standard visitor visas from 6 months to 2 years multiple entry and plans to introduce a 10 year multiple entry visa for the same price (£85).



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN COLOMBIA

May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN COLOMBIA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

The following EU and non-EU countries forming part of the Schengen area are represented in Colombia:

- Germany (Latvia and Slovenia)
- Belgium (Luxembourg)
- Spain (Lithuania and Greece)
- France
- Italy (Malta)
- The Netherlands
- Poland (Estonia)
- Portugal
- Sweden (Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland)
- Switzerland (Austria, Hungary and Liechtenstein)

The European Union Delegation (EUD) has been responsible for coordinating local Schengen cooperation meetings since October 2012.

The key event that marked this period was the signature of the visa waiver agreement between the European Union and Colombia on 3 December 2015. The need for an information campaign — both in the run-up to this date and after the agreement was signed — meant that LSC activity was intensified in the second half of 2015.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

Specific local Schengen cooperation meetings:

20 May 2015	CLS meeting
22 July 2015	Meeting with airlines and travel agencies (chaired by the EU Head of Mission)
25 January 2016	LSC meeting and consular cooperation meeting
10 February 2016	Meeting with airlines, travel agencies and the Colombian migration authority

Other Schengen coordination meetings: Given the political importance of the visa waiver agreement, during the second half of 2015 Schengen matters were discussed each month both at the coordination meetings of political advisers and, particularly at the meetings of Heads of Mission.

¹ April 2015-March 2016

These meetings were attended by all Schengen countries with resident embassies in Colombia. The reports were drawn up by the EU Delegation.

Following the signature of the visa waiver agreement in December 2015, the Member States agreed that in future any Schengen issues would be addressed as an additional item on the agendas of the local consular cooperation meetings. In other words, it would no longer be necessary to hold specific LSC meetings.

3. Current situation

3.1. Implementation of the Visa Code

The implementation of the Visa Code was analysed at LSC meetings until the visa waiver agreement was signed in December 2015.. Some of the issues discussed were: the powers of the Member States' consular posts, grounds for refusing visas, supporting documents, and the average duration of visas issued.

3.2. Assessment of the need to harmonise the supporting documents list

Not applicable

3.3. Information-sharing

Until the signature of the visa waiver agreement, information was shared regularly, both at LSC meetings and on a bilateral basis between Member States. This information mainly related to fraud, visa rejections, insurance companies, relations with migration authorities and statistical information.

Since the agreement's entry into force on 3 December 2015, the Member States and the EU Delegation have begun to share information on how the visa waiver is being implemented: traveller figures, travel supporting documents required in each country, border rejections, etc.

Meetings have been organised and talks held with the main domestic stakeholders affected by the short-stay visa waiver: airlines operating flights to Europe, travel agencies and migration authorities. The first meeting with these stakeholders since the agreement, held in February 2016, was positive: until that point no significant problems had been identified in the implementation of the waiver.

3.4. Other LSC initiatives

As a result of the signature of this agreement, it has been necessary to provide information to local authorities, the Colombian people and travel businesses. This work, led by the EU Delegation, included conducting initiatives such as:

- meetings and contacts with local authorities and travel businesses;
- publication in the press of an article on the visa waiver signed by the EU Heads of Mission;
- drafting and publication of information for the public on the visa waiver: notes, statements, FAQs, etc.;
- contacts and interviews with media outlets to explain the schedule and effects of the short-stay visa waiver.

4. Challenges

The main challenge in 2014-2015 was to ensure that the transition to the short-stay visa waiver scheme went as smoothly as possible, avoiding implementation problems and ensuring that the Colombian people had the information they needed to understand the scope and consequences of the waiver.

Now that this aim has been achieved, the challenge for 2016 is to continue monitoring the visa waiver so as to be able to react to any implementation issues that arise.

5. Other issues

Not applicable



UNION EUROPEENNE

DELEGATION EN REPUBLIQUE DU CONGO

Brazzaville, le 22 mars 2015

**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC)
EN REPUBLIQUE DU CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE)
RAPPORT¹ 2015-2016**

1. Introduction

Trois Etats membres ont des ambassadeurs résidents à Brazzaville : Allemagne, France et Italie. L'Allemagne ne délivre pas de visas Schengen.

Trois entités délivrent les visas Schengen :

- la section consulaire de l'ambassade d'Italie à Brazzaville,
- la section consulaire de l'ambassade de France à Brazzaville,
- le consulat général de France à Pointe Noire,

Aucune n'a recours à un prestataire extérieur pour la réception des demandes de visas.

La France a signé en 2007 un accord qui dispense les porteurs de passeports diplomatiques de visa Schengen. Le Portugal a signé un accord de même type 2014. L'Italie a reçu une demande pour la dispense de visas sur passeports diplomatiques et de service qui est à l'étude depuis plus d'un an.

La France délivre des visas en représentation de l'Allemagne, l'Autriche, la Belgique, l'Espagne, la Grèce, la Lituanie, le Luxembourg, Malte, les Pays-Bas, le Portugal et la République tchèque. En 2015, la Belgique a demandé de modifier l'accord de représentation. Elle demande à être consultée systématiquement pour les visas « artistes », « médicaux » et « en vue de mariage ».

L'Italie délivre des visas en représentation de la Suède, de la Slovaquie et de la Slovénie. Aucun changement en 2015.

La Suisse est le seul Etat membre de l'espace Schengen à délivrer des visas Schengen aux ressortissants du Congo-Brazzaville à partir de son ambassade à Kinshasa. Ce cas s'explique par le fait que la Suisse n'a pas signé d'accord de représentation.

Etats Schengen ni présents ni représentés : Danemark, Estonie, Finlande, Hongrie, Islande, Lettonie, Liechtenstein, Norvège et Pologne.

¹ Avril 2015 – Mars 2016

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2015-2016

Le rythme est annuel : réunion de la délégation, de la France et de l'Italie en février 2015 et en mars 2016. La France a organisé jusqu'en 2014 mais elle ne rédigeait plus de compte rendu. Depuis, la délégation a pris le relais. La coordination hors capitale n'est pas nécessaire : la France rend compte de l'activité de son consulat général à Pointe-Noire. Les Etats représentés pour les visas à Brazzaville avec ambassade à Kinshasa peuvent s'associer aux réunions. Il est possible d'inscrire le sujet aux réunions mensuelles des Chefs de mission diplomatiques mais il ne concerne pas tous les EM.

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Les deux EM qui délivrent des visas Schengen aux ressortissants du Congo-Brazzaville sur le territoire du Congo-Brazzaville ont une parfaite connaissance de leurs obligations en matière de coopération au titre du Code. Ils échangent leurs informations en continu et de manière fluide.

3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.

Les travaux d'harmonisation sont finalisés mais ils n'ont pas fait l'objet d'une décision.

Les deux EM qui délivrent des visas Schengen ont harmonisé au maximum la liste des justificatifs dans la limite de leurs réglementations nationales. Les différences sont minimales sauf en ce qui concerne les visas pour raison médicale. La réglementation française est plus exigeante et la France ne peut pas s'en abstenir. Les dettes accumulées par des Congolais dans les hôpitaux français sont très élevées.

La délégation souhaite que le document ci-joint soit soumis au comité visas pour validation éventuelle.

3.3 Echange d'informations

Entre les EM à Brazzaville, l'information circule de manière informelle et régulière en ce qui concerne les documents non fiables et les cas particuliers

Ils fournissent leurs statistiques à la délégation et leurs Etats membres les fournissent à la Commission. Chaque Etat qui délivre en représentation d'un autre Etat fournit des statistiques à ce dernier à la demande.

Des compagnies d'assurances sérieuses offrent des prestations conformes au code. Il peut y avoir des contentieux car ces compagnies ne prennent pas en charge les soins pour des maladies que les demandeurs avaient avant de partir.

4. Défis

4.1. Lutte contre la fraude

La fraude est très répandue. Tous les dossiers demandent une étude attentive ce qui exige beaucoup de temps. Les faux documents sont de tous types : actes d'état-civil, diplômes, contrats de travail, relevés bancaires, lettres d'invitation, etc. Il existe des officines de fabrication de dossiers complets de faux. La France et l'Italie sont conscient qu'ils ne doivent pas baisser garde et continuer à communiquer entre eux.

4.2. Passeports de service

La direction générale de l'immigration a pour instruction de délivrer automatiquement un passeport de service à toute personne qui en fait la demande sur la base d'une note de présentation signée par un ministre et d'un ordre de mission. La qualité d'agent de l'Etat n'est pas requise. La mission confiée à la personne n'a parfois aucune relation avec son expérience professionnelle. En 2014, la France avait enregistré une hausse de 25% des demandes de visas sur passeport de service. Elle a augmenté le nombre des refus en 2015 ce qui s'est traduit par une baisse de 20% des demandes sur passeports de service et un report partiel de ces demandes sur passeports ordinaires. La diminution des demandes de visas sur passeport de service est liée également à une réduction des missions de l'état en raison des difficultés économiques traversées par le Congo.

4.2. La délégation demande que la liste harmonisée fasse l'objet d'une décision du comité visas si c'est possible en l'état actuel de la liste.

5. Divers

Ce compte-rendu a été validé par la France et l'Italie, seuls pays qui délivrent des visas Schengen en République du Congo (Brazzaville).



UNION EUROPEA

Delegación en Costa Rica

April 23, 2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in
San Jose, Costa Rica
2015-2016 REPORT**

1. Introduction

Of the 6 Schengen Member States (MS), 3 are issuing Schengen visas in San Jose, The Netherlands Spain and Germany. Spain represents Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Leetonia, Malta, Portugal and Sweden. The United Kingdom represents the unrepresented commonwealth countries and the European unrepresented countries but mostly Irish and Rumanians people.

The visa issuing MS are Germany, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and United Kingdom. The countries represented by another Schengen MS are: Belgium (represented by The Netherlands), Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Latonia, Malta, Portugal and Sweden (represented by Spain),

As in previous years, the Delegation of the European Union for Costa Rica coordinated local Schengen cooperation (LSC) between Schengen Member States in Costa Rica. Meeting local Schengen cooperation was conducted four times and was convened and chaired by the consul of Germany, Germany has the local Presidency. Germany chaired the group of consular cooperation during the reference period for consular affairs.

Not all Schengen Member States of the EU are represented in Costa Rica. All Schengen Member States, such as Norway and Switzerland, are not part of the group only to migration issues. All Embassies attended group meetings.

As provided by the Visa Code, local Schengen cooperation is to ensure harmonized implementation of the common visa policy taking into account, where appropriate, local circumstances. All meetings were chaired by the Consul of Germany to Costa Rica.

On January 29, 2015 Consular Meeting talks about issues such as:

Shipwreck catamaran (report of Great Britain consul):and we exchanged phone numbers and useful contacts in case of emergency.

- Cooperation with ICT/Working Tourist Police:

Germany: Complaints about Information made to German Tourists when are robbed and did not receive satisfactory assistance from the Tourist Police. This issue mentioned by German Ambassador Dr. Ingo Winkelmann during a meeting with Minister Celso Gamboa's, but not discussed deeply by the other EU embassies.

- Repatriation/deportation of Citizens without resources:

DE is consulting the management of other Embassies with cases of low or no income citizens, as well as if there are Costa Rican institutions which can help them. DE informs that there are particularly cases with minors in which these persons could be repatriated. The management of this type of situations is similar in other countries, a financial aid from embassies being difficult to imagine. It informs that there are small cases. This was the same case for all the European Embassies, the repatriation has a cost, is a financial assistance by the embassies. Spain Embassy has a list of lodgings for Emergency Situation and adds that also has a Spanish association called the House of Spain. France Embassy Reports Having a French Association of Beneficiaries which can help its citizens and European citizens.

- Imposition of income/pensions:

Other countries report no consular certificates are issued and have their citizens directly Order certifications the Ministry of Finance of Costa Rica about their income in Costa Rica, Germany is alone to be the intermediary between the Embassy and the ministry of treasury

2. LSC meetings held in 2014-2015

LSC meetings have been held at more or less regular intervals at the premises of the EU Delegation HOM'S Meeting. During the reporting period, the LSC meetings were held four times (January 29, 2015, March 12, 2015, September 22, 2015 and March 10, 2016) were almost all well catered for.

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Statistics collected both centrally and locally in 2015 indicated substantial differences among the MS in Costa Rica on: Here for Spain

- From July 2015 to 31/05/2016: 183 visas
- Refusal rates: ranging: 2 (1.09%)
- Average waiting time to get a Schengen visa: ranging is for 2 calendar days;
- Average waiting for normal Visa: ranging from 5 days
- Workload: the number of visa applications handled per full time visa section staff member ranges from 2, 14 visas per day (for visa sections that have not outsourced the visa handling to external service providers).

France does not applicate visa Schengen, France is represented by Spain

UK handles visa applications at the UK Embassy in Columbia

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

During the reporting period a LSC working group has been established in order to assess the measures needed to be taken with regard to harmonisation of the lists of supporting documents. *The EUDEL collected and record visa statistics on a quarterly basis from each of the LSC MS. This data was sent to HQ It is also uploaded onto the password protected AGORA local Intranet to which member states have access, together with all other information shared.*

3.3 Exchange of information

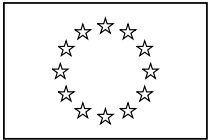
The LSC meetings have been an opportunity to exchange information on a number of topics relevant for the issuing of Schengen visas, such as the statistical survey, travel insurances. Evacuation plan how it is working in each Embassy but we did not one for all the Embassies. We share our contacts in case of needs

4. Challenges

N/A

5. Other issues

Nothing to report. Except the major preoccupation is the security of MS citizen regarding different aggression modes. For a small country the number of aggressions has increased and consuls have also conducted several meetings and conferences on security



UNION EUROPEENNE

DELEGATION EN REPUBLIQUE DE DJIBOUTI

Avril 2015

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in *Djibouti*
2015-2016 REPORT**

1. Introduction

Il n'y a que 18 ambassades présentes à Djibouti dont seulement 2 des Etats membres, la France et l'Allemagne (mais qui n'a pas de section consulaire et ne délivre pas de visas). La section consulaire de l'ambassade de France à Djibouti représente les pays Schengen suivants: Allemagne, Autriche, Belgique, Espagne, Estonie, Grèce, Hongrie, Italie, Luxembourg, Pays-Bas, Portugal et Suède.

2. Réunions LSC en 2015

Aucune réunion sur ce thème n'a eu lieu en 2015.

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

La France applique le code des visas.

3.2 Evaluation des besoins d'harmoniser les listes de documents nécessaires

N/A

3.3 Echange des informations

Au vu de la taille du pays et du fait que seul la France délivre des visas Schengen à Djibouti, la coopération est facile et le dialogue constant.

3.4 Autre initiative prise par le LSC

N/A

4. Défis

N/A

5. Autres sujets

N/A



EUROPEAN UNION

EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION
IN ECUADOR

Quito, 13 May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) QUITO-ECUADOR 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

This is the fifth report drawn up by the LSC in Ecuador.

The EU Member States represented by an Embassy in Ecuador are France, Germany, Hungary (since 2015 but still without a consular section), Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. Each Embassy has a Consular Section or a General Consulate. The Swiss Consulate is taking part in the LSC.

Spain has two General Consulates in Ecuador (Quito and Guayaquil). For matters relating to uniform Schengen visas, the Spanish General Consulate in Quito represents the Czech Republic, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta and Portugal throughout Ecuador and it represents Finland, Lithuania and the Netherlands in its consular area. The Spanish General Consulate in Guayaquil represents Finland, Lithuania and the Netherlands in its consular area. The handling of visa applications, including appointments, collection of documentation and prior electronic processing of applications, is carried out by VFS Global, an external service provider, under a contract put out to tender by Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

The consular section of the Italian Embassy in Ecuador has also outsourced the handling of its visas, including appointments, collection of documentation and prior electronic processing of applications, to VSF Global.

The consular section of the German Embassy in Ecuador represents Austria, the consular section of the French Embassy in Ecuador represents Belgium, and the Swiss Consulate represents Hungary, Poland and Slovenia in Ecuador.

The EU Delegation in Ecuador is 'regionalised' and it comes under the 'regional' Delegation in Colombia for matters relating to Finance and Procurement (Cooperation) and Administration. Nevertheless, on 1 January 2014 it began representing the EU in Ecuador in an official capacity. As of September 2016, the Ecuador Delegation will operate independently of the Colombia Delegation.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

Between April 2015 and March 2016, three regular LSC meetings were held (5 May 2015, 27 September 2015 and 27 January 2016). The meetings were attended by all the European Union consulates present in Ecuador, plus Switzerland and two representatives of the EU Delegation. The EU Delegation organised and chaired these meetings and drafted reports. No LSC meetings were held outside Quito.

¹ April 2015-March 2016

As there have been no meetings on consular matters since 2015 in Ecuador, some consular issues were discussed during Schengen meetings (e.g. strategies to address threats relating to the Cotopaxi volcano, consular assistance for unrepresented EU citizens and the new Directive on consular protection for unrepresented citizens of the Union in third countries). Representatives of the United Kingdom were invited to attend these meetings.

3. Current situation

3.1. Implementation of the Visa Code

The EU Delegation performs the tasks that are to be carried out at LSC level to implement the Visa Code, although it has not received any specific training in this area. It would be very useful if the EU headquarters could provide relevant training for delegation staff who will perform this type of task.

Generally speaking, the exchange of information and the coordination between Consuls on matters relating to the Visa Code and its application are satisfactory and regular. During the drafting of this report, the Member States present raised the following issues:

- Issuing of visas (C1-C5): Member States apply the Code differently; for example, some Member States automatically grant C5 visas to spouses of their own nationals.
- Requirement for the applicant to lodge their application in person: although the Visa Code makes provision for applications that are not lodged in person, in practice this provision is difficult to implement due to technical problems and resource-related issues.
- Visas for spouses: some Member States require the marriage certificate to be registered and authenticated in the European spouse's country of origin. Other Member States accept a marriage certificate issued by the Ecuadorian national authorities with an official stamp.

3.2. Assessment of the need to harmonise the list of supporting documents

Work to harmonise the list of supporting documents began in 2015 and is progressing slowly. Differences, although not great, do exist. The EU Delegation has proposed that specific meetings on this issue be held more regularly with the aim of completing the harmonisation by the end of 2016 at the latest.

3.3. Exchange of information

- Statistics: in July 2015 and at the beginning of 2016, the EU Delegation began collecting statistics (covering a six-month period) from the Member States regarding the number of Schengen visas issued.
- Cases of fraud: few cases of fraud have been reported, although there are reports of irregularities and forged documents in relation to bank accounts, medical insurance and travel itineraries (visa shopping).
- VIS: while the aim of the new system is to facilitate processing, Member States report that it is impractical, as they are unable to see the rejected applications until the end of the process and this delays the entire process of granting the visa. They all feel that it would have been more practical to continue using actual stamps.

- Health insurance: due to frequent problems with insurance companies that do not provide a good service, Member States feel it would be beneficial to make a list of insurance companies available, listing potentially risky companies or those that have given rise to problems or bad experiences in the past.

3.4. Other LSC initiatives

Between April 2015 and March 2016, no other initiatives were taken by the LSC.

In the upcoming reporting period, the work to harmonise requirements is due to be completed and the twice-yearly exchange of statistics will continue.

It has also been suggested that a number of training sessions be organised on specific topics. These could include: recognising forged documents; implementing local laws and rules in relation to the Civil Registry; and public defender [*defensoría pública*] processes in relation to consular matters.

4. Challenges

Given the current economic situation in Ecuador, it is possible that there will be an overall increase in the number of visa applications.

Similarly, in view of the upcoming ratification and entry into force of the EU-Ecuador Trade Agreement, the number of visa applications from business owners and exporters / importers is also likely to increase.

Furthermore, over the next reference period (2016-2017) another challenge will be to continue operating the LSC in a way that all Consuls consider exemplary, with direct contacts and a frank and ongoing dialogue on Schengen issues leading to the rapid resolution of problems.

5. Other issues

On 19 February 2015, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility submitted a formal request for the European Commission to lift the Schengen visa requirement for Ecuadorian citizens wishing travel to the European Union. This requirement was introduced in 2003. This issue is extremely important to the Ecuadorian Government due to the fact that its neighbours Colombia and Peru have been exempt from the requirement since last year and in view of the EU-Ecuador Trade Agreement that is due to enter into force at the end of the year. However, it seems that the European Union has made little progress in this area since last year; this is despite a number of articles in the Ecuadorian press suggesting otherwise, which may have created false hope.

All the Embassies/Consulates involved in the Local Schengen Cooperation have approved this Report.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

EU COORDINATION

13 May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in the Arab Republic of Egypt

2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

As in the previous years, the European Union Delegation to Egypt coordinated the Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) between Schengen Member States in Egypt. Local Schengen Cooperation meetings were held four times and were convened and chaired by the EU Delegation, while Consular Cooperation meetings were organized back to back with the LSC and chaired by the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU. The Netherlands chaired the Consular Cooperation group during the reporting period, including as the local representative of the Luxembourg Presidency for consular matters.

All EU Schengen Member States are represented in Cairo with the exception of Luxembourg, which is represented by Belgium. All Schengen Member States, including Norway and Switzerland, are part of the group. All Schengen Member States attended the group's meetings.

As foreseen by the Visa Code, Local Schengen cooperation sought to ensure a harmonised application of the common visa policy taking into account, where appropriate, local circumstances.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

During the reporting period, the LSC meetings took place four times (21 May 2015, 16 September 2015, 17 November 2015 and 24 February 2016) and were all well attended.

All meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation to the Arab Republic of Egypt (DCM).

On February 24 2016 the EU Delegation hosted representatives of AXA insurance who made a presentation to the Group on the products and services that could benefit both Schengen visa applicants and EU Schengen consulates. AXA has officially asked the Group to join the list of insurance companies allowed to issue insurance certificates for Schengen travellers (Article 15 of the Visa Code) and offered ideas on possible ways forward to facilitate the insurance certificate process, such as online applications.

The EU Delegation drafted the agenda for each meeting, drafted and circulated the minutes (via the agora network), and collected the information needed for coordination efforts.

Coordination with Member States represented by a consulate in Alexandria (France, Greece, Italy and Spain) took place. These Consulates were included in the mailing list of the EU Delegation and therefore received the same information as the Consulates in Cairo.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The EU Delegation to Egypt chaired and provided the secretariat to the group. The EU Delegation liaised regularly with the European Commission– DG HOME in order to exchange views on a variety of issues relating to the community code on visa and to clarify aspects not clear to the EUDEL or to Schengen Members states.

The members of the LSC did not raise major concerns about the implementation of the Visa Code neither they flagged problems on the substantial interpretation of the regulation. LSC members rather raised a number of practical issues relating to the day by day work in Egypt that will be described further in this report.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

As indicated in the previous LSC annual report, the harmonised list of supporting documents was adopted by the Visa Committee in November 2011 and subsequently adopted by the European Commission on 27 February 2012. It entered into force on 1 March 2012. The LSC group also translated the list into Arabic. So far, the amendment of the harmonised list is not considered necessary.

3.3 Exchange of information

- **Private companies:** The majority of MS are now using the facilities of specialised private companies to process the visa applications. Albeit with some nuances, all MS affirmed to be satisfied with the services provided by the private companies.
- **Cases of fraud.** This problem appeared prominent in several meetings and was thoroughly discussed during the 17/11/16 meeting. All members of the Group agree that general fraud, falsification and forgery of documents and stamps are clearly a raising problem in EG. Some MS denunciate that private intermediary companies presented visa requests files with fake social insurances, to which are added genuine stamps, other warn about occasional falsifications relating to: bank statements, human resources department letters, "Mugamma" documents and hotel reservations coming from travel agencies. D which was also represented by a police officer specialized on visa issues, provided the Group with useful information on how to verify validity of bank statements with the local banks. Other concerns are linked to visa requests introduced by high State officials since there were a number of cases of false certificates coming from their side too. Particular attention was raised on the case of Yemeni and Libyan applicants where false or invalid Verbal Notes were produced or when official documents were issued by non-recognised or dismissed national authorities. The LSC Group highlighted that there are no common procedures concerning measures against the persons involved in fraud activities. Some MS keep a "permanent black list" while other, mainly for internal data protection policy reasons, have to destroy that list. MS noted that, according to the visa code, those persons to which a visa request is refused cannot be prevented from presenting a new visa request immediately after the rejection.

- **Monthly statistics** (visa applications/issuances): the EUDEL have been collecting and centralizing the visa statistics that Member States sent on a regular basis. MS are using the jointly agreed template which provides figures for the requests and the actual issuance of A/C/LTV/ D visas. The importance of this exercise was raised during several meetings and the issue discussed in-depth during the meeting of 17/11/2015. The consolidated quarterly visa statistics are shared amongst the MS and regularly sent to the EU Commission (DG HOME).
- **Blacklisted persons and suspicious applications.** MS regularly exchanged information by e-mail on "blacklisted" applicants and suspicious visa applications.
- **Travel Medical Insurance (TMI):** During the reporting period, two insurance companies (AXA, United Insurance) have been approved by the Group. In both cases EUDEL met and exchanged info with the insurance representatives in order to ascertain the legality and compatibility of the companies with the Visa Code, in particular with its art 15. All relevant documents were shared with the LSC Group and approval made via silent procedure. The updated list of insurance companies in Egypt offering adequate TMI for Schengen foreign travellers was shared with the Group via AGORA, as appropriate. During the 24/2/2016 LSC meeting, AXA Insurance Company Egypt made a presentation to the Group on the products and services that could benefit both Schengen visa applicants and EU Schengen consulates. AXA inter alia offered ideas on possible ways forward to facilitate the insurance certificate process, such as online applications. This was an example of useful share of information and good practices which was well received by the Group. During that meeting MS requested that a recurrent problem be addressed relating to insurance coverage during the grace period. This led to the insertion of the following guarantee clause in the new insurance contracts which AXA and United Insurance will issue: "A grace period of 15 days to start the validity of the travel policy is given based on proof of date of entry to the Schengen zone".
- **Transfer of visa collected fees to the respective capitals:** Several members of the Group explained their difficulties in transferring the collected visa fees to their respective capitals. This was due to the complicated and unfavourable financial regulations applied in EG. No specific solution to this issue emerged, and MS apply different means for mitigating the problem.
- **Conduction of interviews:** Member States follow different practices in relation to the way the interviews aiming at granting visa are conducted. The Group Members could compare their own practical experiences and noted the existence of recurrent cases of abuses or misbehaviours from a number of applicants. Certain countries conduct interviews directly within their consulate facilities and personnel, while others outsource that phase of the procedure to specialised companies. In the latter case, the consulate will carry out the interview only in case of doubts or particular problems. As a general pattern, it appears that all Members use a set of precise questions for the interviews and adapt them in accordance with the specificities of the case in order to detect non-genuine or non-legitimate requests of visas. Several Member States shared information on difficult cases where interviewees behaved aggressively or when documents or certificates provided by the applicants were forged.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

None.

4. Challenges

- EUDEL provided regular updates to LSC Cairo on the revision of the Visa Code.
- EUDEL provided regular feedback to the European Commission on LSC Cairo's views/field experience as required.
- EUDEL updated the LSC Group on migration related issues

LSC meetings will continue to discuss local cooperation issues, as foreseen by the Visa Code.

5. Other issues

Consular and also migration issues were inter alia discussed in the 5th Meeting of the EU-Egypt Working Group on Migration, Social and Consular Affairs, Cairo, 21 January 2016, that is to say in one of institutional meetings foreseen by the EU-Egypt Association Agreement.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE STATE OF ERITREA

May 4, 2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in ERITREA
2015-2016 REPORT¹**

1. Introduction

This is the sixth annual report of LSC in Asmara.

Since the previous report there have not been any major changes and Italy remains the only EU Member State (MS) delivering Schengen visas in Eritrea.

In the reporting period Italy represented Italy, Belgium, France, Germany, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden and Finland since 1 January 2016.

Other MS have not signed a representation Agreement with Italy and were therefore not represented in Asmara regarding Schengen visas. They are covered either by the respective Embassies in Sudan, Kenya or Egypt.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

Due to the fact that there is only one Embassy issuing Schengen visa, no specific coordination meeting was held in this period. The relevant issues were discussed and information shared during bilateral meetings, including with visiting non-resident Ambassadors.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

After the meetings in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 MS are well prepared for tasks to be carried out under the Visa code. No specific problems relating to the implementation of the Visa Code have been noticed.

While MS have recognized the travel documents (citizens' passports) of Eritrea, a limited number of MS still do not recognize service passports. Alien's passports are not recognized by most of the EU MS.

In case the MS consider that no Schengen visa should be granted, the possibility remains to consider a national visa by the country the applicant will visit.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The harmonised list of supporting documents has been agreed already in 2011-2012. As of May 2013 Italy remains the only country in Eritrea that is issuing Schengen visa and has been using the agreed list of supporting documents.

The document checklist to be provided in case of a visa application in Eritrea include the following: visa application form, photograph, passport or travel document, payslips for the last three months, letter from employer, organization or school, information on applicants' family, proof of financial responsibilities in Eritrea, invitation letter, proof of family relationship with the sponsor (for family visits if the document is issued by Eritrean Authority it must be legalized by the Consular Sector of the Italian Embassy), certified copy of sponsor's passport/ residence permit, sponsor's payslip for the last three months, sponsor's employment contract, documentation regarding the purpose of the visit, travel health insurance valid for all Schengen countries.

3.3 Exchange of information

The LSC has agreed to exchange information regularly on statistics of visa applications and also on difficulties encountered. The missions cooperate on issues of identification of illegal migrants and cases of fraud. The consular sections have a system of control of returnees and, Italy also has a tracing system of sponsors of people who have defected. Coordination issues, notably whenever there are concerns about potential fraud/abuse/integrity issues have also been discussed during meetings, including ad hoc meetings on security.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

N/A

4. Challenges

The main challenge is the limited number of MS having signed the representation agreements with Italy. The rest of MS remain unrepresented in Asmara regarding Schengen visas.

The other challenges are linked to the continuous unstable political situation in Eritrea, Horn of Africa and the high level of migration (legal, illegal) from the country.

5. Other issues

N/A



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN ETHIOPIA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

Ethiopia is a regional hub in Africa with Ethiopian Airlines having connections to 57 African countries. The EU embassies in Ethiopia have to deal with a large number of family reunification and visa requests from citizens from neighbouring countries, including Eritrea. Meanwhile, the EU is engaging with Ethiopia on migration issues; the high risk of irregular migration and human trafficking has to be taken into account when granting visas. Political unrest in some regions, high population growth and regional refugee flows are likely to increase a need for visa services in the future. Some high level officials expect special treatment in visa matters which makes it sometimes difficult to enforce the rules. In general, dialogue and technical cooperation with Ethiopian administration, including the immigration services, is very challenging. Ethiopia suffers from poor internet connections, electricity problems and cultural and language barriers. Recently, the EU embassies have a noted increase in numbers of Schengen visa applications referring to the free movement of persons in Europe.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

21 EU Member States are present in Addis Abeba, which makes the LSC cooperation very relevant and important to ensure coherent application of the rules. Norway and Switzerland are also present. In early 2015, the lead for organising the LSC meetings was taken by the presidency, assisted by the admin section of the EU Delegation. In 2016, after a period of staff rotation in September 2015, the EU Delegation took back its expected role in the LSC coordination. It is intended that the LSC meetings will be organised regularly every 2 months from now on. The LSC meetings are well attended by the interested embassies and there are lively exchanges of information and experiences. So far, there were no ad hoc meetings with third parties, but this could be considered in the future.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The EU embassies are eager to ensure a correct application of the Visa Code despite many difficulties and in the context of an ever increasing number of Schengen visa applications referring to the free movement of persons in Europe. The main difficulties are: 1) limited staff in visa sections, in particular experts and qualified local staff; 2) technical efficiency problems with the Visa Information System (VIS); 3) complicated cases and incomplete applications submitted by Ethiopians, which requires important time investment at the visa office; 4) frequent lack of correct understanding of some questions in the visa forms; 5) regular no-show to booked appointments and

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

long delays in granting appointments for some popular EU destination countries; 6) risk of document fraud, "visa shopping" and attempts of irregular migration; 7) difficulty of finding reliable translators and interpreters in the context of a multi-ethnic country; 8) lack of effective cooperation with Ethiopian authorities and political pressure of high officials to obtain visas without following the due procedure; and 9) lack of cooperation in return and readmission of irregular migrants.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The EU embassies have recognised the need for coherent communication about the Schengen visa requirements. After long discussions, the proposed harmonised list was agreed upon in May 2016; it will be submitted to the visa committee in Brussels in the near future.

3.3 Exchange of information

The EU embassies are sharing information about the statistics in a form of a table (2015 and 1st quarter of 2016 are under preparation). There are also regular exchanges about the cases of fraud, the VIS implementation and other matters of common interest via email and other means of communication. The 2016 re-activated LSC group is expecting to enhance sharing of information and experiences more regularly after the summer break.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

There is a proposal to organise specific meetings on fraud issues in the airports and the visa sections. These meetings will start with a training session in August 2016. It was also agreed to share best practices in efficient visa customer service through e.g. joint visit to one of the embassies and technical exchanges among practitioners.

4. Challenges

Given the numerous challenges faced by the EU embassies in the application of the Visa Code in Ethiopia, the LSC group intends to enhance its cooperation in many areas. In 2016, there are some planned initiatives: 1) activation of special fraud working group; 2) coherent use of the harmonised list after its approval in visa committee in Brussels; 3) consideration of translation of visa forms in local language (Amharic) to assist in more efficient visa service; 4) planning for joint training sessions with visiting experts.

5. Other issues

In general, it is useful to consider simplification of the visa forms globally to reduce the cases of misunderstood questions.



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union

Skopje, 13 May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in Skopje 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

The Country was granted candidate status for EU membership in 2005. A visa facilitation and readmission agreement with the EU has been in force since 1 January 2008. Visa liberalization entered into force on 19 December 2009, allowing the country's citizens in possession of a valid biometric passport to travel to the Schengen area without visa for up to 90 days per six-month period. Overall, implementation of the visa-free travel regime with the EU has continued smoothly. Following the entry into force of the visa liberalization, the number of visa applications for entry into the Schengen area dropped significantly. Twelve members states (AT, CZ, DE, FR, GR, HU, IT, NL, PL, SK, SLO, SE) and one non-member state (CH) are present for the purpose of issuing Schengen visas. FR is also representing PT and IS. Some MS (e.g., AT, PL, SE, NL) issue visa for persons from Kosovo*.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

After a long time of inactivity, a back to back consular and Schengen cooperation meeting was held on 4 May 2016 in the premises of the EU Delegation. The LSC meeting was chaired by the EUD. The meeting was well attended and discussed the migration crisis, local measures taken to tackle the flow of asylum-seekers from the country, issues discussed during the latest Visa Committee and exchange of information and statistics regarding the implementation of visa free regime/asylum seekers flows. Minutes of the meeting were prepared by the EUD. Occasionally, there is informal ad hoc cooperation among certain MS. Due to the size of the country, there is no need for coordination with the LSC in locations outside of Skopje.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

In general, there are no problems with the application of the visa code. Since the entry into force of the visa liberalization, the number of application from the Country for Schengen visas have been negligible for both 2015 and 2016. The number of applications for long term national visas are much higher. This issue presents more challenges for the MS. Some MS are in the phase of automation and digitalization of the process, outsourcing and centralisation in the capitals. Sometime it happened that the MS that issued the visa was not the first to be entered of the one of longer stay. However, the situation is more challenging for those MS issuing visas for people from Kosovo. Some MS often face fraudulent documents and in general they struggle to comply with the

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

15 days deadline for the issuance of the visa as most of the correspondence goes through regular mail (there is however the possibility to extend the deadline to up to 60 days for specific reasons).

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

In the context of the visa free regime, in general it was considered that further harmonisation of the list of supporting documents was not a priority. The risk of visa shopping due to different fees or document requirements is minimal. While complying with the Schengen Code, some MS ask for minimum supporting documentations, like the proof of financial resources and travel/health insurance, while others ask also for other documents. In particular, those MS issuing visas for persons from Kosovo ask for a more comprehensive list of supporting documents.

3.3 Exchange of information

There is informal exchange of information among MS, in particular when there is a suspicion of fraudulent documents. The exchange of information is closer for those MS issuing visas for persons from Kosovo. Statistics on issuance of visas are exchanged electronically. MS faced no problem with the implementation of VIS, where they can immediately see all relevant information.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

No other initiatives taken within the LSC

4. Challenges

The 2013-2014 report highlighted the issue of the Country's citizens applying for asylum in the EU and Schengen countries. The national authorities continued cooperation to tackle unfounded asylum applications made in Schengen members and associated countries. The number of applications for asylum in EU MS decreased for the fifth consecutive month in December and returns increased by over 50%. However, the overall number in the second half of 2015 grew by around 7% compared to the same period in 2014 (August 2015 to January 2016 compared to August 2014 to January 2015). These are mostly repeated applications. In addition to running public information campaigns, the authorities continued to carry out additional border controls, surveillance patrols and risk analysis. Criminal charges for facilitating abuse of the visa-free regime were brought against seven persons during May-July 2015.

Nowadays, MS mainly face the challenges of the migration crisis, with the massive influx of migrants and asylum seekers coming from conflict zones, middle-east and Africa.

For the future, we would suggest to continue strengthening the cooperation among MS within the LSC, and especially of those dealing with visas for Kosovo citizens.

5. Other issues

This report was shared with the MS.



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN GEORGIA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

There are 13 Schengen MS present in Tbilisi (12 EU² and Switzerland). Additionally, Bulgaria and Romania participate in the LSC meetings. UK is invited to participate and they do so in case a point on the agenda is relevant to UK.

The current representation agreements are as follows:

Switzerland represents Austria; the Netherlands represent Belgium, Luxemburg, Spain; Estonia represents Denmark; Germany represents Finland, Portugal; Latvia represents Hungary, Sweden; Lithuania represents Slovakia; Italy represents Malta; Poland represents Slovenia; France represents Iceland, Norway.

Cyprus – is covered by its Consulate in Ukraine or Armenia

Four MS outsource collection of applications to an external service provider; their experience so far is very positive and helps reduce the waiting times.

The visa refusal rate in Georgia is considered high in comparison with other Eastern Partnership countries. Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements between the EU and Georgia are in force since March 2011. Since 26 February 2012 Georgia is in the process of implementation of the Visa Liberalization Action Plan. In December 2015 the European Commission concluded that Georgia successfully implemented of the benchmark set in its Visa Liberalisation Plan. Based on this conclusion, the European Commission proposed on 9 March 2016 to allow visa-free travel to the Schengen area for Georgian citizens holding a biometric passport.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

4 LSC meetings were held in the reporting period. Usually majority of the Member States invited (15 + UK) attend each LSC meeting. The meetings are chaired by the EUDEL.

Additionally LSC members were involved in number of meetings with assessment missions under VLAP.

Main points for discussions included VLAP implementation, VIS roll-out, Visa statistics, Russian passports issued in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and implementation of Visa facilitation agreement.

LSC meetings take place only in capital where all Consulates are located.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The level of cooperation between the MS and the EUDEL within the LSC remain stable and good. Coordination work by the EUDEL was assured by one dedicated colleague. Consulate-to-Consulate exchanges are well established and promoted within the group.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

² Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden

The EUDEL regularly shares with the MS relevant information, like information about relevant websites or some publication, leaflets (example: leaflets concerning introduction VIS)

2. Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The harmonized list of supporting documents was adopted on 29 April 2014. MS do not see the need to amend the existing list.

3.3 Exchange of information

Monthly statistics' exchange continues very well thanks to the dedication of the Estonian colleague. Some MS encounter delays in providing relevant information.

The MS continue to exchange information on Visa Code compliant travel medical insurance, falsified supporting documents, visa refusals and false visa stickers, increased migratory risks.

MS kept informing each-other about the recognition of Status Neutral Travel Documents; currently 8 MS: BG, EE, PL, CZ, SV, LV, LT, RO recognize the SNTDs.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC *n/a*

4. Challenges

The issue of high visa refusal rate in Georgia has been raised again in the LSC meetings and discussion on the ways of cooperation with local authorities will continue.

4.2. Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2016-2017).

The LSC will discuss the way information to the public is presented on EU MS Consulates websites, including information campaign on Visa free travel once it is introduced. (A special attention will be given to information related to the common rules that govern external border checks on persons, entry requirements and duration of stays in the Schengen Area)

5. Other issues *n/a*

Drafted by EUDEL - Approved by MS in Tbilisi



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO GHANA

Accra / 3 May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in GHANA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

In Ghana 8 Member States are represented (including UK) and Hungary is in the process of opening an Embassy. Norway and Switzerland do also have an Embassy and cooperation is quite good.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

In the mentioned period, we held one Schengen group meeting per month (with few exceptions), and the meetings were normally well attended. UK is seldom present as observer. Upon request of MSs, the EU is chairing the meetings, but there is quite active participation from anybody, including Norway and Switzerland. Concise conclusions are drafted by the EUD. No coordination out of the capital, a part exchanges of info on specific situations.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MSs are quite ready to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code and to share info and discuss possible problems. EUD's preparedness (and knowledge of the Code) is limited but improving.

No specific problems relating to the implementation of the Visa Code were raised and discussed in the LSC meetings, just 'ordinary administration' points.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

MSs are discussing about the merit of preparing a harmonised list. There was the proposal to discuss at our next meeting a 'minimum' common list. Guidance from Headquarters will be appreciated.

3.3 Exchange of information

Exchange of information within the LSC is quite good:

- info on insurances and banks are exchanged and lists with contact points (and relevant problems/indications) for both groups have been circulated and are updated with relevant info and comments
- cases of fraud are presented and discussed from time to time.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

We exchanged information regarding migration and return and met the Director of IOM which is working (with EU funds) on a project for the diffusion of info regarding dangers of illegal and possibilities of legal migration.

4. Challenges

Exchanges with banks and insurance companies will still be in the agenda next year. Migration and return might definitely be an issue to be discussed. We are also launching a Consular Coordination Group and work of the 2 groups will need to be coordinated.

5. Other issues

N/A

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in Guinea Bissau 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

Only three MSs formally present in Bissau with Embassies, France, Portugal and Spain. Of those only PT and ES have consular sections that split Schengen consular work among themselves. No non EU Schengen State has a diplomatic or consular representation in Guinea Bissau.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

During the period, three LSC meetings were held, dedicated to sharing information on the issuance of different type visas and other Schengen procedures. Given that only two MSs have consular sections it is not difficult to have unanimous participation. No other consular coordination meetings with other States were held during the period.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The Visa Code is being applied by the two Mss that have a consular section within their Embassies, ES and PT.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Following a common analysis with the Consular Sections of the ES and PT Embassies, the Delegation can certify that the two are using a common list of supporting documents. The point was made by both that in addition to those, each section reserve the right to ask for additional information from visa applicants as deemed necessary, including personal interviews. The Delegation was assured that this is in conformity with the Visa Code.

3.3 Exchange of information

ES, PT Consular Sections noted that visa shopping is emerging as a new phenomenon, mostly applicants being refused by PT turning to ES in an attempt to get the entry visa.

In addition ES informed that they note that a number of applicants who know that the workload at the PT Consular Section is greater go directly to ES as time saving expedient.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Often at the only direct flight from Guinea Bissau to the Schengen Area (Euro Atlantic from Bissau to Lisbon) ES and PT immigration officers - *Guardia Civil* and *Serviço de Eestrangeiros e Fronteiras* respectively- can be seen together on board controlling passengers' documents.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

4. Challenges

Economically Guinea Bissau is very weak which is made worse by a 10 months' long political crisis. As a consequence estimated unemployment is high. As a consequence a young and fast growing population sees emigration as the way to a better life and the EU is the destination of choice.

Guinea Bissau is keen to apply free circulation of persons among ECOWAS MSs. This could ultimately lead to increased visa requests from that regional organisation's citizens who may have been refused a Schengen entry visa elsewhere within ECOWAS.

5. Other issues

As from 1st January 2016 Guinea Bissau has been implementing ECOWAS stipulations that only biometric passports are accepted for the purpose of border checks. This has not been without problems for Guinea Bissau migrants and students on scholarships abroad who have had difficulties with obtaining the new documents.

Number of visas issued by ES and PT Consular Sections by type for the period:

1 Jan 2015 to 15 Nov 2015	ES REQUESTED	ES ISSUED	PT REQUESTED	PT ISSUED
VISA A (Airport Transit)	11	11	0	0
VISA C (Holidays)	692	449	4964	3931
VISA C (EU Family Reunion)	37	11	Included in C	Included in C
VISA C (Limited Territory Visa)	These are not requested	1	These are not requested	14



12 mai 2016

**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC)
REPUBLIQUE DE GUINEE
RAPPORT¹ 2015-2016**

1. Introduction

Nombre de pays Schengen : inchangé – La France pourrait représenter la Hongrie au cours de l'année 2016 (dossier en cours).

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2015-2016

Trois au cours de l'année 2015. Il a été question que le consul honoraire d'Italie participe aux réunions Schengen. La France a informé l'ambassade d'Italie à Dakar pour diligenter une enquête de moralité sur cette personne.

L'ambassade de Grande Bretagne demande sa participation aux réunions Schengen. Les représentants des Ambassades d'Allemagne, de France et d'Espagne sont d'accord d'élargir les réunions consulaires à l'Ambassade de Grande Bretagne mais pas les réunions Schengen.

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Néant

3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.

Néant

3.3 Echange d'informations

Communications des statistiques mensuelles aux partenaires Schengen. Expériences vécues et communications des informations sur les refus de visa, sur les réseaux d'immigration clandestine en Europe et les cas de fraude documentaire et d'usurpation d'identité par le conseiller sûreté – immigration près l'ambassade de France en fournissant régulièrement des fiches d'alerte et rapports.

D'après les données Frontex, 2 000 guinéens se trouvaient parmi les flots de migrants qui ont tenté de rallier l'Europe durant les quatre premiers mois de 2016.

¹ Avril 2015 – Mars 2016

4. Défis

Les problématiques des jugements supplétifs n'ont pas encore été résolues à ce jour. Un vaste réseau très structuré comprenant des fonctionnaires indéclicats (justice notamment) est entretenu jalousement parce que son fonctionnement, sous prétexte que les services d'état civil des mairies sont défaillants, rapporte beaucoup d'argent.

Fraudes documentaires, réseaux d'immigration clandestine. L'ambassade de France a été désignée comme poste-pilote pour le fonctionnement d'un DVO (Document vérification Officier) dont le travail est la lutte contre la fraude documentaire. Un agent sera recruté et le fonctionnement de ses activités (déplacements notamment) sera pris en charge par les fonds européens.

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in Hong Kong and Macao 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

17 MS are present in HK and Macao; all except Portugal, are based in Hong Kong. 14 MS are Schengen visa countries. Switzerland is an active participant of our LSC. HK and Macao permanent residents do not require Schengen visa.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

In 2015 3 meetings and a joint visit to Health Centre were held. In 2016 so far two meetings and two visits: one to the Airport Authority, and one to the Police Headquarters were held. All meetings and visits were very well attended. The cooperation with MS is very good and MS are keen to participate. Meetings are organised in two parts: general consular issues and Schengen issues. Meetings are chaired by EU Head of Political section. EUO prepares the minutes and draws reports. MS share the common report with their capitals. The question of coordination with the LSC in location outside the capital is not relevant for Hong Kong.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS are fully prepared to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code. VIS roll out went smoothly. No problems have been reported.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The work has been completed and the list has been forwarded to the Visa Committee. The list is expected to be adopted in June.

3.3 Exchange of information

LSC exchanges information on statistics, cases of fraud, consular practices (such as marriages, visits in prison and hospitals) and other issues through secure communication channels or during LSC meetings.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Since November 2015 MS have already conducted three joint field visits that proved very useful. More joint visits are likely to be organised. EUO in cooperation with two MS who have accredited police officers intends to organise a workshop on fraudulent documents and latest technologies for the benefit of all MS present.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

4. Challenges

Nothing to report.

5. Other issues

MS are yet to agree on a concrete arrangement for the consular protection of non-represented EU citizens.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO INDIA

25 May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in INDIA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

Since the entry into force of the Visa Code, this was the second reporting period when all 22 EU Schengen countries were not only present, but also processed visas in India. Of the three² Schengen associated countries present, only two³ processed visas⁴. The big majority of Schengen States accredited to New Delhi also covered several countries in India's immediate neighbourhood⁵, hence frequently also processed Schengen (and/or national) visas for applicants from those countries, or availing themselves of representation agreements *in loco*⁶.

Schengen States continued to have a robust presence in India, encompassing 44 Embassies/High Commissions and Consulates General⁷, of which 90% (39 missions) processed visas. New Delhi is the only location where all Schengen States processed visas in their respective (24) consular offices. The situation is more varied in the six locations where Schengen States have a consular presence, as some did not process visas. The widest Schengen visa office hubs outside the capital city continued to be Mumbai (7 out of 10 present processed visas)⁸, followed by Kolkata (all 3 processed visas)⁹, Bangalore (2 out of 4)¹⁰, Chennai (1 out of 2)¹¹. FR continued to have a visa processing Consulate General in Pondicherry, while PT one in Goa.

Throughout the reporting period, in terms of visa processing some Schengen States started to concentrate their visa processing activities in the capital (NL and CH), while other States started visa processing in locations closer to the applicants (PL and HU in Mumbai).

Taking into account the geography of the sub-continent, and with a constant view to avoid disproportionate efforts by visa applicants to access their respective visa services, 21+2¹² Schengen States continued to outsource visa-related ancillary/non-judgemental tasks to an external service provider (ESP). All Schengen States using an ESP in India actually use the same provider, hence in most cases visa application centres (VACs) function as, *de facto, ante litteram* Schengen "Common Application Centres", being co-located in the same building in each location (Joint VACs).

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

² The only unrepresented Schengen partner remained Lichtenstein, which is represented by Switzerland.

³ NO + CH.

⁴ Although Iceland has a diplomatic mission in India, for visa purposes it is represented in India by Denmark

⁵ Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka (BD-BT-MV-NP-LK respectively). Though in India's immediate neighbourhood, the situation related to Myanmar is not considered here.

⁶ By definition representation agreements for Schengen purposes do not include national visas.

⁷ These numbers do not include the missions of prospective Schengen EU MS (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania: BG-HR-CY-RO) nor those of EU non-Schengen countries (United Kingdom and Ireland: UK-IE).

⁸ Of the 10 Schengen States present (BE-DE-ES-FR-IT-HU-NL-PL-SE) only NL, SE and CH (since 01.02.2016) do not process visas. NO has an Honorary Consul.

⁹ DE-FR-IT

¹⁰ DE-FR yes, with NL and CH present but not processing visas.

¹¹ DE yes, with BE present but not processing visas.

¹² BE-CZ-DK-DE-EE-EL-ES-FR-IT-LV-LU-HU-MT-NL-AT-PT-FI-SI-SE+NO-CH+IS-LI.

In order to allow greater proximity to visa applicants (a constant, reiterated concern shared by all Schengen States), throughout the reporting period, ESP network has been expanding. 11 Schengen States have over 10 locations throughout India (six States have a maximum of 16 locations), while the remaining States have at least six. The network also expands in the neighbouring countries with 10 Schengen States issuing visas in India having ESPs in BD (three in Dhaka), BT (two in Thimpu), NP (five in Kathmandu) and LK (seven in Colombo, two in Jaffna).

The remaining Schengen States (LT, PL and SK) received visa applicants directly¹. All of them have planned or are considering outsourcing in the next reporting period. This confirms a general trend towards a steady increase of outsourcing due to the growing number of visa applications and VIS-induced network rationalisation. In addition, two of the four prospective members (HR and CY) already use an ESP in India.

In 12 months of 2015, Schengen States in India issued almost 710 thousand visas (airport transit + uniform C), an increase by 24.7% as compared to 2014, and contrary to the global decreasing trend (-7.7%). Schengen States in India continued to manage the seventh largest visa operations in the world and second as the non-neighbouring country after China.

FR issued the most visas (134.9 thousand – an increase of 53.9% as compared to 2014), followed by DE, CH and IT (each above 100 thousand). These four countries accounted for 66% of all visas issued in 2015 in India. Only two countries have seen the reduction in numbers – BE and SK. Not issued rate in 2015 remained stable (6.5%) and was only slightly higher than the global average (6.1%). Share of Multiple-Entry Visas (MEV) in 2015 continued to be around 45%, slightly lower than the global average (48.5%).

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

During the reporting period, there were eight LSC meetings (so-called "Plenaries"²) as well as many more sub-groups³ meetings. All meetings took place in Delhi. The LSC Plenary meetings included participation of EU and non-EU Schengen States as well as four Schengen prospective members. The LSC Plenary was chaired by the European Union Delegation (EUD), while the SG meetings were presided by the volunteer Schengen State leading the group. The LSC Plenaries focused on the application of the Visa Code as well as harmonisation exercise, while Sub-groups concentrated more on best practices' exchanges. Reports from the meetings were drawn up by the EUD and circulated to all Schengen States' missions in India.

LSC meetings in locations outside New Delhi, notably Kolkata, Bangalore and Mumbai, were organised more on an *ad hoc* basis and were held there by rotating chairs, according to practical agreements reached locally. Reports from the LSC Plenaries taking place in New Delhi fed into the discussions in other locations. Due to the geographical distance, the representative of the EUD did not participate in any of these meetings personally.

The LSC meetings often contributed to and drawn from the discussions at the other EU local cooperation meetings, notably the Local Consular Cooperation (LCC) or the Local Migration Group (LMG). LCC is presided by the EU Member State holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU and hence the Chair changes every six months as all the EU countries are accredited to India. LCC covers all issues pertaining to consular affairs as per Vienna Convention art. 5 except short stay visa (LSC remit). LMG is chaired by the EUD and is dedicated to the cooperation on migration and mobility-related issues.

¹ LT-PL-SK.

² Open to all Schengen States' representatives.

³ Only some Schengen States participate. For further details, see *infra* part 3.4.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Visa Code is fully implemented in Schengen States' visa operations in India with all Schengen States prepared to carry out all the necessary tasks. It is also the result of the Schengen States' continued commitment to working together within the LSC throughout the last years. The leaders of the SGs expressed particular dedication to furthering this work. The majority of Schengen States continue to advocate for further harmonisation of practices and approaches locally, despite the already achieved high level of harmonisation.

It needs to be underlined that as already discussed in previous reports, Schengen States confirmed that 1) there is no operational way to harmonise the visa fee (as well as service fee) expressed in local currency (Schengen States follow different systems and procedures of setting their exchange rates, in most cases imposed by their capitals); 2) granting of a grace period linked with the related travel medical insurance coverage proved impracticable; 3) agreeing on common criteria for (optional) visa fee exemptions related to certain categories of applicants remained an open issue; and finally 4) using the translation of the application form into Hindi and other official languages remains disadvantageous due to high number of official languages and widespread use of English.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The common list of supporting documents has been approved and is now a legally binding document for all the Schengen States in India (C(2015) 6940 final). All Schengen States implemented the common list on 2 November 2015, the same day as VIS was rolled out in India. At this stage, there is no need to amend the list.

3.3 Exchange of information

Visa statistics

The exchange of monthly visa statistics was overall quite regular for most of the Schengen States. However, as not all States were able to provide the statistics on monthly basis, the LSC Plenary in India agreed to exchange the data quarterly, which would hopefully stimulate more widespread circulation.

In addition to exchange of statistics collected locally, the LSC Plenary also discussed the results and trends on the basis of data collected centrally by DG HOME annually.

Cases of fraud

Over the last few years, a system of cooperation and information exchange concerning cases of fraud has been established between Schengen States in New Delhi, thus allowing quick reaction on such issues as visa annulments, migration alerts, document forgery and falsification and other visa related issues. Special mailing list devoted to "visa alerts" exchanges is the first point of information exchange often followed by dedicated meetings between States concerned.

Schengen States benefiting from local presence of national Document and Visa Adviser/Airport Liaison Officers/Police-immigration officers (DE (2), AT (2), FI and NO), were particularly active in this field and regularly provided guidance and expertise to all other Schengen States.

Travel Medical Insurance (TMI)

As a follow up to the activity carried out in 2013-14 and procedure applied since, Schengen States rely on the positive list of local insurance companies which offer an adequate TMI as per requirements of Visa Code Article 15. Periodic update of the list is done by a volunteering Schengen State.

VIS rollout

VIS was rolled out in India on 2 November 2015. Apart from minor technical issues (e.g. poor quality of fingerprints, some spelling mistakes, mismatching of applicants and data) and initial drop in the number of applications, the launch went smoothly with all States fully prepared for the introduction of biometrics. This is also thanks to the fact that Schengen States continued to share their experiences during the preparatory phase, developed common documents and leaflets, organised outreach events (e.g. for the travel agents' fraternity) and benefited from the ESPs' familiarity with VIS rollout in other countries.

After five months of functioning, it is noted that quality of the fingerprints, in particular those collected by ESPs in some locations, could be still improved, as in rare cases applicants are asked to provide biometrics for the second time.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Throughout the reporting period, driven by the pressing concerns and eagerness to improve functioning of visa processes, the LSC in India continued to cover issues that go beyond what is strictly prescribed by the Visa Code. Most of these initiatives were developed through the dedicated Sub-groups and were a continuation of efforts started earlier than March 2015, with some new activities launched nonetheless.

Non-official (supporting) documents checking

The group concentrated on streamlining of Schengen States' practices on verification of "non-official (supporting) documents" presented by visa applicants, such as bank statements, hotel reservations, TIN/PAN numbers, company data etc. The core task was completed with a number of training sessions organised in 2014 and 2015. Should the need arise in the future; more sessions will be organised ad hoc.

Fast Track/Bona Fide/Multiple Entry Visas

The Sub-group's work focused on best practices related to facilitations/priority treatment offered to specific categories of "fast track/VIP/bona fide" applicants (especially business and regular travellers). A database listing all the existing practices was developed and discussed by the LSC Plenary. As it is an activity requiring regular updates, the work will continue.

Cahier de doléances

The group's remit is to collect and compare the most common hindrances encountered by Schengen States' nationals when applying for visas to India. The work is done in cooperation with the local consular group (LCC). The group has concentrated on collection of most immediate grievances experienced by EU travellers and continues to analyse the cases following different categories of EU applicants, notably business, researchers, and journalists.

Joint ESP monitoring missions

Many Schengen States are obliged to perform regular audits of its ESPs. Even though the compulsory procedures, intensity and regularity vary between States, the overwhelming majority of the concerned States recognised the benefit of the group's objective. Even though the Sub-group was launched only recently it has already developed the common checklist for ESPs' monitoring and worked out the voluntary visiting schedule with States offering to check on facilities of other LSC members. Several such visits have already taken place with the results shared and discussed by the LSC Plenary.

The group's work also feeds in the general assessment of the ESPs' work which thus helps to improve the processes and make them the most cost-efficient.

AGORA platform

During the reporting period, the LSC Plenary has agreed to set up an AGORA platform for easy sharing and exchange of information both for LCC as well as LSC. The platform is about to be fully operational in the coming weeks.

4. Challenges

Response to 2014-2015 challenges

The main systemic challenges for the LSC India identified in 2014-2015 report included the smooth implementation of VIS roll-out and response to the predicted further increase in the number of visa applications. Both challenges were address diligently. As for the former please refer to 3.3; as for the latter Schengen States accommodated efficiently to the growing burden, with many operational changes introduced nonetheless, notably use of ESPs, creation of national visa centres, hire of temporary staff etc.

Challenges for 2016-2017

The main challenges foreseen for the coming 2016-2017 are likely to relate to the implementation of the Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (CAMM – for details please refer to point 5) and growing difficulty in addressing the problem of documents' faking and forgery as well as people smuggling.

The CAMM includes the EU's and India's commitment to discuss, *inter alia*, further enhancement, on reciprocal basis, of short-term mobility of some categories of travellers, in particular so called *bona fide* applicants, who are known for their integrity and reliability and with history of the lawful use of previous visas.

As far as documents' forgery and faking as well as people smuggling are concerned, the LSC Plenary continues to regularly discuss these issues during its meetings, exchange information via email and organise *ad hoc* discussions and consultations. It has also agreed to work towards developing more standardised approaches (standard operating procedure (SOPs) where appropriate) on treatment of such cases. This work would also require more cooperation with other non-Schengen non-EU but like-minded countries, in particular US, Canada and Australia, namely those active in the Delhi Anti-Fraud Working Group (DAFWG).

5. Other issues

EU-India Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (CAMM)

During the recent EU-India Summit (30 March 2016), the Leaders endorsed the establishment of the CAMM between the EU and India. The CAMM, as a framework for cooperation, aims at deepening the EU-India cooperation on global and bilateral challenges related to migration and mobility. The CAMM addresses issues covering four pillars as proposed by the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM)¹ and lists a number of actions related to the remit of the LSC, in particular the need for:

- better organised regular migration and the fostering of well-managed mobility,
- prevention of irregular migration and trafficking in human beings;

This report was prepared by the EUD in New Delhi and approved by the LSC New Delhi Plenary on 25 May 2016.

¹ COM(2011) 743 final



**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC)
IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ
REPORT (April 2015- March 2016)**

1. Introduction

Iraq still presents a very peculiar and challenging environment as per Schengen visa issuing. There are recurring attempts of submission of fake and manipulated documents. Travel agencies pretend to be facilitators in exchange for illicit fees. For those Countries not having a visa issuing office in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, communications via courier between liaison offices in Erbil and the visa offices in Baghdad are not easy to ensure.

Schengen Countries with visa offices in Baghdad Green Zone have to deal with strict access requirements imposed by the Iraqi Security in order to conduct interviews.

All and all the period under reference has witnessed the betterment of the security situation in Baghdad and Erbil thanks to some success of the pro-governmental forces against Da'esh.

Therefore, since February 2015 all Schengen Countries having a visa office in the Country have been regularly operating, after some suspension across 2014-2015 due to the security conditions.

Ten Schengen Member States (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden) have Consulates and/or Embassy's visa offices in Iraq: all of them in Baghdad except Hungary and Poland, and seven in Erbil (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands and Poland).

Since the last report, the Slovak Embassy closed its operations in the Country, thus leaving Belgium without representation in Iraq as regards visas.

Italy opened a Consulate in Erbil, replacing the former liaison office.

The Netherlands opened a Consulate General replacing the former liaison office. Netherlands forward the applications collected in Iraq to the regional office in Amman for further processing.

Poland has a Consular Agency in Erbil but no Embassy in Iraq.

Aside from Belgium, there are several **non-represented Countries**. For some of them there are arrangements to be represented by another Schengen Country as regards visa issuing: Czech Republic represents Hungary (in Baghdad) and Austria (in Baghdad, as Austria in Erbil has outsourced visa collection to VFS Global and visas are then processed at the Austrian Embassy in Amman); Italy represents Slovenia, Malta and Portugal; Poland represents Latvia (in Erbil only); Sweden signed an agreement with Norway (max. 100 visas per year) and Finland (maximum 50 visas per year) to issue visas in Baghdad starting from April 2016 for VIP, "bona fide" businessmen and official delegations only.

Those Countries which are neither present nor represented in Iraq have their nearest visa offices in Amman (Belgium) and Ankara (Denmark—also in Istanbul, Dubai, Tehran –, Estonia – also in Istanbul –, Luxembourg – also in Abu Dhabi) or directly at Headquarters (Lithuania). Besides being represented by the Polish Consular Agency in Erbil, Latvia issues visas at its Embassy in Ankara.

Italy has outsourced collection of applications to an **external service provider**, VISAMETRIC, since the beginning of 2014. VISAMETRIC has established three offices, one in Baghdad out of the International Zone, one in Basra and one in Erbil.

The Netherlands, as of May 2015, use the services of an external service provider, VFS, in Erbil.

Spain outsourced visa applications' collection in Erbil to VFS; visas are then processed in Ankara.

Austria outsourced visa applications' collection in Erbil, to VFS; visas are then processed in Amman.

Germany is negotiating with IDATA for services in Erbil.

Greece, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden accept visa applications only from specific groups: officials, businessmen, VIPs and students with grants (with the exception of Sweden).

Germany, in addition to the above groups, accepts visa applications also for medical emergencies and for Iraqis invited by German institutions.

For the Netherlands, applications are then forwarded to the regional support office in Amman for further processing.

Until February 2016, Greece collected and evaluated applications and documents in Baghdad and then sent them forward to the Embassy in Ankara or to the Consulate in Istanbul for visa issuing. Since February 2016 the Greek Embassy in Baghdad has started issuing visa. Greece accepts 20 applications per week on Mondays and Wednesdays, except for urgent cases.

2. LSC meetings held between April 2015 and March 2016

Five regular meetings took place in Baghdad.

Four regular meetings were organized in Erbil, plus an additional, more informal, gathering promoted by Germany.

Chairmanship and organization were regularly ensured by the EU Delegation.

In Baghdad, Italy co-chaired two meetings. In Erbil, Germany co-chaired one meeting (in April 2016 there was one meeting in Erbil and one in Baghdad, both co-chaired by the Netherlands).

Common reports are drafted by the EU Delegation and are shared locally and with Capitals.

All meetings were well attended.

EU Countries not part of the Schengen agreement have been invited and often attended the meetings to address topics of common concern and share best-practices on curbing the mounting illegal migration to the EU, conducting interviews, evaluating documents, identifying fake applications etc...

Meetings addressed general and Iraq-specific issues like outsourcing of visa services, restrictions on the acceptance of certain visa applications (tourism), Dublin regulation on asylum seekers, location and staffing of visa offices, harmonised list of visa supporting documents, identifying fake travel agencies, best practices on documents verification, list of insurance companies, list of reliable local lawyer, statistics on visas processed and issued, EU proposal for a "smart border package (EES and RTP)", discussing specific matters pertaining to the Kurdistan Region, drafting the local Schengen cooperation report for Iraq, practical ad interim cooperation to issue Schengen Visas to Belgium for Iraqi official delegations.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

With a view to curb "visa shopping" by Iraqi applicants, Member States concurred on the necessity to adopt a harmonised list of supporting documents and to submit it to the Visa Committee, in addition to compiling a list of most reliable companies for Travel Medical Insurance in line with the Visa Code's requirements.

LSC meetings addressed also the matter concerning a growing number of asylum seekers who applied for asylum in a given EU Country using a visa issued by a different EU State (so-called "Dubliners"). MS agreed to exchange information on known cases of Iraqi asylum seekers in other Schengen Countries reached with their visa.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

A common harmonised list of visa applications' supporting documents was agreed both in Baghdad and Erbil. It was amended according to the feedback received by the Visa Committee. In December 2015, a final consolidated version has been submitted for the Commission's implementing decision.

3.3 Exchange of information

Statistics

There has been a regular and useful exchange of information.

Member States and EU Delegation compared experience and information on numerous topics:

- visa offices present in Iraq, in Baghdad and in Erbil;
- number of expatriate and local staff employed;
- number and type of visas processed and issued;
- currency accepted for the payment of fees;
- cases and attempted cases of fraud and illegal migration;
- list of lawyers and consultants used to double-check authenticity of supporting documents;
- current challenges and future plans.

Cases of fraud

Cases of fraud and of manipulated documents have been signalled and explained by Member States in order to develop best-practices.

Schengen Countries, and also non-Schengen EU States, continued to exchange information about "facilitators", i.e. travel agencies producing fake hotel reservations for people intending to perform irregular migration or providing unwarranted services to visa applicants under the pretext of being an element in the visa application process.

Participants signalled cases of counterfeited passports which affected also EU non-Schengen Countries.

Travel Medical Insurance companies (TMI)

A list of preferential travel medical insurance has been elaborated.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Issuing Schengen visas to Belgium in Baghdad

LSC discussed the matter of finding a solution to the lack of Belgium representation in Iraq since the end of August 2015 (closure of Slovak Embassy).

EU warmly appraised the "ad interim" collaboration accorded by the Italian Embassy in Baghdad. Between November 2015 and February 2016 IT issued visas for Iraqi delegations (Iraqi Airways, ICAA, Council of Representatives, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence) for important meetings in Brussels on EU-Iraq relations.

EU invited BE to take stock of the above in their plans to find a permanent representation as to visa issuing in Iraq. The current situation, i.e. issuing visas at the Belgian Embassy in Amman, is posing considerable difficulties to the smooth running of EU-Iraq relations.

Dublin regulation on asylum seekers

Exchange of information on the so-called "Dubliners", i.e. asylum seekers having reached the EU with a visa issued by a Country different from the one they have requested the asylum to, following the presentation of a study of the Italian Embassy in Baghdad referring to the first semester of 2015 which highlighted a growing number of such cases.

Outsourcing

Schengen States exchanged information on the practice of external visa service providers (providers, reliability, kind of services, cost etc...) with a view to create awareness and to identify the most reliable ones.

4. Challenges

Visas to Belgium

"Ad interim" cooperation will be continued locally in order to facilitate issuing visas in Iraq for Iraqi official delegations going to Brussels, while stimulating BE to find a permanent solution for its presence or representation in the Country.

Harmonised list of visa supporting documents

LSC managed to consolidate a list of supporting documents. It expects now the relevant Commission implementing decision. Afterwards, the main challenge would be to apply it in a uniform manner in order to curb any "visa-shopping" in Iraq.

Outsourcing of visa services

More Countries are now outsourcing their visa services and others may decide to join also according to the current users' assessment. Therefore it is important for the LSC to continue monitoring the matter like in the previous period.

Exchange of information on attempts of irregular migration and "Dubliners" asylum seekers

Due to the fragile security and economic situations, LSC needs to boost the exchange of information on cases of illegal migration, fake documents and preposterous applications in order to curb the phenomenon and contain the growing number of so-called "Dubliners".

* * *

This report has been approved by all MS present



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation to the State of Israel

05/05/2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) TEL AVIV 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

LSC Tel Aviv covers the area of the State of Israel. Visas are issued by Member States (MS) in the Consular Sections of their embassies in Tel Aviv. IS and LU have no representation of their own in this jurisdiction. IS is thus represented by DK and LU is represented by BE. Some MSs also cover the area of the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip from the Consular Sections of their embassies in Tel Aviv (FI, CZ, PL, SK, EE, LV and LT). Israeli citizens, holders of ordinary passports, are not required to be in possession of a visa when entering the Schengen area for less than 90 days. LSC Tel Aviv therefore essentially covers the cases of non-Israeli citizens who are resident in Israel.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

The LSC meetings are held in the office of the EU Delegation in Tel Aviv. Two LSC meetings were held between April 2015 and March 2016 (in August 2015 and in December 2015). Both of the meetings were well attended. Meetings were chaired by the EUD.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MSs and EUD's preparedness to ensure the tasks to be carried out in the LSC under the Visa Code is high. No specific issues related to the implementation of the Visa Code were reported in the LSC meetings.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

It was noted that the Commission's Implementing Decision on the Harmonized List of Supporting Documents for East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza was adopted on 16/03/2015. The local date of implementation, agreed between MSs, was 01/04/2015. EU Delegation will use this as an initial point of reference to create a Tel Aviv list, bearing in mind significant differences in the respective "customers" of the Tel Aviv LSC and that covering the occupied Palestinian territory. The list will be drafted with the aim of approving it in upcoming LSC meetings during 2016.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

3.3 Exchange of information

MSs proposed creating a local fraud list or a local 'black list' so that data regarding submitters of fraudulent documents could be shared. Some MSs expressed concerns about the legality of creating a "black list". As a result MSs are welcome to continue to informally share this information

Travel documents issued to Druze, Palestinians, Jordanians and new immigrants state the nationality as "undefined". After clarifying with the Israeli MFA which nationalities (and in what circumstances) are qualified as "undefined" information will be circulated with a specimen of the relevant travel document to MSs.

EUD will in 2016 create a LSC visa specific contact list based on inputs from the MS (currently the LCC list is relied upon).

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

None.

4. Challenges

The issue of Eritrean asylum seekers applying for Schengen visas was discussed in both LSC meetings in 2015. MSs receive a growing number of applications from Eritreans. They do not issue visas to Eritreans, who are present in Israel as irregular migrants or asylum seekers, except for cases of family reunification; some MSs conduct a DNA test in order to check family ties. A key challenge is that the Eritreans often cannot prove their identity due to lack of documents. Often local Eritrean asylum seekers present fraudulent documents. As a result many applications are refused. Cases referred to MSs by UNHCR are accepted. Some Eritreans are issued passports at the Eritrean Embassy in Tel Aviv, but most do not possess any documentation. Israel issues travel documents to those Eritreans who receive visas.

5. Other issues

No other issues are reported from LSC Tel Aviv.



Amman, 12 May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

14 Schengen Member States have consulates in Amman and issue visas (AT, BE, CZ, FR, DE, EL, HU, IT, NL, NO, PL, ES, SE, CH). There are several non-represented countries (EE, DK, FI, IS, LI, LT, LU, LV, MT, PT, SI, SK) that are represented by another Schengen country as follows: AT represents SI and SK; BE represents LU; CH represents LI; DE represents LT and LV, ES represents PT; IT represents MT; NL represents EE; NO represents DK, FI and IS. Those countries which are not represented in Amman have their nearest consulates in Cairo (MT, LV, LT, PT, SI), Ankara (EE, FI), Beirut (SK, DK) and London (IS).

As a consequence of the Syrian crisis and the withdrawal of many diplomatic missions from Damascus, many Schengen countries' embassies in Amman are authorised to receive applications from Syrian nationals. In the case of SE, all applications from Syrian nationals are assessed in Amman. Some countries have no restrictions on where Syrians should apply (FR), whereas others have authorised Beirut and Amman to receive the applications (PL, NL, AT, IT, CH, BE, HU, CZ, EL), with the majority being processed in Beirut. DE receives visa applications from Syrians in Ankara, Beirut and Amman. ES does not receive visa applications in Amman from Syrians who are not ordinary residents in Jordan; all Syrian citizens can apply at the ES embassy in Beirut.

There are several MS that are not represented in Iraq and these only issue visas for Iraqi nationals at their embassies in Amman.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

Four LSC meetings were held in the reporting period (in May 2015, September 2015, November 2015 and February 2016). The meetings were generally well attended with regular participation by most of the MS which have embassies in Amman. Throughout the reporting period, EUDEL chaired the LSC meetings and drew up summary reports. The reports are shared with MS, some of which also share the reports with capitals.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The level of visa fees was discussed since MS appeared to be charging rather different fees for a short-term Schengen visa, ranging from 46 JD to 60 JD. All MS took the prescribed rate of 60 euros as the starting point, and the notable differences stemmed from diverse national practices for adjusting to exchange rate fluctuations. The discussion was an occasion for MS to review their procedures for adjusting the fee in local currency to varying exchange rates, while acknowledging

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

that MS embassies were subject to different instructions from capitals regarding exchange rate adjustments.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The Commission Implementing Decision on the list of supporting documents entered into force on 26 March 2013 and is applicable to all Schengen MS. As has been the case in previous reporting periods, MS still receive a proportion of incomplete applications but no MS have expressed a need to amend the list of supporting documents.

3.3 Exchange of information

In the forum of LSC, MS continued to routinely exchange information on visa statistics, fraud cases and experiences regarding the documentation requirements for visa applications.

Compared to the previous year, in 2015 visa applications increased by an average of 10 % to a total of 61.545 applications received by all MS present in Jordan. Czech Republic saw the highest increase (36 %) in visa applications, albeit from a rather low starting point, while Hungary, Austria and France were the only three MS which saw a decrease in the number of visa applications. Across all MS, the average approval rate was 84 % (versus 83 % last year). Norway had the highest refusal rate at 34 %, and Czech Republic had the lowest at 3 %. The main reasons for refusal were lack of proper supporting papers and doubts regarding the purpose of the stay.

Visas issued for Iraqi nationals represented 11 % of the total visas approved in 2015, making up 26 % of all visas issued by Austria and 19 % of those issued by Belgium, in contrast with 3 % of total visas approved by Greece. 8 % of all visas issued in Jordan were for Syrian nationals, slightly increasing from 7 % in 2014 and 5 % in 2013. Syrian nationals made up 36 % of Norway's approved visas, whereas they only constituted 1 % for Greece and 2 % for Switzerland.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

LSC finalised the Common Information Sheet which had been initiated during the previous reporting period. Following agreement in the LSC, EUDEL printed the leaflets and distributed to all MS as well as circulated the electronic versions (in English and Arabic, respectively) for publication on MS websites and possible printing of additional copies. The Common Information Sheet details in a simple way the procedures and documentation requirements for potential visa applicants.

In addition to the standard agenda items and information sharing, the LSC forum during the reporting period also provided a platform for discussion with the EUDEL's CT/Security Expert on the interlinkages between visa/consular issues and security, and a video conference with EUROPOL in the Hague regarding the importance of the Schengen Information System (SIS) to the Agency's work as well as the links between EU internal and external security.

4. Challenges

MS continued to face challenges in terms of applicants' compliance with deadlines for lodging visa applications as well as providing the required documentation. It is hoped that the Common Information Sheets can help to further reduce the refusal rate and the amount of incomplete applications. No further issues to report.

This report has been approved by the Local Schengen Cooperation.



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

19/05/2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) KAZAKHSTAN 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

The Republic of Kazakhstan hosts Schengen Member States (with Bulgaria and Romania as observers) in two cities: Astana and Almaty. Twenty one MS have embassies with consular sections in the capital Astana and there are five consulates in Almaty, the former capital. The EU Delegation is located in Astana and coordinates the LSC meetings. Four MS in Kazakhstan have representation arrangements and use external providers for collection and processing of visa applications. The circumstances in Kazakhstan for submitting visa applications include vast distances between towns and cities plus harsh climate conditions that create additional burden to applicants in winter time.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

During the reporting period the LSC group in Astana held 6 regular meetings on the following dates: 22 April 2015, 9 June 2015, 16 July 2015, 28 October 2015, 24 February 2016 and 27 April 2016. Special meetings for Mr Adrian Georgiev, representative of DG HOME, with Kazakhstan officials from MFA, MIA and Border Services Department were organised on 26-27 November 2016.

The LSC meetings are organised and chaired by the EU Delegation in Astana. The EU Delegation is also in charge of reporting and coordination of the follow-up steps when needed. In case they wish so, MS share the EU Delegation reports with their capitals. A telephone linkup is organised with a designated consulate in Almaty and representatives in Brussels (Anne Marie Soerensen) to allow participation in the meetings of all consulates and DG HOME at HQ.

In addition to the regular meetings on a bi-monthly basis, the EU Delegation facilitates the Working groups meetings, e.g. two meetings of the WG on the implementation of the harmonised list of required visa documents.

The LSC group meeting are very well attended. The most important feature of the meetings in Astana is the regular participation by audio link of DG HOME from Brussels.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

In Kazakhstan the Visa Code is strictly implemented in a coordinated and synchronised manner. The Code proved its relevance as a single unified legal instrument, helping to address effectively common problems raised in relation to the Schengen visa application process. Furthermore, MS were informed directly by HQ on the Visa Code Recast Proposal from 1 April 2014, that aims at

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

easing the administrative burden for both applicants and consulates by fully exploiting the benefits of the Visa Information System (VIS). In Kazakhstan VIS has successfully been applied since 14 November 2013.

Specific issues that came under scrutiny included treatment of third country citizens (mainly, Russia and Ukraine) that enjoy the rights of continuous visa free stay in Kazakhstan.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

During the reporting period the LSC group monitored carefully the implementation of the COM Decision on the list of documents to be presented in Kazakhstan. No particular proposals to amend the existing list arose.

3.3 Exchange of information

As agreed amongst MS, since July 2012, a table of visa statistics is sent by EU Delegation to MS in Astana and Almaty, as well as to Brussels every month on the basis of information provided by embassies and consulates to the EU Delegation.

MS informed each other about existing bilateral agreements with KAZ concerning visa-waiver for holders of diplomatic / service passports.

The LSC group discussed in two of its meetings issues related to fraud and falsified documents, reported by several MS. These instances related mainly to invitations and banking account certificates. The relevant Kazakhstani and European companies and institutions have been informed about the misuse of their documents templates.

One MS, based in Moscow, inquired about particular applicants through the EU Delegation and received information from most of the colleagues from MS consulates.

The WG on travel medical insurances finalised a list of insurance companies offering adequate TMI. The EU Delegation provided assistance in gathering information from companies that wished to be considered for inclusion into it. During the reporting period there has been one problematic case for insurance obligations not having been fulfilled that was ultimately resolved.

The new Kazakhstan Administrative Offences Code provided pre-requisites for finding a solution on a longstanding problem of treatment of EU citizens that overstayed the allowed period in their visas (under force majeure circumstances).

EU Delegation disseminated amongst EU MS information related to consular matters published in local press.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

The main event in the EU-Kazakhstan bilateral relations was the signature of the Enhanced PCA on 21 December 2015, some of the provisions of which are relevant to future Readmission Agreement and screening in view of the possibility for visa facilitation talks.

At a number of meetings with Mr Ardak Madiyev, Director of the MFA Consular Department, convened by the EU Delegation in June, July and October 2015, on 30 March 2016, MS were informed about the developments of Kazakhstan National Action Plan to prepare for such negotiations for which the Kazakhstani authorities used the experience of Moldova.

Kazakhstan presented its National Plan of Actions to the EEAS HQ and DG Home during the visit of a delegation led by Director Madiyev to Brussels on the eve of the High Level meeting held in April 2016 and it is expected that EU technical expertise will be provided under the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) mechanism of the Partnership Instrument, for which Kazakhstan is eligible from 2015.

In the reporting period the Kazakhstani authorities prolonged as from 15 July 2015 a short-stay visa free travel to Kazakhstan for the nationals of the ten biggest investors in the country. 9 EU MS and 2 Schengen member-countries to benefit from this new regime.

At a meeting with the LSC group, organised by the EU Delegation on 16 July 2015, Mr Ardak Madiyev, Director of the MFA Consular Department, informed that a visa-free regime for up to 30 days for national of OECD countries would probably be introduced in 2016 or 2017.

Through this decision KZ attempts to test the work of its visa issuing and migration authorities, including through innovations, such as issuing of business and investor's visas inside the country. It tries to approbate to what extend visa free travel may increase the flow of visitors, in preparation for EXPO-2017. At the same time KZ attempts to use the unilateral decision to seek more favourable visa treatment for KZ citizens by countries beneficiaries of the new arrangement and indirectly, visa simplification arrangements with the Schengen states.

At the meeting on 27 April 2016 of the LSC group with KZ officials the intention was announced to include all EU MS in the list of beneficiaries of the visa free entry.

The LSC group organised a presentation on visa requirements at the EU Educational Fair held in Almaty.

4. Challenges in 2015-2016

As noted in the 2014-2015/previous reports Kazakhstan continues to address the visa issues on the highest political level. This tendency was illustrated during the working visit of President Nazarbayev to Brussels on 9 December 2014 for the finalisation of the EU-Kazakhstan negotiations on the EPCA.

In 2014-2015 the Kazakhstani government proceeded with unilateral steps to prepare for possible negotiations on readmission and on visa facilitation as illustrated by its National Plan of Action and by the unilateral decision for short-stay visa free travel to Kazakhstan by nationals of four Schengen MS. The latter decision proves the differentiated approach of Kazakhstani authorities towards the Schengen MS and may find a continuation in further efforts to seek solutions on various aspects of visa issues on a bilateral basis with some, but not all MS. The issue was raised during the visit of Kazakhstan President to Brussels on 30 March 2016.

5. Other issues

Consular and migration issues were also discussed at the 13th meeting of the EU-Kazakhstan Subcommittee on Justice and Home Affairs held on 25 November 2015 in Astana.

The immigration influx to Kazakhstan from other Central Asian states for the time being remains a possibility, but did not materialise in any significant way during the reporting period.

The report was adopted by the MS at the LSC meeting on 24 May 2016.

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in KENYA 2014-2015 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

There are currently sixteen (16) Schengen Member States consulates issuing Schengen Visas in Nairobi: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Romania and Czech Republic are accredited in Kenya but do not issue visa

The EU Delegation assumes the role of convening and chairing plenary LSC meetings on a regular basis (monthly except summer and December).

Some of the representations (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Italy) use the services of Visa Facility Service (VFS).

2. LSC meetings held in 2014-2015

As mentioned above, the EU Delegation chairs the meetings, which are held most of the time at the EU Delegation building. Attendance is moderate with some MS being more supportive than others. Minutes are taken by the EU Delegation and shared with all Schengen Area States accredited in Kenya.

In 2014-2015, six (6) meetings were held. The lower amount compared to the previous period was mainly due to the rotation of the Head of Administration in charge of the file within the EU Delegation. All visa issuing representations are based in Nairobi.

Most MS seem to share the common reports with their Headquarters.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Schengen area MS are well prepared and trained to conduct their tasks under the framework of the Visa Code. No problems to report.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Work on harmonizing the supporting documents started at the end of 2013. A revised version was proposed to the Central Visa Committee in February 2014. The comments were received in March 2014. They were revised during a meeting in beginning of May 2014. A revised proposal was sent to Brussels in June 2014. The final list was adopted on 3rd September 2014 CO(2014)6146 final.

In March 2015, only one Member State still needed to implement the decision fully. A common information sheet has been produced. It is available on the EU Del website at the following URL: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kenya/eu_travel/visa/index_en.htm.

¹ April 2014 – March 2015

3.3 Exchange of information

The coordination of the statistics collection is now made directly by Brussels to the satisfaction of all missions. The published statistics are then shared to all once on the EU website.

Regarding local Travel Health Insurance companies, an accredited list of suitable companies is maintained up-to-date in cooperation with the MS, in particular Spain.

In case of fraud, MS communicate well with each other and exchange information and experience.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

N/A.

4. Challenges

N/A

5. Other issues

N/A



EUROPEAN UNION

**EUROPEAN UNION OFFICE IN KOSOVO /
EUROPEAN UNION SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE**

Pristina, 13 May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in KOSOVO 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

Kosovo hosts overall representations from 18 Member States of the European Union. This number includes Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania, three Schengen applicant States. Schengen visas in Kosovo are issued by Switzerland², Norway³, Italy, Hungary, Slovakia, Greece, Germany, Finland, and Slovenia⁴. Sweden, and the Czech Republic representations receive applications from Kosovo citizens in Skopje, capital of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Embassies of Poland in Skopje and Tirana issue Schengen visas for Kosovo citizens.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

From April 2015 to March 2016, two LSC meetings took place. Both meetings were convened by the European Union Office in Kosovo and chaired by the Head of Political, Economic and European Integration Section, Mr Thomas Gnocchi with the assistance of the LSC contact person, Ms Vjola Dyrmishi. One of the above-mentioned meetings served to discuss *ad hoc* issues relating to the extraordinary refugee crisis affecting the Western Balkans countries, as well as eventual consequences for Kosovo. On that occasion, representatives of local authorities were invited to brief Member States, whereas the second LSC session was focused on visa-related matters. LSC meetings are well-attended by the Member States, but the representation is not always homogenous. This entails a heterogeneous composition which varies from the Heads of Visa Section to the Ambassadors of the Member States. As a consequence, sometimes the focus of the discussion can shift from operational issues concerning the application of the common visa policy to rather political matters. LSC meetings also served as a forum where the European Union Office provided updates to Member States on the visa liberalisation dialogue with Kosovo. EUO has systematically drawn up minutes of the meetings held, and has shared them with the Member States whose comments and amendments were included in the final version of the reports sent to DG Home Affairs. There is no need to organise LSC meetings outside the capital, since Kosovo is very small and all Member States are located only in Pristina.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The LSC meetings offer an adequate forum to Member States to exchange relevant information on the application of the Visa Code as set out in the Title V, art. 48 of the regulation No 810/2009.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

² Since November 2015, the visa section of the Swiss Embassy issues visas on behalf of Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Before this date, Switzerland already processed visa applications for France, Austria, and Liechtenstein.

³ Norway deals with visa applications on behalf of Denmark as well. Additionally, the Embassy processes visa applications for Lithuania since June 2015, and for Iceland since November 2015.

⁴ Slovenia issues short-stay visas for Latvia as well.

However, discussion on the obstacles and main challenges in implementing the common visa policy is often limited.

One of the reported problems relates to the timing of the appointments which does not always comply with art. 9 of the Visa Code (two weeks' time from the date of request). Depending on the destination country, the waiting time to get an appointment in order to lodge the visa application can be measured in weeks but also in months. As a consequence, during the LSC meetings, some Member States have reported cases of "visa shopping". However, some Member States also notified that such phenomenon should also be attributed to the perceived difficulty by the applicant. Additionally, according to Member States some applicants who were already rejected from other embassies try their luck somewhere else.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The harmonisation of the list of supporting documents has been completed, and no issues related to this matter were raised during the LSC meetings. In the absence of a Visa Facilitation agreement between Kosovo and the EU, Member States continue to apply different application fees (35 euro or 60 euro).

3.3 Exchange of information

Member States continued to submit visa-related statistics that were shared with DG Home Affairs within the framework of the visa liberalisation dialogue. The EU Office' functional mailbox and the common mailing list are useful tools for Member States to report on cases of fraud or forged documents. Participants have notified that most cases of forged documents regard bank statements, and certificates attesting pension savings.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

NTR

4. Challenges

The challenges listed in the previous LSC report, mainly related to the development of a central civil status registry system, have been addressed by the local authorities with the support of IPA-funded projects. The document security of the civil status certificates has been assessed by Member States' experts during the visa assessment missions. According to the technical evaluation which took place in July 2015 and in March 2016 the civil status certificates issued by the Kosovo authorities are in compliance with the international security standards.

On 4 May, the European Commission has adopted a legislative proposal recommending visa-free travel for Kosovo.

5. Other issues



UNION EUROPEENNE

**Délégation de l'Union Européenne
en République Libanaise**

Beirut, 8 April 2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in
LEBANON
2015-2016 REPORT¹**

1. Introduction

Of the 26 Schengen Member States (MS), 14 are issuing Schengen visas in Beirut and 12 are represented by other MS. The visa issuing MS are Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Norway and Switzerland. The countries represented by another Schengen MS are: Estonia (represented by France), Latvia (represented by Hungary), Lichtenstein (represented by Switzerland), Lithuania (represented by Austria), Luxembourg (represented by Belgium), Malta (represented by Italy), Portugal (represented by Spain), Slovenia (represented by Hungary), Finland (represented by Austria) and Iceland (represented by Norway). Sweden does not have any consular section in Beirut but uses an external service provider for the collection of applications. Slovakia is represented by Austria for Lebanese applicants, but by the Czech Republic for applicants legally residing in the territory of Syria. There are no LSC consular sections in Lebanon outside Beirut.

10 MS use external service providers for the collection of applications. Denmark, Italy, France and Switzerland use the provider [TLS Contact](#) whereas Austria, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden use [VFS Global](#). Cyprus, which is a candidate country for Schengen, is also using VFS Global.

Due to the crisis in neighbouring Syria, Lebanon has received a large number of refugees, with over 1 million refugees currently registered². Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, both the number of issued visas and the refusal rates have increased substantially in Beirut: The number of issued visas went up by almost 83% between 2010 and 2015 (higher than the worldwide increase of 29%) and the average refusal rate increased by 64% in Lebanon (no change worldwide). These increases are surely related to the Syrian crisis but the lack of locally available statistical information on the nationality of the applicants has prevented a verifiable explanation to the increased number of applicants and of refusal rates.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

LSC meetings have been held with a regular interval at the premises of the EU Delegation. Five regular LSC meetings took place during the reporting period (2 April 2015, 3 June 2015, 7 October 2015, 2 December 2015 and 3 February 2016). The first four meetings were chaired by EU

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

² <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> UNHCR January 2016

DEL, in charge of the drafting of the agenda as well as the meeting reports. Since February 2016, the meetings are co-chaired with NL.

In addition to the regular LSC meetings, a workshop on fraudulent visas and official documents was organised by AT on 4 May 2015.

The meetings were well-attended with an average of 66% attendance of the 14 embassies issuing Schengen visas in Beirut. The meetings focused on current topics such as attempted fraud and travel restrictions, the need to harmonise visa practices to prevent visa shopping and diverging treatments of visa applicants. The meetings also provided an opportunity to share information to further the coordination on a number of relevant and related topics.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Statistics collected both centrally and locally in 2013 indicated substantial differences among the MS in Beirut on:

- Refusal rates: ranging from 6 % to 39 %;
- Average waiting time to get a visa: ranging from 9 to 43 calendar days;
- Workload: the number of visa applications handled per full time visa section staff member ranges from 271 to 2,720 (for visa sections that have not outsourced the visa handling to external service providers).

These differences may in turn indicate differences in visa practices – which could result in visa shopping insofar as applicants may be tempted to request a visa at an embassy known to have low refusal rates or short waiting times. Statistics for 2015 are currently being gathered in order to see if these tendencies have continued.

In order to identify possible differences in visa practices and, where needed, propose further harmonisation, LSC working groups composed of 2 or more MS were in 2013 established based on the Visa Code Art 48:

- Art 48.1a – Harmonised list of supporting documents
- Art 48.1b – Criteria for exemptions from paying the visa fee
- Art 48.2 – Common Information Sheet
- Art 48.3a – Exchange of information on Monthly Statistics
- Art 48.3b – Exchange of information on Fraud and Migration Risks
- Art 48.3c – Exchange of information on Transport and Insurance Companies

During the reporting period these working groups have been reporting back to the LSC-meetings on their progress.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

During the reporting period, the working group on harmonised list of supporting documents has compiled a document outlining a common list but due to large differences between MS regarding what documents to add to the list, a final version has not yet been approved.

3.3 Exchange of information

The LSC meetings provide an opportunity to exchange information on a number of topics relevant for the issuing of Schengen visas. A consistently reoccurring issue during the reporting period has been the prevalence of fraud documents. A focal point with the Lebanese security forces have been identified, in order to better handle the large amount of fraud documents that has been discovered by visa issuing MS. MS have also frequently been reporting and discussing attempts at frauds, for example the selling of fake appointments (to a visa issuing embassy) or a specific travel agency known for issuing producing counterfeit documents.

The list of official and recognised travel documents has been a standing point on the agenda of the LSC since October 2014. At each meeting, MS are asked to confirm the accuracy of the data in the list provided by DG HOME.

A LSC working group has been working to ensure that exchange of statistics is made in conformity with Visa Code Art 48.3a. The working group have also been collecting data in order to carry out a similar statistical exercise as 2013 (see point 3.1). Discussions have been held at the LSC meetings on how to best handle the problem of MS not being able to distinguish between Syrian and Lebanese applicants, and what data to collect in order to get the most accurate view on issues such as refusal rates, average waiting time etc.

Due to the increasingly vulnerable situation for refugees in Lebanon and the de-facto closing of the border for Syrian and Palestinian refugees (as of May 2015), discussions have been held regarding their travel routes through Lebanon and any affect that it might have had for the issuing of Schengen visas in Lebanon.

The EU DEL has also consistently been updating the local Schengen MS on any news from DG HOME that might have been of interest, such as the public consultations on the smart border package.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Fraud Workshop in May 2015

During the reporting period, the trend of increased number of fraud cases, as was seen also during the previous reporting period, seem to have continued. A fraud workshop was held on 4 May 2015 by two representatives from the Austrian Ministry of Interior. The workshop gave a general overview of the most important printing techniques and on the different safety and security features, such as watermarks and security threads, which are incorporated in passports and Schengen visa stickers. The workshop also gave some useful information on how counterfeit documents can be detected, for example through calculating the passport number according to a set formula.

Website

The EU Delegation has updated the information regarding Schengen visas on the Delegation webpage, and have encouraged MS to send their information (data to local websites etc.), so that it can be added to the webpage.

4. Challenges

Two main challenges for the LSC in Lebanon remain the same as last year:

1) The high discrepancy in refusal rates and average waiting time to get a Schengen visa

More information is needed in order to better understand and analyse the substantial differences in refusal rates and average waiting time among the MS (see point 3.1). This information will be collected during the coming reporting period.

2) The continuing crisis in Syria which causes a heavy workload for the MS

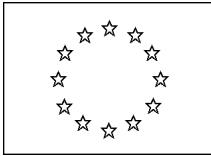
Due to the on-going crisis in Syria, MS have faced an increased workload. The estimated proportion of Schengen visa applications submitted by Syrian nationals to embassies in Beirut amounts to 10 % of all applications received. It is important to note that not all MS can present separate statistics on Syrian and Lebanese applicants.

Due to the great impact that the Syrian crisis has had on Lebanon, the repercussions for the visa handling for the MS in Beirut has been discussed in a number of LSC meetings. Challenges identified include the different criteria to accept or refuse Syrian applications, increased attempted frauds, the problems for Syrian nationals to acquire the required documents from Damascus and the difficulty of proving the authenticity of official documents.

The next reporting period will continue to focus on the work that will be performed in the working groups and to collectively implement the suggestions they present.

5. Other issues

Nothing to report.



UNION EUROPÉENNE

DÉLÉGATION A MADAGASCAR

18/05/2016

**COOPERATION LOCALE SCHENGEN (LSC) A MADAGASCAR
RAPPORT 2015-2016**

1. Introduction

Trois Etats membres de l'UE sont présents à Antananarivo : l'Allemagne, la France et le Royaume Uni. Deux autres Etats européens membres de l'Espace Schengen sont également représentés : la Suisse et la Norvège. Depuis 2012, seuls la France et la Suisse assurent la représentation Schengen et délivrent à ce titre des visas Schengen.

La répartition de la représentation Schengen entre ces deux Etats à Antananarivo est la suivante :

France: 22.149 demandes de visas ont été traitées par l'Ambassade de France en 2015 (22.500 en 2014), y compris visas pour DOM, CTOM, pays africains représentés ou visas de long séjour pour la France.

S'agissant spécifiquement des demandes de visas Schengen, 11.012 visa ont été délivrés et 2.955 refusés en 2015. Parmi ces derniers, 1.976 l'ont été délivrés et 376 refusés en représentation d'autres Etats Schengen.

La France représente les Etats Schengen suivants :

- Antérieurement à 2011 : Espagne, Italie, Grèce, Portugal, Slovaquie
- Depuis le 1^{er} décembre 2011 : Belgique
- Depuis le 1^{er} janvier 2012 : Allemagne (exclusivement pour les ressortissants malgaches), Autriche, Luxembourg
- Depuis 2013 : Estonie

Les prises de rendez-vous et le dépôt de dossier pour les passeports ordinaires sont externalisées depuis le 27 avril 2016 et déléguées au prestataire "TLS contact" avec l'objectif de délivrer les visas plus rapide et dans les meilleures conditions. Pour les passeports diplomatiques et de service, les modalités de dépôt des demandes de visa restent inchangées et se déroule à la chancellerie de l'ambassade. Le rendez-vous est obligatoire. Depuis novembre 2014, les visas sur passeports officiels (diplomatiques et de service) suivent la même procédure avec appel à un numéro dédié (087007).

Suisse: 850 demandes de visa ont été traitées sur l'année 2015, dont 728 visas délivrés. S'agissant spécifiquement des demandes de visas Schengen, sur 784 demandes traitées, 662 visas Schengen ont été délivrés.

Le dépôt des demandes de visa se fait en principe sur rendez-vous (sans frais) depuis le site internet ci-après : www.swiss-visa.ch. Ce site internet offre également aux demandeurs la possibilité de faire leur demande en ligne.

La présence personnelle n'est plus requise pour les demandeurs dont les données biométriques ont été déjà recueillies – titulaires de visas délivrés avec la mention « VIS », ainsi que pour les enfants de moins de 12 ans. Si les empreintes digitales recueillies précédemment se révèlent être de qualité insuffisante, l'Ambassade de Suisse se réserve le droit de convoquer le demandeur pour une nouvelle prise, de même si un entretien est jugé nécessaire.

L'Ambassade de Suisse a repris l'établissement des visas Schengen pour les pays suivants :

06.06.2011, Norvège

30.01.2012, Suède

01.05.2012, Pays-Bas

01.03.2014, Pologne

01.01.2015, Hongrie

Les visas demandés au consulat général de France ainsi que de l'Ambassade de Suisse sont intégrés au programme VIS (Visa Information System) depuis le 6 juin 2013.

La coopération est encouragée et des réunions sont organisées par la Délégation de l'UE avec la France et la Suisse.

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2015-2016

Une réunion spécifiquement consacrée à la coopération locale Schengen a été organisée le 22 octobre 2015. Une autre réunion est prévue en juin 2016.

Dans la mesure où seuls deux Etats sont concernés par cette coopération, il n'y a pas lieu d'accroître la fréquence des réunions de coordination locale Schengen. Une coordination informelle s'opère par échanges directs entre les deux services concernés pour autant que besoin. Cette coordination informelle fonctionne bien.

Les rapports de réunions sont établis en coopération entre la délégation de l'UE, l'Ambassade de Suisse et le Consulat Général de France.

L'Ambassade de Suisse et le Consulat Général de France font rapport à leur Capitale après chaque réunion Schengen.

La coordination n'est pas assurée en dehors d'Antananarivo car les deux services chargés de l'émission de visas centralisent leurs activités à Antananarivo.

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

La Délégation informe régulièrement les Etats concernés de l'évolution des travaux, activités et instructions reçus de Bruxelles et transmis par la DG HOME de la Commission européenne (et autres services pour les autres sujets couverts par la coopération locale).

3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.

Seuls deux Etats sont actifs dans ce domaine. Le Consulat Général de France annonce les changements du taux consulaire à l'Ambassade de Suisse qui modifie en conséquence les frais de visa. La liste des pièces justificatives demandées est échangée pour harmonisation régulièrement. L'harmonisation semble suffisamment réalisée.

En ce qui concerne l'Ambassade de Suisse, les actes d'état civil ne sont pas requis. L'Ambassade se réserve toutefois le droit d'exiger d'autres justificatifs, notamment des copies d'acte d'état civil, si elle le juge nécessaire. Les justificatifs concernant l'hôte (preuve des moyens financiers) sont envoyés par email ou par fax directement à l'Ambassade. La Suisse considère l'harmonisation comme réalisée.

En ce qui concerne le Consulat Général de France, contrairement à la Suisse, les actes d'état civil sont systématiquement requis (livret de famille pour les personnes mariées). Les attestations d'hébergement ne sont pas suffisantes, les vérifications des ressources et du nombre d'occupants du logement de l'hébergeant par les mairies n'étant pas toujours probantes. La France considère également l'harmonisation comme réalisée dans la mesure du possible, sachant que les deux Etats Schengen demandent des documents qui leur permettent de justifier du motif du voyage, des ressources financières, de l'hébergement, de l'assurance, conformément aux ICC (Instructions consulaires communes).

3.3 Echange d'informations

Les statistiques sont communiquées régulièrement entre la Suisse, la France et l'UE. La France et la Suisse se consultent sur les dossiers individuels (sur les demandes de visas de personnes de nationalité comorienne, par exemple). La collaboration est très bonne et très rapide.

Le Consulat de France constate régulièrement des cas de fraude sur les visas Schengen concernant en particulier les relevés bancaires et les attestations de travail. Face à ce phénomène, le Consulat de France a renforcé la vérification des documents reçus.

La liste des documents de voyage émis par le pays d'accueil : le nouveau passeport biométrique est émis par les autorités malgaches depuis décembre 2013. Il est le seul accepté par ces autorités depuis le 1^{er} janvier 2015.

Depuis le 1er janvier 2015, les autorités malgaches ne reconnaissent plus le passeport biométrique délivré avant décembre 2013. Par conséquent, les demandes de visa ne pourront être déposées qu'avec le nouveau modèle de passeport électronique.

Un passager avec un visa de circulation encore valable sur l'ancien passeport, peut continuer de voyager avec ce visa jusqu'à sa fin de validité, il faudra simplement voyager avec les deux passeports.

4. Défis pour 2015-2016

Les deux Etats concernés continueront à assurer la mise en œuvre des règles relatives aux visas Schengen en coopération avec la Délégation de l'UE. Des améliorations éventuelles de la coopération seront examinées pour autant que de besoin.

En 2016, le Consulat de France a pour l'objectif de délivrer un maximum de visas de circulation qui permet de multiples entrées.

5. Divers

L'Ambassade de Suisse est également accréditée aux Comores et aux Seychelles. Elle est représentée par l'Ambassade de France à Moroni en matière de visa Schengen.

Ce rapport finalisé par la Délégation de l'UE a été établi en étroite coopération et avec la contribution des deux Etats Schengen directement concernés: France et Suisse.



Nouakchott, le 27 mars 2015

COOPERATION LOCALE
AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC)
EN REPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE DE MAURITANIE

RAPPORT¹ 2014-2015

1. Introduction

En Mauritanie trois États membres (EM) sont présents: Allemagne, Espagne et France (FR). Ces trois EM ont des accords de représentation avec les États membres Schengen non présents suivants :

Allemagne : Aucun ;

Espagne: Autriche, Italie, Portugal ;

France Belgique, Estonie, Grèce, Hongrie, Lettonie, Lituanie, Luxembourg, Malte Pays-Bas, République Tchèque, Suède, Suisse.

Le recours à du personnel externe pour la réception des demandes de visa est établi comme suit :

Allemagne: Pas ;

Espagne: Recours à un prestataire uniquement pour la prise de rendez-vous, la réception et la remise de documentation ;

France: Recours à un prestataire uniquement pour la prise de rendez-vous.

Responsabilité de la coordination des réunions: Délégation de l'Union Européenne (DUE).

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2014-2015

À Nouakchott une réunion formelle a eu lieu sur la période, avec la présence de tous les EM, présidée par la Délégation UE. En outre, des contacts électroniques/téléphoniques ont eu lieu. Le rythme trimestriel de réunions formelles n'a pas pu être tenu, par faute de sujets à l'agenda. Des rapports n'ont pas été rédigés. Uniquement FR produit un rapport annuel à sa capitale.

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Les tâches sont accomplies sur une base régulière dans le cadre de la coopération consulaire selon le Code des Visas.

3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.

Les EM présents considèrent que l'harmonisation des pratiques est déjà réalisée.

¹ Avril 2014 – Mars 2015

3.3 Échange d'informations

Des statistiques mensuelles ont été échangées.

L'assurance médicale de voyage est demandée et est couverte aussi bien par des compagnies locales qu'internationales connues et répondent aux exigences du Code des Visas.

Pour les cas de fraude détectés il y a eu un échange d'information *ad hoc* entre les trois États-membre, au-delà du système VIS. Les fraudes portent sur des documents d'état civil, des documents bancaires, des réservations d'hôtel, des contrats de travail, des invitations d'affaires, des bulletins scolaires, des diplômes de fin d'études universitaires, entre autres.

Les passeports, documents de voyage émis par la Mauritanie tous reconnus.

Il y a eu un échange sur les pratiques des trois EM concernant l'émission de visas simultanés, apposés sur passeports ordinaires et passeports diplomatiques, constatant que la pratique n'est pas harmonisée.

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Les EM ont envoyé à leurs capitales des informations sur les nouveaux prix des visas pour rentrer en Mauritanie, qui ont plus que doublé de prix (de 50 à 120€).

4. Défis pour 2015-2016

Maintenir les niveaux d'échange et de coordination actuels.

5. Divers

Les EM constatent des difficultés sur la représentation légale des procurations, vu que les Maires n'ont plus le « rôle de notaire » et que des nouveaux documents se basent sur des documents autrefois considérés non-éligibles pour certains actes.



Mexico City, 12 May 2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in Mexico City (MEXICO)
2015-2016 REPORT¹**

1. Introduction

The Delegation of the European Union to Mexico is responsible for the organisation, chairing and following up on the Local Schengen Cooperation meetings. The following 21 Schengen Member States (and Schengen associated MS) are present in Mexico City:

1. **Austria** (also issuing Schengen visas on behalf of Malta)
2. **Belgium** (also representing Luxemburg and Slovenia in Schengen visas)
3. **Bulgaria** (not applying the common visa policy in full, always invited to LSC meetings)
4. **Cyprus** (not applying the common visa policy in full, always invited to LSC meetings)
5. **Czech Republic**
6. **Denmark** (also issuing Schengen visas for Sweden, Norway and Iceland)
7. **Finland**
8. **France**
9. **Germany**
10. **Greece**
11. **Hungary**
12. **Italy**
13. **Netherlands**
14. **Poland**
15. **Portugal**
16. **Romania** (not applying the common visa policy in full, always invited to LSC meetings)
17. **Slovakia**
18. **Spain** (also issuing Schengen visas for Estonia)
19. **Sweden** (Schengen visas for Sweden are issued by Denmark)
20. **Norway** (Schengen visas for Norway are issued by Denmark)
21. **Switzerland**

Outside the capital city, only Spain has professional consular representations (General Consulates) in Guadalajara (State of Jalisco) and Monterrey (State of Nuevo León).

2. LSC meetings held

In the reporting period one LSC meeting was held in Mexico City (in April 2015). It was well attended. The LSC group met at the EU Delegation. LSC meetings are chaired by the EU DEL (with minutes and follow up dealt with by the chair). Apparently few MSs draft their own minutes for their capitals.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

Mexican nationals are exempted from Schengen visas, so there is reasonably low number of Schengen visa applications in Mexico (by third countries' nationals only). Big MSs issue approx. 140 Schengen visas per year. Schengen Consuls cooperate on an *ad hoc* basis via informal contacts.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Due to the EU-Mexico tourist visa waiver agreement (VWA), Schengen visas do not constitute a major issue in the local consular work. VIS was implemented in Mexico and is fully operational.

MSs apply different exchange rates and also update them with different regularity, mostly according to instructions from their capitals, which makes it impossible to have one uniform visa fee in the local currency. However, the differences in fees for Schengen visas are not significant and they do not lead to visa shopping.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

This has not been a priority for Member States in Mexico so far, due to a low number of Schengen visa applications. In 2016 EU DEL in Mexico will launch the harmonisation of supporting documents.

3.3 Exchange of information

Some Schengen consuls maintain regular working contacts between themselves (also due to their close cooperation in consular issues), but EU DEL has not been included in such an exchange of Schengen information. The goal for 2016 is to stimulate a better cooperation and a regular exchange of Schengen-related information.

According to the latest exchange of information, most applicants for Schengen Visa in Mexico in 2015 come from Colombia, Belize, Peru, Ecuador and Cuba; however among applicants there were also nationals of African and Asian countries.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

n/a

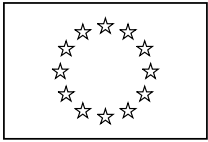
4. Challenges

The issue of treatment of EU nationals entering Mexico is regularly the object of criticisms towards MEX authorities. Recurrent cases of questionable refusals of tourists upon arrival in Mexico were raised. Some tourists are returned to the EU without any justification (in most cases without informing consular services of the person concerned). Despite fulfilling the formal requirements (valid passport and return ticket), many travellers were refused entry by MEX immigration officers (most MS reported cases of their citizens being turned away). However, in general it can be stated that MEX authorities comply with the VWA.

5. Other issues

n/a

This report was prepared by the EU Delegation to Mexico. Members of the EU Schengen group have been invited to comment on the draft and their suggestions were included in the document.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO MONTENEGRO

Podgorica, 11 May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in MONTENEGRO 2015-2016 REPORT

1. Introduction

In addition to the EU Delegation, there are now 20 member states (MS) with diplomatic representation (14 embassies: GR, AT, GB, CZ, FR, SI, IT, BG, HU, SK, PL, DE, RO, HR and 4 Honorary Consuls representing 6 countries (DK/SE, BE/LU, HR and MT) in Montenegro. Local Schengen Group meetings were held bi-annually, following the Consular protection meetings. Meetings were attended by representatives of MS of the Schengen agreement and observers (Romania, Croatia and Bulgaria). The EUD assisted in organization of the meetings, drafting minutes and compiling and circulating relevant information (visa statistics, MS list of contacts). Both meetings were chaired by the EUD Head of Administration.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

At the first meeting held on 6 May 2015, Consul at the Embassy of Slovenia, and Head of the Common Application Centre (CAC) informed the participants about visa issuance and statistics and informed that the CAC did not encounter any problem while issuing visas.

For the first 3 months of 2015 the Common Application centre issued only 103 (in January - 16 visas, in February - 22 visas in March - 65 visas and for April 38 visas) which were mainly tourist and transit visas (issued to travellers to Hungary, Slovenia, Austria, Poland). This number is less than the number for the same period last year. The applicants were mainly from Ukraine and Russia and they make 75% of all applications. There were some unusual applications from South Africa, Filipinas, India, Mozambique, Nigeria, Egypt and China. More Chinese applicants were expected this year because of the motorway construction in Montenegro awarded to a Chinese company.

Italian embassy issued 25% less visa than the last year which is probably due to financial and war crisis.

Romanian embassy had more than 50% decreases for visa issuance and applicants were mainly Russian citizens

Greek embassy issued the same number as the last year, 25 visas (24 were multi-entry tourism visa and 1 single visa).

The Chairperson informed that the total of all MS issued visas 2014 is 1004 visas and 11 visas were refused.

At the second meeting held on 25 November 2015 the Schengen countries shared the statistics on issued visas. The Common Application centre and the Italian embassy issued 565 visas and 72 visas were refused for the period from January to end of October.

Bulgarian embassy issued 800 visas and 6 refused (rejected by the Schengen system) from January to November.

Greek embassy issued 47 visas from the beginning of January to end of October.

German embassy issued 169 visas and 14 were refused. Visas were rejected by the Schengen system or the applicants did not provide sufficient funds to finance themselves). Also, 352 long-term visas were issued.

Romanian embassy issued 10-15 long term visas to international citizens and 20 visas to Russian and Ukrainian citizens. There was a strong increase in transit visas.

From January to October, Italian embassy issued 283 visas (184 Schengen and 99 National) and there were 19 refusals.

Total number of issued Schengen visas in 2015 was:

	Issued visas	Refused visas
The Common Application Centre	516	203
Italian embassy	Schengen Visas 216, National Visas 108	20
Germany	259	53
Greece	53 Schengen Visas	

For the first trimester of 2016, CAC issued 148 Schengen visas, Italy 50, Germany 57, Bulgaria, 76 and Greece 13

3. State of play

MS application of the visa code is satisfactory

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

- The Visa code has been thoroughly discussed during the Local Schengen meetings.
- The EUD compiled the information on MS visa statistics for 2015 and first three months of 2016 and circulated to all MS and DG HOME.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The general view of MS is that Annex II to the Schengen regulation (lists of supporting documents) and the instructions received from the capitals offer substantial and adequate information, more than enough for Montenegro, so MS see no need for further harmonization.

3.3 Exchange of information

The exchange of information within the LSC includes annual statistics, cases of fraud, communication problems with local authorities, travel documents issued by the host state.

New amendments to the Law for foreigners

The amendments were introduced as of 1 April 2015 and the guests from the Police Directorate were invited for the clarification. New type of visas has been introduced and a rulebook has been drafted to regulate registration and de-registration of foreign citizens' stay. There is an increase of EU citizens trying to enter Montenegro with IDs which are still recorded in the Interpol database as lost. And for the work permit applications of the EU citizens, new provisions are in place for the recognition and validation of their qualifications/diplomas.

Medical insurance

All MS embassies require medical insurance from visa applicants and it is mandatory. Embassies require the coverage of the whole period of stay (exp. 90 days multi-entry visa) as applicants tend to provide insurance only for the first trip. Some embassies do request the insurance for the first trip but inform applicants that they have to provide it every time they travel (during 90 days multi-entry visa) or ask them to sign a document confirming they are informed on insurance requirements for each trip during visa's validity.

For short-term visas, some embassies require a confirmation from the inviting person/company that they will cover invitees' costs of transportation or repatriation to the country of origin.

Embassies do not require a particular insurance company but they do pay attention what coverage includes and the amounts.

Fraudulent documents

One embassy had a case with a fraudulent proof of funds. The statement was obtained from the bank but the money was deposited and withdrawn in one day. The embassy now requests the bank statement for the minimum period of 3 months.

Website publication of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on Schengen visas

The chairperson informed that the DG HOME published on their "Schengen website" short stay visa information, FAQs, which provides general information on Schengen visa. This sheet was also placed at the Delegation's website with MS embassies' link.

Collection of worldwide statistics on consular assistance given in third countries to unrepresented citizens – Summary of exercise

The chairperson thanked to participants who collaborated in this worldwide exercise from 1 December 2014 to 30 November 2015 and shared the information that the resident MS provided assistance only to 4 citizens (1 LU-death; 1 LT – ETD; 2 LU – ETD).

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Training

MS and the EUD Delegation might consider organizing training on practical issues related to the detection of falsified documents (by Frontex) in the near future.

4. Challenges

MS will continue to jointly resolve outstanding issues (period of registration of foreigners, online registration form for the registration of foreigners) with Montenegrin authorities.



COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN (LSC) AU MAROC RAPPORT 2015-2016

1. Introduction

17 pays membres de Schengen sont présents au Maroc: 15 Etats membres de l'UE (Autriche, Belgique, République tchèque, Danemark, Finlande, France, Allemagne, Grèce, Hongrie, Italie, Pays-Bas, Pologne, Portugal, Espagne et Suède), 2 pays Schengen non membres de l'UE (Suisse et Norvège) et 3 Etats membres de l'UE qui n'appliquent pas d'une façon complète l'acquis Schengen (Bulgarie, Croatie et Roumanie).

Plus de 480 mille demandes de visa sont reçues au Maroc chaque année. 2 Etats membres de l'UE reçoivent environ 84% des demandes. 4 autres Etats membres reçoivent, chacun, entre 2,5 et 5% des demandes. Les autres reçoivent ensemble 3% des demandes. 2 Etats membres ont, chacun, 6 Consulats dans les principales villes. 2 Etats membres de l'UE ont 2 Consulats alors que les autres pays membres de Schengen ont, chacun, 1 Consulat (souvent appuyés par un réseau de Consuls Honoraires). 7 Etats membres de l'UE utilisent des prestataires de services extérieurs pour la réception des demandes de visa. Certains pays membres de Schengen ont centralisé ou régionalisé les décisions relatives aux visas.

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2014-2015

La LSC s'est réunie 4 fois au cours de 2015. Toutes les réunions ont connu une bonne participation. Certains consuls basés à Casablanca y étaient souvent présents. Les réunions étaient présidées par la DUE qui était appuyée par certains Etats membres de l'UE, notamment dans l'établissement de l'ordre du jour. A présent, les rapports sont rédigés par la DUE uniquement sur une base ponctuelle et partagés, si nécessaire, avec les autres consulats ou avec les capitales.

D'autres réunions impliquant des pays tiers (Canada, USA) ou concernant des sujets spécifiques (faux-documents) ont été organisées soit par la DUE (à l'occasion de la visite de FRONTEX en septembre 2015) ou par les Etats membres.

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

En général, les EM de l'UE et la DUE sont bien équipés pour assurer, en étroite coordination, un fonctionnement fluide de la LSC. La Présidence, assurée par la DUE, se consulte régulièrement avec les Consuls des pays membres de Schengen (PMS) pour établir l'ordre du jour et préparer la discussion sur des questions concrètes. Dans la mesure du possible, la Présidence se déplace dans d'autres villes pour discuter avec les Consuls de la réalité et des problèmes locaux. L'efficacité de la Présidence sera beaucoup plus renforcée avec l'arrivée d'un officier de liaison pour la migration.

L'un des problèmes spécifiques qui se posent en matière d'application du Code des Visas c'est l'application par certains PMS de la Directive 2004/38/CE. Certains PMS considèrent cette Directive comme s'appliquant aussi aux voyages temporaires, vacances et courts séjours. Cela constitue une faille exploitée par les demandeurs de mauvaise foi, qui se voient refuser la demande de visa présentée au profit d'un membre de leur famille résidant au Maroc (ex: pour un regroupement familial). Ils demandent un visa pour un voyage temporaire à un autre Etat membre de l'UE pour leur membre de famille et le visa est automatiquement accordé. La présidence du LSC a contacté la Commission (DG HOME) qui a expliqué par mail que la Directive 2004/38/CE s'applique seulement en cas de changement de résidence ou de séjour de longue durée d'une famille composée de ressortissants d'un Etat membre de l'UE et de ressortissants de pays non membres, qui sont résidents permanents dans un Etat membre de l'UE et souhaitent se déplacer vers un autre. Les PMS concernés ont contacté les capitales mais un certain flottement dans l'application demeure.

3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs.

La liste harmonisée pour le Maroc a été approuvée le 15 octobre 2015 et mise en œuvre par tous les pays Schengen. La mise en œuvre a été discutée à la suite des réunions LSC. Aucun changement n'est prévu pour l'heure.

3.3 Echange d'informations

Malgré les efforts consentis, il demeure difficile d'établir un tableau complet contenant les statistiques LSC. Les PMS ont des périodes différentes pour soumettre des rapports à leurs capitales et différentes façons d'enregistrer les demandes. Néanmoins, la LSC a de fréquentes discussions sur l'évolution des demandes de visas dans les différents pays et sur les éventuelles questions concernant le basculement vers des nombres importants de demandes.

La LSC discute régulièrement des fraudes et de l'utilisation de documents falsifiés pour la demande de visa. Les PMS partagent leurs résultats et se tiennent informés sur la découverte des fraudes systématiques, une question fréquente au Maroc. Ils partagent également des informations sur le suivi effectué avec les autorités locales. Le dialogue avec les pays non membres (notamment les USA) sur cette question a été considéré comme très utile par la LSC. Certains PMS ont rendu compte de sérieux problèmes avec les assurances couvrant les frais médicaux. La LSC a discuté cette question et partagé les expériences réussies ainsi que les problèmes qui se posent à ce sujet. Le "visa shopping" (dépôt simultané de plusieurs demandes de visa dans différents États membres) et les informations sur les demandes suspectes restent, jusqu'à un certain point, difficiles à partager. La législation relative à la protection des données dans certains PMS empêche un partage fluide d'informations et de données sur les demandeurs de visa.

D'autres questions ont été discutées par la LSC, notamment les différents points de vue des PMS sur un certain nombre de sujets comme le concept de membres de famille, l'acceptation de certains certificats de mariage (établis par procuration), les différentes pratiques concernant l'acceptation des Notes Verbales du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération pour appuyer les demandes de visa, ainsi que les questions relatives au rapatriement (identification, laissez-passer) en particulier en vue des négociations pour un Traité avec le Maroc sur la facilitation des visas et la réadmission.

3.4. D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

A l'occasion de la visite de FRONTEX, la DUE a organisé une réunion conjointe avec le JAI, les groupes consulaires et Schengen, avec la participation de pays non-membres, pour discuter des modèles de migration au Maroc et dans la région. Cela a constitué une occasion pour amorcer une discussion entre les consuls, les officiers de liaison et FRONTEX autour des principales questions de migration.

Un PMS a organisé des réunions avec les membres de la LSC et les Etats non-membres pour le partage d'informations sur les documents falsifiés. Des présentations ont été faites par certains PMS et certains pays sur leur expérience.

4. Défis

La question de couverture des frais médicaux par les assurances restent un défi pour certains pays. La LSC va lancer un dialogue avec les compagnies pour s'assurer qu'ils ont une meilleure compréhension de la question et prendre les mesures préventives nécessaires tout en s'assurant que le souscripteur est bien informé de son droit à un remboursement et des procédures à suivre. Les fraudes et les documents falsifiés demeurent une question majeure pour le travail de la LSC.

5. Divers

Le contre-terrorisme devient une question qui s'impose de plus en plus à la LSC. A cet égard, il s'agit de discuter, en coordination avec le siège, de la façon de sensibiliser davantage à cette question dans les consulats en les dotant des outils nécessaires.



12 May 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) MOZAMBIQUE 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

The Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) Group continued to meet, to deepen coordination and to perform the entrusted local tasks.

Schengen MS issued almost 15 thousand visas in Mozambique in the year 2015.

DK, DE, ES, FR, IT, NL, PT, FI are the 8 Schengen visa collecting/issuing MS present in Maputo in the reporting period. It should be flagged that this will change in the next reporting period, as DK stopped issuing visas (also in representation of EE, SE, IS, NO) end April 2016 due to the Embassy closing down end 2017.

Only PT has a visa issuing general consulate outside the capital (in Beira, Sofala Province).

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

The LSC had two meetings in the reporting period, which were well attended. The EU Delegation chaired the meetings, being also responsible for drawing-up the reports, duly approved by MS and then sent to DG Home, and by MS to their capitals.

In between meetings, LSC coordination and exchange of information was ensured by e-mail exchanges.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The EU Delegation is chairing the LSC since June 2012, working closely with MS and with the full support and cooperation from the European Commission (DG Home).

The LSC fosters an active coordination and cooperation with a view to ensuring preparedness to carry-out the tasks foreseen in the Visa Code, including harmonised application of the Visa Code provisions and implementation of the Visa Information System (VIS), in force since June 2013. The LSC exchanged good practices and relevant information and clarifications.

Some MS highlighted in this regard the usefulness of the FAQs (drawn up by the Brussels Visa Committee) which they put on their website and was helpful for applicants.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The Mozambique LSC harmonised list of documents supporting a visa application was adopted by a Commission Implementing Decision of 4/9/2014, with 15 September 2014 as the joint agreed starting date. During the reporting period the LSC had the chance to continue to exchange views on the respective implementation practical experiences. In the meetings MS considered that there was no current need to amend the existing list. Some MS highlighted that the common list reference became very useful for the consulates and applicants.

3.3 Exchange of information

During the reporting period, the LSC improved the general exchange of information, namely on (i) visa statistics trends, based on the yearly official statistics as well as the quarterly exchange of visa statistics information; (ii) the trends regarding the few instances of migratory risk or visa fraud were discussed in the meetings; (iii) overview of the general VIS functioning; (iv) best practices and relevant experiences.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

A public event to kick-off the 30 years of Schengen celebrations consisted in a presentation by EU Delegation Head of Political Section to students of European Studies of the International Relations Institute (ISRI), open to the participation of MS, and as part of the Europe Day 2015 sequence of events in Mozambique. The visibility event was an opportunity to explain the importance of the Schengen experiment and acquis, as well as demystify some preconceived ideas on the difficulty of acquiring a visa to go to Europe. Due to the events in the Mediterranean, the issue was also raised on the ensuing Q&A session, the EU having replied along Special European Council Conclusions lines.

4. Challenges

Following the entry into force of the harmonised list of documents to support of a visa application, the previous yearly report had set as a challenge to assert whether there was a need for revision of the list, as was the case in other locations. In the meetings during the reporting period MS considered that there was no need for revision of the list.

During the next reporting period the LSC will continue to deepen the close exchange of information, coordination and entrusted local tasks, probably with new Schengen issuing MS represented (due to the changes following the closure of DK visa issuing).

5. Other issues

No other issues to address.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA AND
TO THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in NIGERIA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

Key issues on the location and number of Member States (MS) and non-MS issuing Schengen visas are as follows:

- Schengen visas are issued in both Abuja and Lagos;
- in Abuja there are sixteen (16) Schengen MS and two (2) non-MS (Norway and Switzerland), of which thirteen (13) Schengen MS (one – Denmark – only from 4th February 2016) and the two (2) non-MS issue Schengen visas; and
- in Lagos there are five Schengen MS Consulate Generals (or similar) of which four (4) issue Schengen visas; the one (1) non-MS with an office in Lagos does not issue visas.

The table in Annex summarises the situation of Schengen Area countries and their responsibilities.

2. LSC meetings held in 2016-2016

Eight LSC meetings were held in the year 2015-2016, six in Abuja, and two in Lagos.

1. 29th April 2015
2. 24th June 2015
3. 2nd July 2015 (Lagos)
4. 9th September 2015
5. 28th October 2015
6. 4th December 2015 (Lagos)
7. 9th December 2015
8. 24th February 2016

All meetings, which are chaired by the EU Delegation, were well attended. Non-Schengen Member States, Ireland and the UK do not participate; both Bulgaria and Romania are invited to participate. Key issues addressed have been the finalisation of a Common Information Sheet, Schengen visa statistics, and information on insurance companies.

One ad-hoc meetings were held on "Person Verification" organised by the Austrian Embassy on 5th November 2015, with about thirty people in attendance (the most popular Schengen meeting).

The meetings in Lagos coordinated by the EU Delegation are not as frequent as might be desirable, but the Lagos Consuls are able to meet on their own initiative to exchange views on Schengen visas, which they do from time-to-time.

¹ April 2014 – March 2015

Minutes of meetings are prepared and shared with Member States at the subsequent meeting. Meetings in Abuja are organised to take place in principle on the last Wednesday of every other month (starting February), with exceptions arising during holiday periods. Meetings in Lagos are organised on a more ad-hoc basis.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS and the EUD are able to carry out the tasks on LSC mentioned in the visa code. During 2015-2016 steps have been taken to follow-up on some of the aspects of Article 48 of the visa code following a review undertaken at the end at the meetings of 25th February 2015 (Abuja) and 13th March 2015 (Lagos).

- *Lagos*: greater involvement and communication with the Lagos Consuls, which are responsible for around three-quarters of the Schengen visas issued; however there is still a need to strengthen collaboration.
- *Common criteria for examining applications for exemptions (Art 48(1)(b))*: this matter was not to be pursued, since the responsibility does not lie at the level of LSC.
- *Exhaustive list of travel documents issues by host country (Art 48(1)(c))*: no such list exists, and despite repeated attempts to obtain this list from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs no progress has been made.
- *Common Information Sheet (Art 48(2))*: following the support of EU HQ a Common Information Sheet in the form of Frequently Asked Questions was prepared. It was discussed with Member States in a number of Schengen Meetings and finally agreed in Abuja (24th June) and Lagos (2nd July) and circulated to Schengen Member States. However, use of the Common Information Sheet varies between different Member States. A summary of the use of Member States as of end-April 2015 can be found in the attached annex.
- *Monthly Statistics (Art 48(3)(a))*: A format for the collection of monthly statistics was agreed between the Schengen states. An initial format for the collection of monthly statistics was agreed at the meeting of 29th April 2015, but following a subsequent trial it was proposed to revise the format to better capture the information on three key statistics – "applications", "issued", and "denied". The collection of statistics in this format was reinitiated and was completed for the year 2015.
- *Assessment of migratory and/or security risks (Art 48(3)(b))*: The general security matters are usually discussed in other for a (eg under the EU Migration and Mobility Working Group). It has not been felt necessary to address this matter in the Local Schengen Cooperation Meeting.
- *Information on cooperation with transport companies (Art 48(3)(c))*: No problematic matters were identified.
- *Information on insurance companies (Art 48(3)(d))*: MS agreed to share information on this matter in an agreed format, and this has been prepared and circulated. It has more recently been agreed to collect information on companies providing Travel Medical Insurance in line with Article 15 of the visa code with the aim of having a harmonised EU list in due course.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The harmonised list of supporting documents (Art 48(1)(a) of the visa code) was approved by a Commission Implementing Decision of 6.8.2012 C(2012)5310 final. No formal monitoring has been undertaken of the harmonised list. As was reported last year all MS state that they are using the list, but have in LSC meeting identified a number of issues:

- should be clear that these are minimum requirements;
- sometimes not clear what is needed, for example, what is meant by "proof of employment";
- the list does not determine how you act on the information – in some cases MS will refuse a visa if there is no proof of accommodation; for other MS this is not the case;
- visa shopping still taking place – even between Lagos and Abuja;
- No reference to Travel Medical Insurance is included in the list

At present no amendments have been proposed to the harmonised list. There has been no request to carry out a review of this harmonised list.

3.3 Exchange of information

Exchange of information takes place between the MS issuing Schengen visas. This exchange of information takes place through email. For the three main issues which are expected to be reported on, the following observations can be made:

- Statistics have in the past been examined on an annual basis but with the agreed efforts to collect quarterly information it is planned to make improvements in this area, although the collection and checking of this information requires considerable effort (see above, section 3.1).
- Sensitive issues: there has only been limited discussion of sensitive issues of malpractice;
- Travel Medical Insurance: sharing of information has been carried out (see above section 3.1)

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

An initiative has been taken to improve information exchange with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by inviting the Director of the Consular and Immigration Division to discuss Schengen visa issues with the Schengen states. However, it was not possible to undertake this exchange in the year 2015-2016, with the first meeting of this kind taking place in April 2016.

In addition it remains important to increase the follow of information between Abuja and Lagos, with efforts needed to increase the number of meetings held in Lagos from the two to three each year.

4. Challenges

The main challenges listed in the 2014-2015 report were related to the application of the visa code, notably through a harmonised list of documents. Some progress has been made in this area but it remains to be seen whether all Schengen States make full use of this information. For 2016-2017 the main challenges will be (i) maintaining an efficient collection of Schengen visa statistics; (ii) setting up a common list of agreed Travel Medical Insurance companies; and (iii) ensuring wider use of the Common Information Sheet/FAQs

5. Other issues

No other issues to be raised.

Table: Representation of Schengen Area countries in Abuja and Lagos⁽ⁱ⁾

No	Abuja				Lagos (Consulate General) ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾			
	Present	Issuing Schengen visas	Use of external service provider	Use of CIS/FAQ ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾	Present	Issuing Schengen visas	Use of external service provider	Use of CIS/FAQ
1	AT	Yes	No – but planned	No – but planned				
2	BE	Yes + EE, NL, LU, LT	Yes	No				
3	CZ	Yes	No	No				
4	DE	Yes – mainly government	No	Yes	DE	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	DK	Yes – since 4 th Feb 2016	Yes	Yes	DK	No	na	na
6	EL	Yes	No	No				
7	ES	Yes – mainly government	Yes	No	ES	Yes	Yes	No
8	FI	Yes	No	Yes				
9	FR	Yes	Yes	No	FR	Yes + NL, LT	Yes	No
10	IT	No	Yes: sent to Lagos	No	IT	Yes + MT	Yes	No
11	HU	Yes	No	No				
12	NL	No – visas issued by BE	na	na	NL	No – visas issued by FR	na	na
13	PL	Yes	No	No				
14	PT	Yes	Yes	Yes				
15	SK	No	na	na				
16	SE	Yes + LV, SK (and DK up to 3rd Feb 2016)	See note (iv) below	No				
17	CH	Yes	No	No	CH ^(v)	No	na	Na
18	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes				

Notes:

(i) The non-Schengen MS present in Nigeria are: (a) Abuja: Bulgaria, Ireland, Romania, and the UK; (b) Lagos: UK

(ii) CIS/FAQ: Common Information Sheet/Frequently Asked Questions (Art 48(2) of the Visa Code)

(iii) Honorary Consuls are not mentioned; the "Embassy Office" of the Netherlands is included

(iv) Sweden has been using an external service provider since 16th April 2016

(v) Switzerland opened their Consulate General Office in Lagos in March 2016



11/05/2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN PERU 2015–2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

The LSC drew up four reports in Peru.

The EU Member States represented by an Embassy in Peru are: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Romania. Each Embassy has a Consular Section / General Consulate. The consular division of the Swiss Embassy takes part in the LSC.

The agreements on Schengen representation in Peru are as follows:

- Germany represents Lithuania.
- Austria represents Malta and Slovenia.
- Belgium represents Luxembourg.
- Spain represents Slovakia.
- Finland represents: Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The EU Delegation chaired the LSC meetings in the period April 2015-March 2016.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

During this period three regular LSC meetings were held (two in 2015 and one in 2016). They were attended by most of the European Union consulates present plus Switzerland and the EU Delegation, which usually chairs the meetings held in its buildings and draws up the minutes.

Schengen issues were also discussed at the meetings of the Heads of Mission, Consuls and Political Advisers on the Schengen visa waiver process for Peruvian citizens concluded on 14 March 2016 with the signing of the EU-Peru Agreement.

The agendas for the consular meetings include several subjects of common interest: the situation of prisoners from EU and Schengen countries in Peruvian prisons; the Law on Migration; entries of tourists without entry stamps in their passports and subsequent removal; security; natural disasters; etc.

¹ April 2015 — March 2016

In the last year, non-Schengen countries did not take part in LSC meetings. In the past, these countries were invited to attend to discuss issues of common interest. No LSC meetings are held outside Lima.

3. Current situation

3.1. Implementation of the Visa Code

The EU Delegation draws up the agenda in line with the most important priorities / events in recent weeks.

Two subjects dealt with systematically at the LSC meetings in the second half of 2015 and the beginning of 2016 were: a) The EU-Peru Agreement on the Schengen visa waiver for Peruvian citizens; and b) the process for the introduction of biometric passports by Peru.

The exchanges of information and the coordination between the Consuls on matters relating to the Visa Code and its application are constant and satisfactory.

3.2. Assessment of the need to harmonise the list of supporting documents

There is no harmonised list of supporting documents, but the differences are minimal: harmonisation is complicated since it does not depend on the consulates. For example, in the case of the visa fee, this is set by the capitals. However, since the differences in fees are slight, it has not seemed necessary to harmonise them.

There is no common information form, but the information requested by Schengen consulates is similar.

3.3. Exchange of information

- Monthly statistics: circulation is not systematic.
- Fraud cases: alteration of visas issued by other embassies, alteration of dates of entry and exit stamps, false certificates of employment, alteration of bank data taken from the Internet, bigamy.
- Travel medical insurance (TMI): there are insurance companies that offer TMI, but the Consuls report specific instances of failure to activate the insurance and forged TMI documents.
- Travel documents issued by Peru: there are three types of passport:
 1. Peruvian passport (ordinary);
 2. Diplomatic passport;
 3. Special passport.

Holders of diplomatic passports have not needed visas for most of the Schengen Member States represented in Peru.

Peru has been issuing biometric passports since 25 February 2016 and will cease to produce conventional/non-biometric passports on 7 July 2016.

3.4. Other LSC initiatives

The LSC has exchanged information on the Schengen visa waiver for Peruvian citizens in preparation for the signing of the EU-Peru Agreement.

The LSC is drawing up a common information sheet on the requirements for Peruvians to enter the Schengen area without a visa. This sheet will be posted on the websites of the consulates and embassies.

4. Challenges

The most important development for the Schengen Area Member States in 2016 was the conclusion of the negotiations of the EU-Peru Schengen Visa Waiver Agreement and the implementation of the Agreement. During the first few weeks of the entry into force of the Agreement, no major problems have been detected at airports/points of entry to the Schengen area.

The main challenges expected for 2017 are:

- Ensure the smooth implementation of the Agreement.
- Monitor the impact of the Agreement on Peruvian passenger flows to the Schengen area and potential entry problems.
- Continue maintaining a LSC which the Consuls regard as good, with direct contacts and frank and constant dialogue leading to rapid solutions
- Coordinate with the National Authorities the search for solutions to any difficulties that may arise in the context of the Agreement.

5. Other issues

All the Embassies / Consulates involved in Local Schengen Cooperation have approved this Report.



11 July 2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in MANILA,
the Philippines
2015-2016 REPORT¹**

1. Introduction

A total of 12 Schengen members (Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Austria) are represented in the Philippines. The current representation arrangements for the non-resident MS are as follows:

- AT – Lithuania
- BE – Luxembourg, Hungary, Slovenia
- CZ – Slovakia
- GR – Portugal
- NL – Poland and Latvia
- NO – Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Estonia

Some MS have outsourced the bookings for visa appointments (ES, NL, DK, FR, NO use VFS; IT uses PIASI; DE also uses PIASI but only partially). The Embassy of Switzerland has outsourced the visa handling (including the registration of the biometric data) to the company TLS contact.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

LSC meetings take place on a quarterly basis at the EU Delegation (EUD). They are usually well attended. LSC meetings are organised and chaired by the EUD. Ad hoc meetings are as well organised on specific subjects and with the participation of third parties, including non-Schengen Member States.

The Minutes/Reports of the meetings are drawn up by EUD.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The Visa Code is largely applied by Members States in the Philippines. However, differences in the interpretation of some articles still appear.

A large number of Schengen visas are granted to Filipino seafarers. Harmonisation of seafarers' application procedures as a result of practice of practice of human trafficking remains a recurrent topic.

¹ April 2015 – April 2016

A mission of Schengen evaluation of the Italian Embassy to the Philippines by DG HOME took place in Manila from 22 to 26 February 2016. This was an opportunity for the LSC to have an exchange of views with DG HOME on 24 February 2016 regarding implementation of the Schengen visa code in the Philippines.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Members of the Schengen which are present in Manila consider that harmonisation of practice is already acquired. The objective of the LSC to finalise the harmonisation of the documents to be presented by visa applicants and to get a decision on the final list was achieved in September 2014 with the adoption of a Commission decision.

Effective monitoring of MS' implementation of the COM Decision C(2014) 6146 of 3.9.2014 establishing the list of supporting documents to be presented by visa applicants is a regular point of discussion of the LSC meetings. For the time being, there is no need to amend the existing list.

3.3 Exchange of information

3.3.1 Monthly statistics

Most Schengen MS Embassies submit statistics on a regular basis (monthly and/or yearly).

3.3.2 Cases of fraud

Information regarding specific or suspicious causes of fraud is pro-actively shared by email between European Embassies and in the LSC framework. Common cases encountered were on document fraud by applicants and/or the authorities, practices of human trafficking, including by several identified travel agencies.

3.3.3 Travel Medical Insurance (TMI)

The LSC has and MS Embassies have a shared list of TMI agencies that they regularly worked with. Most of these agencies are used by Schengen visa applicants. Only insurance companies offering the requirements of the Visa Code are accepted. No Insurance Company accreditation list is published.

3.3.4 Others issues

Other topics that have been discussed on one occasion during the reporting period include the following:

- monitoring of external service provider,
- rules of calculation for the monthly uniformed visa fee calculation for all missions,
- "report back" decision parameters, procedures and exchange of information,
- visa requirements for spouses of EU nationals living in a MS other than their own,
- shipping crew manning agencies accreditation, requirements and procedures,
- visa issuance to non-Filipino residents,
- relevance and reliability of hotel bookings.

Among other topics, the February 2016 LSC meeting was an opportunity to touch upon the follow-up of the June 2015 Manila Declaration on the fight against human trafficking.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

3.4.1 Human trafficking

As in the past, human trafficking has continued to be a regular item for update and discussion during the meetings. The objective is to strengthen cooperation between embassies and to create awareness on this topic. In most meetings, cases of human trafficking/smuggling are discussed.

3.4.1 Cooperation with other groups

Exchange of good practices regarding cases of fraud with non-Schengen countries (especially UK & USA) is considered very fruitful. On 4 February 2016, the NL Chair of the EU Consular group organized a meeting on Document Fraud Indicators & Prevention with the USA, the UK and the DE Embassies as keynote speakers. A follow-up meeting was organized by the UK Embassy on 27 April 2016.

4. Challenges

The main issue for the coming year will be to monitor MS's effective implementation of the September 2014 COM Decision on the list of documents to be presented by visa applicants in the Philippines. A closer look will also be made at the issue of visa issuance for Filipino seafarers and fishermen, taking into account the prospect of a follow-up Manila conference on the fight against human trafficking in 2016.



22/04/2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in MOSCOW 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

All Schengen Member States/associated Member States remain present in Moscow with the exception of Liechtenstein which is represented by Switzerland. At the end of March 2016, only few of them do not use external service providers for the collection of visa applications, and representation arrangements have been established at least in Ekaterinburg, Irkutsk, Kaliningrad, Murmansk, Petrozavodsk, Pskov, Sovetsk and St. Petersburg.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

During the reporting period, seven regular LSC meetings were organised in Moscow, in addition one ad hoc roundtable (16/06/2015) as well.² All meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation (EUD) and well attended by Schengen Member States (as well as Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania). Representatives of Local Schengen Committee from Turkey and Kazakhstan participated in one LSC meeting³ as guest speakers, and invitation to one meeting⁴ was extended to the high representative of the Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR). Invitations to ad hoc roundtable about the VIS roll-out (16/06/2015) were exceptionally extended also to the UK and Ireland.

EUD continued to draw up draft summary reports of all LSC meetings and consulted the LSC group before transmitting the approved reports to the European Commission. The Member States shared the common reports with their respective capitals and drew up their own reports. Alongside EUD's chairmanship of both groups, consulates in Moscow coordinate their practices closely with their colleagues in St. Petersburg (and in other locations in Russia) in line with the outcomes of the discussions in Moscow.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The Schengen Member States and EUD are generally well prepared to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code although practical interpretation of many stipulations were discussed in LSC meetings (see below point 3.3.).

¹ April 2015 – March 2016.

² On 28 April, 26 May, 9 June, 15 July, 21 October, 14 January, and 4 March.

³ On 28 April.

⁴ 26 May.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The agreed harmonised list of supporting documents is being implemented in Moscow even in the absence of the related Commission Decision (COM is in the process of launching the procedures for formal adoption of the harmonised list). However, other non-EU MS are expected to follow this legal procedure for a harmonisation of practices.

Practical implementation was on the LSC meeting agendas intermittently during the reporting period when the participants expressed some particular concerns about availability of supporting documents.

3.3 Exchange of information

The LSC discussed regularly monthly statistics; in 2015, the number of Schengen visa applications submitted in Russia decreased by 40% (from 5.76 to 3.47 million) for the second consecutive year following a previous decline of almost 18% (2014). This means that between 2013 and 2015 the total decrease was more or less 50%, from 7M applications to 3.5M applications.

In reporting period the share of issued multiple-entry visas increased (from 60% to 68,1%) and the refusal rate marginally increased (from 0.9% to 1,3%) in comparison to 2014. In Moscow, the total number of applications decreased (from 4.0 to 2.28 million), the share of multiple-entry visas increased (from 50% to 66%) and the refusal rate marginally increased (from 1.0% to 1,4%). Information on cases of fraud was regularly exchanged within the LSC (and through the local anti-fraud group), and a dedicated assessment took place of migratory and security risks, including sources of information at local level (social security, health insurance, fiscal registers, entry-exit registrations), use of false/counterfeit/forged documents, illegal immigration routes and refusals.

During the reporting period, the LSC discussions were dominated by the preparations, information campaign and kick-off of the roll-out of the Visa Information System as well as first practices with regard to visa applications lodged by the residents of Crimea or Ukrainian persons (incl. refugees) in Russia. In addition, the LSC considered *inter alia*

- *principles of visa issuance* (issuance of visas for holders of double citizenships; conditions of issuance of multiple-entry visas for tourists; definition of the correct use of previous visas; visa applications by local staff of third-country Embassies);
- *visa fees* (harmonisation of visa fee waivers for children aged 6-12 years, holders of diplomatic and service passports, young participants in events organised by non-profit organisations and disabled persons; submission to the Russian MFA of statistics on visa applications lodged without charging a fee);
- *other practicalities related to visa issuance* (handling of discovered fake Russian documents; practical methods of delivery of visa applications from external service providers to the consulates; cross-referencing between two passports of one person; calculator on short stays in the Schengen area; submissions of fraudulent documents notably by persons from third countries and the North Caucasus; organisation of interviews on distance; collection of biometrics from holders of Russian diplomatic and service passports; travellers with Russian service passports; visa refusal rates; false proof of ticket bookings or hotel bookings over the internet for visa applications of tourists, use of stamps);
- *information campaign* (notably in view of the planned VIS roll-out and first experiences);
- *cooperation with external service providers, travel agencies and travel insurance companies* (changes in the number of applications by individuals and through travel agencies at external service providers; proposal to ensure collection of applications and delivery of issued visas at doorsteps; additional services proposed by external service providers (offer

- of cut-price tickets by Aeroexpress in return of publications, extra services during evening hours); unpaid bills by Russian travel insurance companies; practical checks on terms of travel insurances; practical checks on external service providers);
- *the EU's visa related policy* (implementation of travel restrictions imposed on individual Russian citizens, possible changes of the Visa Code);
 - *Russia's visa policy* (reciprocity with regard to the implementation of the EU-RU Visa Facilitation Agreement including refusals and processing time, legislative amendments to facilitate issuance of visas, pilot project with 72-hour visas for tourists at the border-crossing points of Kaliningrad, special visa regime for participants of sport events like World or Continental Championships,); and
 - *relevant events and developments* (opening of new offices of external service providers, expert meetings under the EU-Russia Migration Dialogue, EU-Russia Joint Readmission Committee, EU-Russia Joint Visa Facilitation Committee).

Some LSC meetings were followed by the dedicated consular protection meetings organised by the respective rotating Presidencies.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

During the reporting period, the LSC updated a comprehensive table on consular presence in the Russian territory for the purpose of collecting Schengen visa applications. The LSC also discussed the possibility to present 2016 statistics on MEVs already by sub-categories.

In the context of preparations for the VIS roll-out, the LSC agreed to a DEL-organised information campaign with the main elements: -dedicated web-site with interactive user-interphase (www.evrovisa.info), -outreach to Russian media and -press-trips to visa centres, -participation in travel industry fairs and -contact with tourist branch organisations. The purpose of the information campaign was to smooth the VIS-introduction; alleviate user problems and avoid politicising and help building a public understanding of VIS. The information campaign has been very successful with website visits beyond 200.000 individual views; well received by all stake-holders incl media and end-users. The campaign peaked before and around VIS roll-out in summer and autumn 2015 and, at the request of MS it will continue so far until primo 2017.

3.5. Roll-out VIS in Russia

The Visa Information System (VIS) has become operational in on September 14, 2015. The network of visa centres was increased. The main benefit seems to be the improved security while reading of documents containing biometric security features. In general, MSs reported no major problems with the VIS going live at their consular sections and exchanged good practices regarding introduction of VIS.

4. Challenges

As regards the challenges indicated in previous reports, the implementation of the amended EU-Russia Visa Facilitation Agreement based on a reciprocity principle, full integration of Bulgaria or Romania into Schengen and full implementation of the harmonised list of supporting documents, were potential challenges also for 2015-2016 and they will remain for the next reporting period as well.

MS continued to exchange information in matters of relevance to the LSC consuls to ensure standardisation of practices (for example regarding issuance of MEVs and introduction of mandatory procedural facilitations and mandatory issuing of MEVs valid for at least one to three years for particular groups of visitors defined as applicants who have previously lawfully used at least two visas that are registered in the VIS).

In terms of other subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2016-2017), the analysis of experience of roll-out of the VIS in Russia since 14 September 2015 and visa related aspects and the consequent introduction of travel bans to a number of Russian individuals in connection to the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation would require particular vigilance and activity by the Member States and EUD.

With around 60 consulates and 350 authorised visa centres across Russia from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok the Schengen Member States aims at making the process simple, fast and safe for citizens applying for visa, but the Russian Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR) demanded to extend the network of visa centres further due to geographical size of the country. The Schengen member states will continue to test some technical mobile alternatives, but member states believe that the current network of visa centres already covers over 90% of the Russian territory in terms of demand. In the light of challenging economic situation in Russia, the Schengen consulates and their visa centres need to carefully assess how best to continue to ensure high quality of service for visa applicants in Russia.

* * * * *

This LSC Moscow 2015-2016 report has been discussed during the LSC meeting on April 22, 2016 and approved on May 13, 2016 by all Member States present and EUD using a silence procedure.



UNION EUROPEENNE
Délégation en République du Sénégal

25 mai 2016

COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) AU SENEGAL RAPPORT¹ 2015-2016

1. Introduction

Au Sénégal 10 Etats membres sont représentés au niveau Ambassadeur : Allemagne, Autriche, Belgique, Espagne, France, Italie, Pays-Bas, Portugal, Roumanie, Royaume-Uni. Ces Etats membres délivrent des visas pour leurs ressortissants au Sénégal, et des pays pour lesquels ils sont accrédités.

Le Luxembourg et la République Tchèque sont représentés au niveau Chargés d'affaires a.i. La Suisse est représentée au niveau Ambassadeur.

Concernant les EM non-représentés à Dakar, 12 le sont uniquement pour les visas et non pour la protection consulaire. 8 EM ne sont pas représentés.

L'Espagne, la France, l'Italie, les Pays-Bas et le Portugal ont externalisé la réception des demandes de visas.

La plupart des Ambassades des Etats membres au Sénégal sont accréditées auprès de plusieurs pays dans la région, pour certaines jusqu'à 9 pays.

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2015-2016

Durant la période couverte par le rapport, trois réunions de coordination Schengen se sont tenues (mai 2015, septembre 2015, avril 2016) avec une très bonne participation. Tous les Etats membres de l'espace Schengen sont représentés. Entre les réunions, une circulation d'information est assurée grâce à une "mailing list" constituée à cet effet.

La Délégation de l'UE, représentée au niveau du Chef de la section politique, presse et information, préside les réunions, qui se tiennent à tour de rôle dans les locaux des Ambassades des Etats membres volontaires pour les accueillir ou à la Délégation de l'UE. Les comptes rendus des réunions sont préparés par la Délégation de l'UE, qui établit également l'ordre du jour, incluant les contributions des Etats membres.

3. Etat des lieux

¹ Avril 2015 – Fin mai 2016

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Les Etats membres appliquent le Code des Visas. Certains EM ont pu avoir une compréhension différente du champ d'application de la **Directive 2004/38/CE concernant la délivrance de visas aux membres de la famille d'un ressortissant de l'UE**. Les échanges ont permis de répondre à plusieurs interrogations. La DUE s'est montrée disposée à transmettre au siège toute demande de clarification de la part d'un EM sur le champ d'application de la Directive.

3.2 Estimation du besoin d'harmonisation de la liste des documents justificatifs

L'harmonisation des pratiques concernant les documents justificatifs devant être fournis par les demandeurs de visas est acquise. Les réunions de coordination permettent d'échanger les informations sur les documents justificatifs.

3.3 Echange d'informations

Les réunions de coordination et la mailing list servent à échanger les informations notamment sur les aspects suivants:

- les statistiques sur le nombre de demandes des visas, les taux de refus,
- l'assurance médicale de voyage,
- les cas de fraude consulaire,
- le partage d'expériences sur la vérification d'authenticité des documents délivrés par l'Etat civil du Sénégal,
- le partage d'expérience sur l'externalisation de la réception des demandes de visas, etc.

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Une réunion élargie aux questions de sécurité s'est tenue en avril 2016 suite à la montée de la menace terroriste en Europe et en Afrique de l'Ouest.

Il a été convenu, suite à cette réunion, de mettre en place une liste dédiée aux questions de sécurité (y inclus harmonisation des messages à l'attention des voyageurs) entre les EM, incluant la Suisse. Font partie de cette liste les Consuls et des représentants des Chancelleries diplomatiques (y inclus au niveau Ambassadeur / Chargé d'Affaires).

4. Défis

La fraude consulaire continue à constituer un défi important. Le Sénégal reste l'un des principaux pays d'origine d'immigration illégale depuis l'Afrique vers l'Europe.

La fraude documentaire reste importante, des faux passeports, y inclus des passeports diplomatiques, sont en large circulation au Sénégal.

Des délais de traitement des différents dossiers consulaires avec les autorités du Sénégal sont importants.

5. Divers

N/A

Ce rapport a été préparé par la Délégation de l'UE au Sénégal et partagé avec les Etats membres de l'Espace Schengen le 19 mai et approuvé par procédure de silence le 24 mai.



31/03/2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) SERBIA
2015-2016 REPORT¹**

1. Introduction

19 States applying common visa policy are represented in Serbia, i.e. 17 Member States (BE, CZ, DK, DE, GR, ES, FR, IT, HU, NL, AT, PL, PT, SI, SK, FI, SE) and 2 associated States (NO, CH).

All the consular and visa offices are sections of the Embassies and are located in the capital Belgrade, HU has also a Consulate General in Subotica.

The 4 MS that yet do not apply the common visa policy but committed to do so (BG, RO, CY, HR) are also present in Belgrade. RO has also two Consulates General in Vršac and Zaječar, BG has a Consulate General in Niš while HR has a Consulate General in Subotica.

Among States which decided not to apply the visa policy only the UK is represented in Belgrade.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

The EU Delegation to Serbia coordinates the LSC meetings since April 2010. Meetings are regularly organised usually once per semester and prepared by the EU DEL.

In the reporting period the LSC meetings took place on June,30, 2015 (meeting attended by 12 States applying the common visa policy and 2 States committed to apply it), November, 17, 2015 (meeting attended by 13 States applying the common visa policy and 2 States committed to apply it) and on March, 31, 2016 (meeting attended by 12 States applying the common visa policy and 1 State committed to apply it).

Reports of LSC meeting were drawn by the EUD, distributed to MS for comments and once cleared circulated again for forwarding to the respective capitals and to DG Home.

Invitations were also sent to locations outside the capital of the countries applying the common visa policy or are committed to do so, as well as reports.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

According to Regulation (EC) No 1244/2009 since 19 December 2009 biometric Serbian passports (excluded those issued by the Serbian Coordination Directorate - *Koordinaciona uprava*, which undertook the competence of issuing passports residents in Kosovo*) are visa free.

Visas are almost exclusively issued to third country nationals residents in Serbia.

* this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

¹ April 2015– March 2016

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

After a consensus was reached on March, 2015 on the start of the exercise of adopting a list of harmonised documents, one Schengen Embassy (NL) volunteered to coordinate the effort by comparing current lists and setting up a working group open to participation of others which would then present a proposal to the LSC. BE, FR and DK took part.

The first 3 draft harmonised lists on tourism, business and visits to family/friends prepared the WG were presented to the LSC at the meeting of March, 31, 2016

3.3 Exchange of information

Information is exchanged among Schengen States on monthly statistics.

EUD also timely exchanged information coming from HQs

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Frontex offered a training in Belgrade for Consular Staff of EU-MS/SAC embassies/consulates in the premises of the EU Delegation. The training did not only concern falsified travel documents but also (other supporting) documents such as drivers' license, bank/credit cards, invitation letters etc. and was based on the recognition of all different security elements in documents. The whole training was in English and the same module was offered on 2 days, on 28 and 29 July 2015¹.

Serbian MoI/Border police and MFA-Visa consular department officers also attended the training in the frame of the implementation of the Working Arrangement with Frontex. The feedback on the training was generally very positive.

Since the general assessment of MS is that there is no substantial risk for visa shopping, no further information was exchanged on optional visa fee waivers and on the visa fee charged in local currency.

4. Challenges in 2016-2017

There are no specific challenges related to the application of the provisions of the Visa Code in Serbia, the main challenges are described under point 5. *infra* and are related to the phenomenon of "fake asylum seekers", which has arisen after the introduction of the visa free regime and is tackled in the framework of the Post Visa Liberalisation Monitoring Mechanism, which is indeed the subject of main interest among Schengen States on the ground.

5. Other issues

The issue of asylum seekers from Serbia to some Schengen MS, the challenges and the measures by both the Serbian authorities and MS are the main point of discussion in LSC meetings. The issue is frequently labelled as "fake" asylum seekers, due to the fact that in general the rate of acceptance of

¹ The content of the training:
Detection and Remarks, Security features,
Printing techniques
Printing Inks
Printing safeguards
Passport production + MRZ and Laminates
Schengen BCP stamps
Personalization + biometrics
Visa + supporting documents
Profiling + impostors
Reference manual + FADO
Practical workshop

the requests is extremely low, due to the fact that the request of protection is often unfounded and driven by economic reasons.

One of the measures envisaged to combat the phenomenon is the suspension mechanism introduced in the existing Visa Regulation which allows, under certain exceptional conditions, for the temporary reintroduction of the visa requirement for third country nationals benefiting from the EU visa waiver. This 'safety brake' has not been triggered so far.

It has to be noted that according to FRONTEX/EASO data the trend, when it comes to Serbian citizens, has been lately decreasing. The total figure for asylum seekers from Serbia to the EU+ area (EU28, NO and CH) was of ca. 12,200 in July-December 2015, with a decrease of -38% in comparison with the same period of 2014. Ca. 87% of the asylum seekers chose DE, SE is the second destination with 3.5%, followed by FR and NL with 2.5% each. It has to be highlighted that 51% of asylum applications from Serbian citizens are repeated applications, while the rate of positive decisions for Serbian citizens was below the "low recognition rate" set out in the preamble 6 of Regulation EC 1289/2013

The present LSC report has been circulated to the LSC Serbia and has been cleared on 31.03.2016



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DELEGATION-S-AFRICA-COORDINATION@eeas.europa.eu

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN SOUTH AFRICA

Report - 2015-2016¹

1. Introduction

There are 19 out of the 26 Schengen members present in South Africa – Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania have diplomatic missions in the country and are invited to attend both Schengen and Consular Coordination meetings. Norway and Switzerland, both Schengen countries, also attend the Consular Coordination meetings.

Ireland and the United Kingdom do not attend the Schengen Cooperation Group meetings.

Key locations from consular point of view include Gauteng (Pretoria and Johannesburg), Cape Town and Durban. While many Schengen Members issue visas at their Embassies in Pretoria, many maintain Consulates in Johannesburg, which is a larger urban and economic centre.

Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands and Spain have a permanent consular presence and deal with issue visas in Cape Town, while 4 others (Visegrad countries) do it on a "part time" basis. Sweden has a permanent consular presence in Cape Town but does not issue visas.

Denmark has a Consul in Durban while many others have Honorary Consuls.

Local Schengen cooperation takes place in Pretoria, involving Gauteng based consuls.

Some Member States represented in South Africa cooperate with outsourcing companies in visa matters. The precise functions contracted to external service providers vary from Member State to Member State.

On Schengen visa matters, agreements regarding those countries not represented are as follows:

Italy represents Malta, Sweden represents Estonia, Denmark represents Iceland, Hungary represents Latvia, Switzerland represents Lichtenstein, Belgium represents Luxembourg, Germany represents Slovenia

The European community in South Africa is relatively large and count for around 372,955 people registered. It remains challenging to determine the exact amount of ex-patriates as not everybody register with their respective Embassies. Many EU nationals in SA have dual citizenship –South Africa and European.

¹April 2015 – March 2016

2. LSC and LCC meetings held from January 2015 to April 2016

From April 2015 to April 2016 the Local Consular Group (LCC) met four times¹ and the Local Schengen Coordination (LSC) group held two meetings². The "jumbo" meeting on 3 December 2015 combined the Consular- and Schengen Group meetings (back to back but with different attendance) in order to accommodate agenda items for both groups before the holiday period.

During this report period the LCC and LSC meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation with the exception of the meeting on 3 December 2015 as, due to the unavailability of the EU Del chair, the chairmanship was ensured by Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands who counted on the assistance of the EU Delegation for the preparation, drafting and distribution of relevant documents. The EU Delegation liaised closely with the South African authorities in preparation and follow up of all the meetings.

Both LSC and LCC Groups discussed issues of relevance to consular work in South Africa. These included amongst others, updates on local detention facility fees, situation of minors detained at border posts, updates on amendments to the new immigration act, overstay appeals, acceptance of non-South African provisional passports and trainee applications for diplomatic missions, among other topics.

Lists of events:

Senior officials from the Department of Home Affairs were invited to address the Consular Coordination Group on various issues most notably on the new Immigration law and subsequent amendments to the new Immigration Law. The Deputy Director General from the Department of Home Affairs and his team addressed the group at its LCC formation on 25 March 2015 and 25 February 2016.

The newly appointed Ambassador to the EU Delegation, Mr Marcus Cornaro, welcomed the guests and the group at the LCC meeting of 25 February 2016.

Colleagues from the Embassies of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States exceptionally attended the LCC meetings on 16 September 2015 and 25 February 2016.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Member States are implementing the Visa Code in compliance with instructions from their respective headquarters. Exchanges in the group hinted that there is no significant visa-shopping practice in South Africa as all the Schengen countries seem to be well harmonised.

The LSG provided the opportunity for the Member States exchange information on practices regarding visa regulations and the fees applied in local currency, use of external service providers, capturing of biometric data for visa applicants, issues related to fraud, fake documentation, challenges in obtaining official documents e.g. unabridged birth certificates issued by South African competent authority, and to discuss issues regarding specifics of South African requirements on travel documents and residence permits, among others.

¹ 3 June 2015, 16 September 2015, 3 December 2015 and 25 February 2016

² 22 April 2015 and 3 December 2015

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

A common information sheet submitted to HQ in February 2016 has been discussed and will be revised in line with the comments received from the Visa Committee on 15 March 2016 as to be further submitted to the Visa Committee in Brussels.

3.3 Exchange of information

The EU Delegation disseminated the important information and relevant guidelines issued from Brussels.

Locally, statistics are gathered on regular basis, and the EU Delegation facilitates the sharing of this information. These include Consular Emergency Coordination, Consular Dossier, Visa Statistics and the collection of Worldwide Statistics on Consular Assistance given to unrepresented EU Citizens in Third Countries.

4. Challenges

The implementation of the new Immigration Law regarding travelling with minors that come into effect on 1 June 2015 and the subsequent new amendments to the Immigration Act continue to pose challenges particularly regarding issues of minors travelling in and out of South Africa and the different practices by the South Africa authorities at border posts regarding the list of necessary documentation.

The implementation of this law, however, didn't facilitate the issuance of unabridged birth certificates to children born in South Africa applying for Schengen visas.

The implementation of the new SA regulations will remain a key issue with the group and one that will be re-visited with the South African authorities on a regular basis.

Furthermore, the issue of SA's different visa treatment to different European Member States remains high on the agenda and has been raised by the EU HRVP Mogherini during her Ministerial Visit on 25-26 February 2016. Recent South Africa's notification to Slovakia that Slovakian citizens need as from April 2016 to obtain a SA Visa prior to arrival in the country came as a surprise and, therefore, is now an issue to be discussed at high level.

The Department of Home Affairs reacted positively to the possible collaboration on forensics, particularly interaction between the Department of Home Affairs and Member States as to detect fake permits. Interested Member States who have such expertise on the ground will work with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation as to initiate this.

The Department of Home Affairs often refers to the Schengen requirements as to justify procedures put in place in South Africa, including the necessity for unabridged birth certificates for minors applying for travel visa. The DHA has requested some Schengen countries missions in SA to provide with the list of necessary documents and requirements needed to obtain a Schengen visa. However, the challenges regarding the new law are not so much the legal requirements established by the new law but the challenges posed by the seemingly lack of uniform application of the same law by different South Africans missions/consular offices.

Member States are committed to continue the dialogue with the national authorities on issues that affect the daily executing of consular duties by Member States and both the LSC and LCC are perceived as good platforms to do so.

Challenges and progress are reported and discussed at HoMs meetings, who are kept informed on the work of both the LSC and LCC meetings.

5. Other issues

The report has been shared with the Member States and includes the inputs received.



27/05/2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in *Taiwan* 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

There are 16 Schengen MS offices in Taipei (AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, LU, NL, PL, SK, SE, CH). FI does not issue visa, LU is represented by BE, SE is represented by DE, Lichtenstein is represented by CH, Iceland and Norway by DK.

Taiwan passport holders benefit from visa-free access to the Schengen area, meaning that the Schengen activity is limited in Taipei to non-Taiwanese passport holders, altogether in very limited quantities. MS visa activity is thus essentially concentrated on national visa questions.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

LSC meeting and local meeting were held in October 2015 with a good participation and were both chaired by the EU office in Taiwan. Agenda and minutes are prepared by the EU Office and circulated to Member States. As approved by EU Office and Member States, the meeting is held once in a period of six to twelve month.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

General observation: there are far less visa requests since the implementation of the visa waiver in 2011.

The EU office informed Member States of MOFA's misunderstanding of the VIS regulations. The EU office clarified the message with the Department of EU Affairs in Taiwan.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

As mentioned in previous LSC reports, a supporting documents list is published through a collective Q&A, available on-line on EU Office and Member States website.

There are no standard requirements on the working holiday visas.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

3.3 Exchange of information

A Schengen Manual for EU MS offices in Taipei has been prepared to provide background information on local practices. It has been updated by the EU Office in November 2015.

The EU Office is responsible for collecting MS visa statistics (both Schengen visas for third-country nationals residing in Taiwan and long term visas) on a quarterly basis. The consolidated quarterly visa statistics are shared amongst the MS and sent to DG HOME for information.

A list of trusted TMI companies is included in the Schengen manual. No major cases of fraud have been reported by MS.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

None

4. Challenges

The collective and public Q&A to be updated on a regular basis

5. Other issues

None



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

25 May 2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in Tanzania
October 2015 to March 2016 REPORT¹**

1. Introduction

Eleven Schengen Member States (MS) are represented in Dar es Salaam (United Republic of Tanzania). Nine of them issue Schengen visas on-site: Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland. The Dutch Embassy has a visa counter in Dar es Salaam, but applications are sent to Pretoria, where visas are issued. Denmark has a diplomatic mission in Dar es Salaam, but applications are handled by the Norwegian Embassy. Belgium represents Luxembourg and Austria; Finland represents Estonia and Hungary; the French Embassy issues Schengen visas for the Czech Republic, Greece and Latvia. Sweden represents Iceland and Poland. The Italian Embassy issues visas for Malta. Spain issues Schengen visas for Portugal. Finally, the Swiss Embassy is competent for Schengen visas for Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Slovakia.

Compared to other African countries, Schengen States do not face high migration pressure from Tanzania, which is reflected in the numbers of issued visas (10,048 short term visas issued, 706 refused). Most of the visa applicants usually plan short stay visits in Europe; they want to visit friends or relatives, or they travel on business purpose or participate in exchange programs organized by their church parishes and international conferences.

2. LSC meetings held in October 2015 till March 2016

The Head of Political, Press & Information Section of the EU Delegation in Dar es Salaam is in charge of Local Schengen Coordination, including organizing and chairing meetings.

In the mentioned period the LSC working group (WG) met twice (on 16 December and 27 January). The meetings were very well-attended. The main topic during this period was the same as in the previous reporting period covering the period April 2014 to September 2015: harmonization of supporting documents for visa requests (see below).

The LSC WG revised the draft further to comments received from the Visa Committee, which discussed the draft from Tanzania on 27 November and then again on 15 March.

In January the WG also agreed to relaunch the sharing of local statistics on the basis of a draft template prepared by EUDEL.

Coordination among Schengen MS outside of Dar es Salaam is not needed, as no MS has consular representation issuing visas elsewhere in Tanzania².

¹ October 2015 – March 2016.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The LSC WG in Dar es Salaam has worked with a view to harmonising the lists of supporting documents in 2014-16. Therefore **Art. 48 (1) a)** of the Visa Code can by and large be considered as implemented.

A new system to collect statistical data has been agreed upon, approved by all Members States and has been implemented starting from 1 January 2016. The data are collected quarterly and show issued as well as refused visas. The system will be evaluated and if necessary improved, during the second quarter of 2016.

Fraud cases are communicated as per **Art. 48 (3) b) iii)** between the members of the LSC WG.

Art. 48 (4) is also applied: LSC WG meetings are held regularly. Reports (minutes) of the meetings have started to be circulated since December 2015 according to **Art. 48 (5)**.

Overall, some challenges remain regarding the similar application of the Visa Code (see 5).

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The LSC WG has worked intensively on this priority since 2014. The draft produced by the group was revised in 2015 and considered by the Visa Committee on 18 November 2015 and then again on 15 March 2016. The group hopes that the Visa Committee will approve the revised draft and that a Commission Decision will be adopted during 2016.

3.3 Exchange of information

As already mentioned above, the systems in use should allow for collection of statistics and sharing by all MS.

Members of the WG are regularly in contact through an e-mail distribution list and exchange views and concerns when necessary, either bilaterally or as a whole group. Exchange of information is active and intense at the level of officers receiving the visa applications. The main topics concern fraudulent visa applications () from Comoro nationals marrying Tanzanian nationals, moving to Tanzania and applying for visa and Zanzibari marriage cases.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

In the framework of the Consular working group (different composition, but including several members of the LSC WG), meetings were organized with relevant local authorities about certificates and civil status (RITA -Registration, Insolvency and Trusteeship Agency).

4. Challenges

- Many visa applications are incomplete; Appointments are taken very late; Family relations are difficult to track; Certificates are not always trustworthy.

5. Other issues

Nothing to report.

The annual report was endorsed by all members of the LSC WG by silence procedure on 26 May 2016.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THAILAND

21 May 2015

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in
THAILAND
2014-2015 REPORT¹**

1. Introduction

The EU Delegation to Thailand coordinates the Local Schengen Cooperation meetings in Thailand. The meetings are held regularly and the EU Delegation prepares agenda and minutes, which are shared among all LSC participants in Bangkok and relevant addressees in Brussels [DG HOME]. EU Member States and Schengen Associated States are invited to provide input for the upcoming meetings' agendas.

In 2014-2015, the number of EU Member States and Schengen Associated States remained unchanged in Thailand. In total, there were nineteen Schengen embassies represented in Bangkok, namely Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Greece (GR), Hungary (HU), Italy (IT), Luxembourg (LU), The Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Slovakia (SK), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE) and Switzerland (CH). Even though Romania (RO) is not yet part of the Schengen area, the country has a diplomatic mission in Thailand and is invited to the LSC meetings as observer. Ireland and the UK are part of exchange of information on specific subjects, but they are not invited in the LSC meetings on a systematic basis, bearing in mind Article 48(6) of the Visa Code.

As mentioned in previous reports, a growing number of Schengen embassies have had to outsource their visa application processing services to private companies in order to cope with the increasing number of visa applications. Currently VFS Global processes visa applications for Austria (AT), Denmark (DK), Finland (FI), Italy (IT), Norway (NO), Spain (ES) and Sweden (SE) while TLS Contact manages for France (FR) and Switzerland (CH). Belgium (BE) only uses VFS call centre service for arranging visa appointments, while The Netherlands (NL) will be fully outsourcing visa applications to VFS as from September 2015.

2. LSC meetings held in 2014-2015

LSC meetings have been held at regular intervals at the premises of the EU Delegation in Bangkok. During the 2014-2015 reporting period, a total of eight LSC meetings were held. Two of those were meetings on harmonisation of supporting documents for visa applications (05 February 2014 and 05 March 2014) and six were regular meetings (30 January 2014, 24 April 2014, 15 October 2014, 17 December 2014, 18 February 2015 and 29 April 2015). Since October 2014, discussions on harmonisation of supporting documents took place during the regular meetings. All these meetings were well attended and participants of the meetings were active and cooperative. Reports of the meetings are drawn up by EU Delegation and shared with EU Member States and Associated Schengen States.

¹ April 2014 – March 2015

In addition to the Local Schengen Cooperation meetings, EU Member States attend meetings on Local Consular Cooperation issues, previously conducted by Italy (IT) and currently by Luxembourg (LU).

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The Visa Code is applied according to the regulations. No major deficiencies or problems were noted.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Harmonisation of a list of supporting documents

Harmonisation of supporting documents has been a work in progress and it has been the primary topic of many of the meetings in 2014-2015 reporting period. LSC in Thailand is currently harmonising the list of supporting documents for a Schengen visa for specific purposes: i) tourism, ii) business, and iii) family. Progress has been made following the submission of the draft harmonised list of supporting documents to the Visa Committee in November 2014 and its subsequent amendments in December 2014 and February 2015. However, there remain a number of unresolved issues prior to reaching a final agreement.

Harmonisation of visa fee

Some EU Member States and Schengen Associated States (DE, DK, FI, LU, NL, SE and CH) agree on a locally harmonised visa fee for adults and children based on the official ECB exchange rate. The rest of the LSC group have diverging practices, with some accepting visa fee payment in Euros and others receiving the rate directly from their capitals.

Although Article 16 (7) of the Visa Code instructs EU Member States to use the official euro exchange rate set by the ECB and round the amount charged to settle on a similar visa fee, the practices of some EU Member States diverge in this regard. The LSC group awaits for this issue to be addressed in the Visa Code recast as Article 16 (7) cannot be carried out locally as intended.

3.3 Exchange of information

Visa statistics

The EU Delegation is collecting visa statistics from the EU Member States and Schengen Associated States, which have a diplomatic mission in Thailand, on a monthly basis. The table prepared by DG HOME, which asks for statistical information on visas A, C and LTV is used.

During 2014, Schengen embassies issued 210 733 C type visas. The amount continues to rise, with 194 624 applications in 2013, 187 344 applications in 2012, 170 613 in 2011 and 157 998 in 2010.

Visa statistics for Thailand in 2014 (per EU MS and Schengen Associated State)

Visa Stats Total 2014	A visas applied for	A visas issued	Multiple A visas issued	A visas not issued	C visas applied for	C visas issued	Multiple-entry C visas issued	Circulation C visas issued (multiple entry 1+ years)	LTV issued	C visas not issued
BE	0	0	0	0	5,345	4,841	0	0	0	332
CZ	0	0	0	0	4,665	4,617	86	69	1	48
DK	0	0	0	0	7,058	3,637	3,028	0	0	533
DE	3	3	0	0	44,749	43,529	0	2,544	44	1,220
EE (rep. FI)	0	0	0	0	75	73	11	0	0	2
GR	0	0	0	0	602	585	69	0	0	17
ES	0	0	0	0	10,783	10,455	106	0	0	175
FR	0	0	0	0	35,187	32,702	0	11,697	6	1,356
IT	0	0	0	0	25,346	25,280	3,966	1,263	1	66
LV	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LT (rep. DE)	0	0	0	0	23	23	0	0	0	0
LU	0	0	0	0	198	158	30	7	1	2
HU	0	0	0	0	2,294	2,257	625	0	0	37
MT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NL	0	0	0	0	9,688	9,550	5,391	4,156	3	106
AT	0	0	0	0	8,713	8,645	2,667	0	1	68
PL	0	0	0	0	872	840	21	0	0	32
PT	0	0	0	0	776	780	433	0	0	20
SL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SK	0	0	0	0	173	172	12	11	0	1
FI	0	0	0	0	6,244	6,160	210	0	0	78
SE	0	0	0	0	11,142	8,642	860	0	0	2,498
IS (rep. DK)	0	0	0	0	1,811	1,305	508	0	0	49
NO	0	0	0	0	4,889	4,741	389	5	0	148
CH	0	0	0	0	48,127	46,582	0	0	0	1,320
Total 2014	3	3	0	0	223,415	210,733	18,412	19,752	57	7,776

The above table shows breakdown of visa statistics for each EU Member State in year 2014. A monthly analysis of the visa statistics data would reveal an increase in number of application between February and April (peaking in March), coinciding with school holidays in Thailand.

Common list of health insurance companies

Article 15 of the Visa Code stipulates that health insurance shall be valid for all EU Member States and shall be valid for the entire period of stay. A common list of travel and health insurance companies exists for Thailand and is still relevant. New applications are accepted twice a year and the listed regularly updated.

Other Issues

During 2014-2015 LSC meetings, exchanges of information on a range of other issues took place including topics concerning trends and incidents of fraudulent and suspicious behaviour by particular individuals or groups. Furthermore, participants actively exchanged knowledge and acquaintances on fraudulent/suspicious activities committed by travel agents.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Document Verification Training

A member of the ICE Team from the Austrian Embassy attended the LSC meeting in February 2015 and offered to arrange document verification training workshops for the LSC group. One training workshop has already been delivered and most EU Member States and Schengen Associated States wish to participate in further trainings. The document verification trainings by ICE Team are offered on 19 and 21 May.

4. Challenges

Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2015-2016)

- The VIS system has been operation in Thailand since November 2013 and it has improved the way visa applications are handled. However, some Member States have reported during one of the LSC meetings malfunction in the VIS system including non-registration of travel history to some countries outside the Schengen area as well as the non-registration of some visa decisions made after the VIS roll-out.

- Cooperation between Member States have allowed to identify visa applicants who are assumed to be victims of human trafficking, in the frame of an investigation led by the Swiss police liaison officer in Bangkok. Human trafficking issues have existed in Thailand in the past, but it has reached new heights with recent international media attention and discovery of serious cases in the past few months.

International media attention has helped highlight the issue of human trafficking; however, distinction is made between internal and international human trafficking. While the former is believed to chiefly involve Thai nationals a being forced to work in the fishery sector, the latter consist of cross-border trafficking of people involving Thailand.

5. Other issues

- The Royal Thai Government had previously lobbied for visa-free travel for its citizens to Europe, but no further steps have been taken with recent political developments following the coup in May 2014 in Thailand.

The report has been approved by all EU Member States and Schengen Associated States' diplomatic missions present in Thailand.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO TURKEY

Ankara, 30 March 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION TURKEY 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

The reporting period of this report relates to the period from April 2015 until March 2016 and covers all locations in Turkey where Schengen countries issue visas, namely Ankara, Istanbul, Edirne and Izmir.² The representation of Schengen states remained the same³. All States, with the exception of Latvia, are outsourcing their visa application service.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

The Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) meetings were well attended. On average attendance of the Schengen countries was as follows:

- **In general:** 86,25%
- **In Ankara:** 79,60%,
- **In Istanbul:** 92,91%

The participation of Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia is not included in these statistics. However, all three countries always were invited and frequently participated. Ireland and the United Kingdom were also invited to attend the meetings as observers.

In the reporting period 11 regular LSC meetings were held: six in Ankara and five in Istanbul, additionally one meeting with UND (Truck Driver Association) was held:

- 1st April 2015, LSC meeting in Ankara;
- 15th June 2015, LSC meeting in Ankara;
- 18th June 2015, LSC meeting in Istanbul;
- 8th September 2015, LSC meeting in Ankara;
- 10th September 2015, LSC meeting in Istanbul;

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

² Turkish citizens also have the possibility to apply for a visa in Bursa, Gaziantep and Antalya for Italy and Germany at an ESP.

³ **In Ankara:** Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland (totally 23 Schengen countries).

In Istanbul: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, and Switzerland. Finland is represented by a honorary consul, a Finnish citizen tasked to collect visa applications and to participate in LSC. (Totally 17 Schengen countries).

In Izmir: Germany, Greece and Italy (3).

In Edirne: Greece (and Bulgaria).

- 20th October 2015, LSC meeting in Ankara;
- 22nd October 2015, LSC meeting in Istanbul;
- 7th December 2015, LSC meeting in Istanbul;
- 8th December 2015, LSC meeting with UND in Istanbul;
- 10th December 2015, LSC meeting in Ankara;
- 25th January 2016, LSC meeting in Ankara;
- 2nd February 2016, LSC meeting in Istanbul;

The EUD included Edirne and Izmir MS representations (General Consulates) in the LSC mailing list and shared the minutes of LSC meetings and the statistics with all Schengen consulate locations in Turkey. Schengen States consulate staff in other locations was free to participate in the LSC meetings organized in Ankara and Istanbul.

Reports/minutes were drawn up by the EUD. The MS have been encouraged to share the LSC meeting minutes with their central authorities.

Luxembourg as the rotating Presidency of the Council in the second semester of 2015 and the Netherlands in the first semester 2016 have had a constructive approach.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code – April 2014-March 2015

Given the number of visas issued and the geopolitical importance of the EU-Turkey relations, the LSC is considered an important platform for the exchange of information and experiences enabling Member States to ensure a harmonised approach when it comes to visa issuance.

On several occasions, during discussions among the MS it became apparent that there are some potentially divergent practices in respect of the implementation of the EU-Visa Code and the Handbook for the processing of visa applications and the modification of issued visas. These discrepancies mostly relate to the issuance of multiple-entry visas and the determination of *bona fide* applicants, with the practice of several Embassies/Consulates to sign local “facilitation” agreements with chambers of commerce and similar structures. Therefore, the EUD offered to conduct a study – "LSC-Turkey 2014" – to highlight the discrepancies in terms of a harmonised approach towards implementing the Visa code.

The study was finalised and forwarded within the hierarchy for approval to publish.

It is not clear yet in what format or forum the Study will be published.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

A full comparative assessment of the harmonised lists of supporting documents for Turkey seemed to be necessary, in particular with regard to flight / travel reservations or other proof of transport/accommodation, and evidence of hotel bookings.

On 23 July 2014, a working group tasked with revising the 2011 "Harmonised List for supporting documents" was established. 10 MS (DE, IT, NL, FR, EE, LV, SE, ES, LT, and DK) under the chair of the European Union Delegation (EUD) met on 26 August, 26 September, 16 October, and 19 November 2014 to draft a revised list. After each meeting, the LSC network was informed about the proposed changes and participating States were invited to provide their feedback. Received

contributions were incorporated accordingly. On the 2 March 2015 the amended "Harmonised list of supporting documents" was sent to the European Commission for further discussion in the Council's Visa committee.

The Visa Committee returned the list with the request to answer some specific questions in regards of flight reservations and hotel bookings.

On the 6th December 2015 the answers were sent to the Visa Committee for further approval.

3.3. Exchange of information

Monthly statistics have been collected by each MS consulate/embassy location. There are comprehensive monthly statistics since 2010, allowing the EUD and the MS to carry out monthly and yearly comparisons and analyses at the local level.

Several information requests have been circulated among the LSC, aiming at better coordination and harmonization of practices. Information on fraudulent visa requests has also been regularly shared with the aim of preventing illegal migration.

A regular information exchange on different methods of handling visa requests from Syrian nationals at MS' embassies in Turkey took place within the LSC platform, including the exchange of statistics relating to both visa and asylum requests by Syrian nationals.

Besides taking notice of Member States bilateral resettlement programs for Syrian refugees, LSC addressed regularly several aspects of the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on the Schengen visa practice in Turkey, notably on: i) how family reunion is being interpreted and applied in "Syrian cases"; ii) in what circumstances Member States are resorting to "visas with limited territorial validity" in this context; iii) how to assess documents presented by Syrian nationals in support of their visa requests; iv) the impact of "usurpation of identity documents" (*look alike cases*) in the assessment of a Syrian visa request.

3.4 Other initiatives taken within the LSC framework

Public outreach meetings were organised in an attempt to explain the Schengen visa system to the wider public and, in particular, to businessmen associations and local chambers of commerce in different locations throughout Turkey.

Following the first positive experience of Konya (December 2013), a second wave of public diplomacy initiatives was planned and started in collaboration with the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB). It was agreed with the Head of European Union Department to initiate a two year program called "LSC Visa information Dialogue with Business Community in Turkey" consisting of visits to TOBB branches all over Turkey (4-5 visits every year) during which a presentation of the Schengen rules and procedures and a Q&A session. The first session took place in Ankara on the 21st of March 2014.

Following sessions have been carried out:

- 26th May 2015 in Erzurum
- 12th October 2015 in Samsun
- 18th February 2016 in Manisa

- LSC organised a meeting with UND in order to understand the problems of the Truck Driver Association. The meeting was organised in Istanbul as a round table discussion. The participating MS appreciated the initiative and pointed out that the problems and wishes raised by UND are now more understandable. This kind of meeting will be organised again in April 2016.
- LSC has been following the developments of the Visa Liberalization Dialogue (VLD) between Turkey and the EU and the adoption of the Readmission Agreement. Several colleagues of the LSC group also attended the meetings and de-briefing sessions organised during the VLD expert missions.
- The LSC was also used as a platform by the Dutch Embassy in order to bring up a new initiative which is aimed to foster and improve the dialogue, cooperation and harmonization of the practices among MS' embassies and consulates. The head of the Dutch consular section, distributed an online questionnaire in order to learn the different approaches of other consular sections in dealing with family reunification. She pointed out that there are different procedures and requirements in every country regarding the family reunification. The questionnaire consists of 12 relevant and clear questions.

Other relevant news

- The Embassy of the Czech Republic in Ankara and the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Istanbul announced the cooperation with the VFS GLOBAL Company, for receiving visa applications. VFS GLOBAL Visa Application Centres were opened in Ankara and Istanbul from 29th September, 2015. This service is available for Turkish residents/other country nationals legally residing in Turkey who wish to apply for a Schengen visa to the Czech Republic.
- The Consulate General of Hungary in Istanbul announced the opening of a new Visa Centre in Ankara on the 15th of February 2016.

4. Challenges in 2016-2017

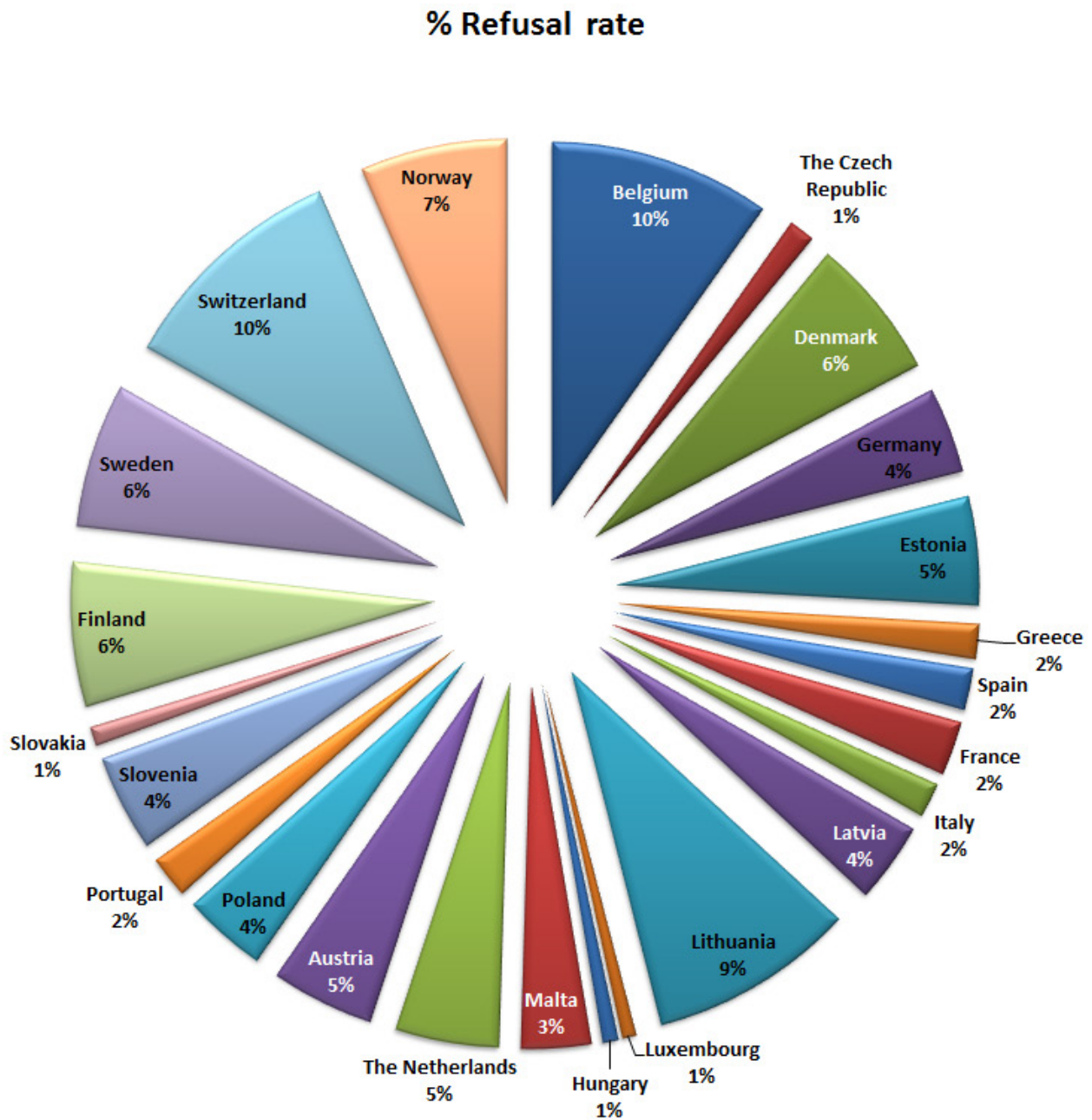
The LSC in Turkey will continue the harmonization work within the framework of the EU Visa Code. The approach of the Turkish public administration towards the Schengen Visa Regime remains critical especially given the ongoing visa liberalization dialogue and the entry into force of the Readmission Agreement.

Once a "new harmonized list" is approved, the LSC network will work on a "common" implementation.

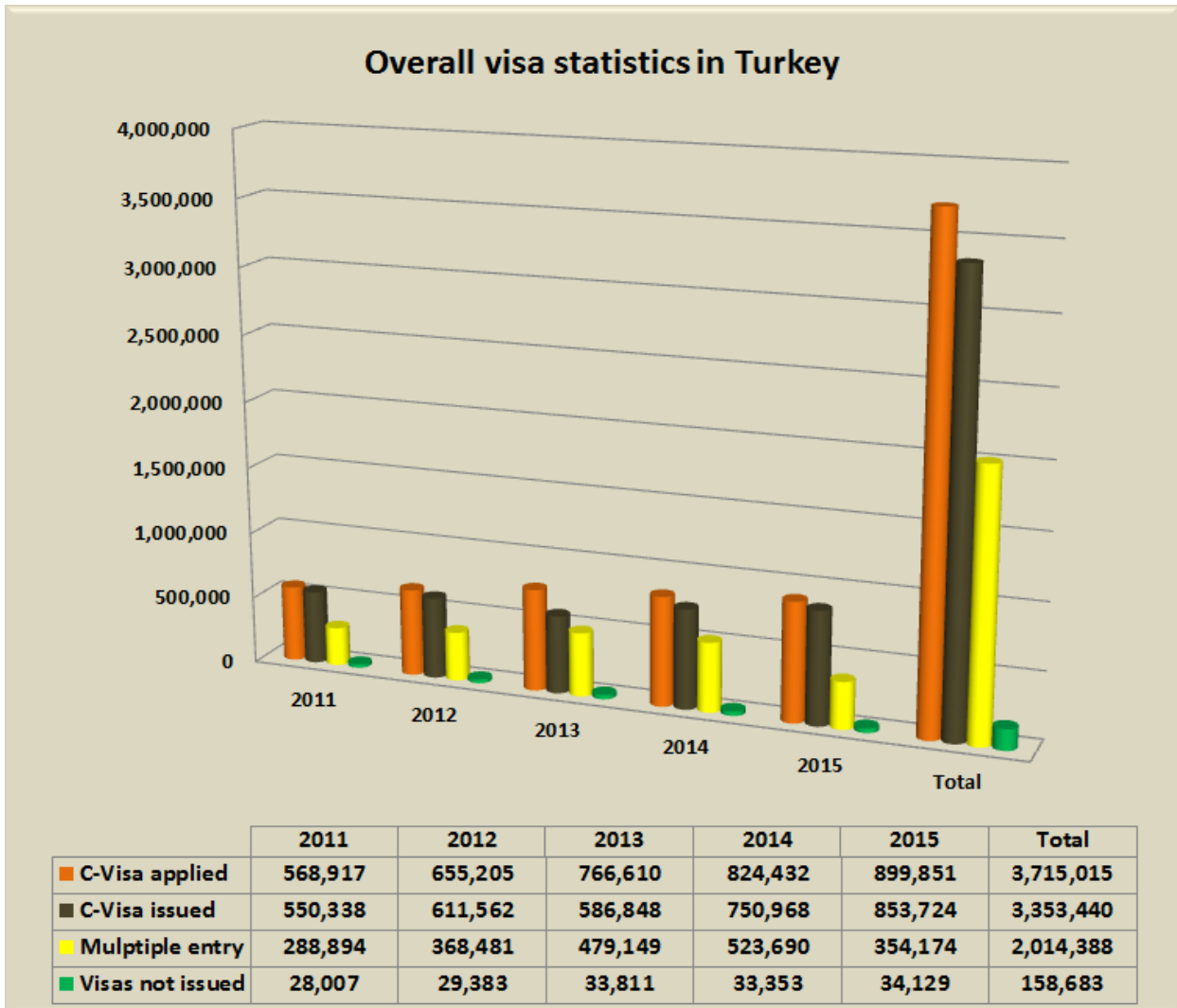
The LSC will closely follow the VLD process, till the Visa Liberalization will be finally decided.

The same applies to the general perception by the Turkish public of the system, which requires LSC to devote resources for public diplomacy purposes, possibly through a systematic campaign directed at target groups, including pro-active, public information sessions with businessmen and advertisements in the media.

Percentage of refusal rate per country in 2015

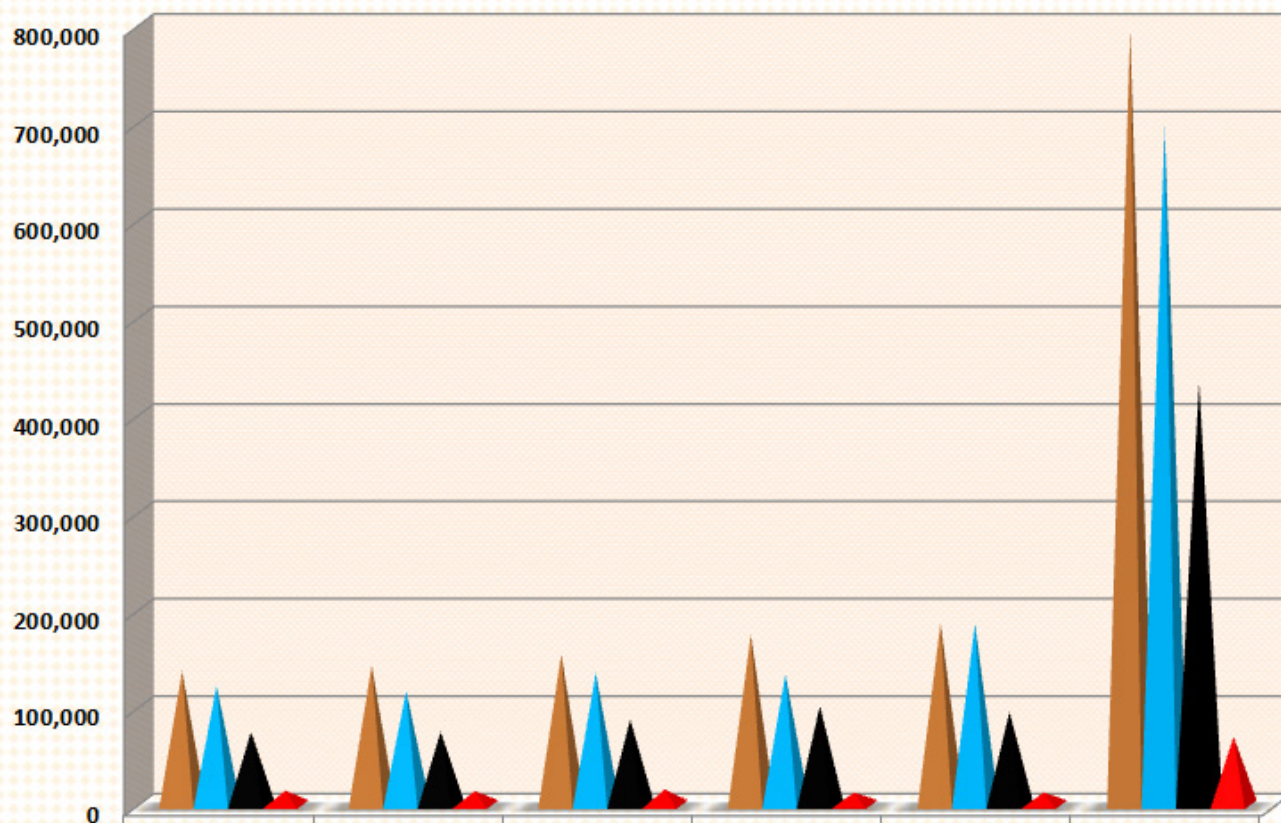


Overall visa statistics in Turkey (2011-2015)



Overall visa statistics Ankara (2011-2015)

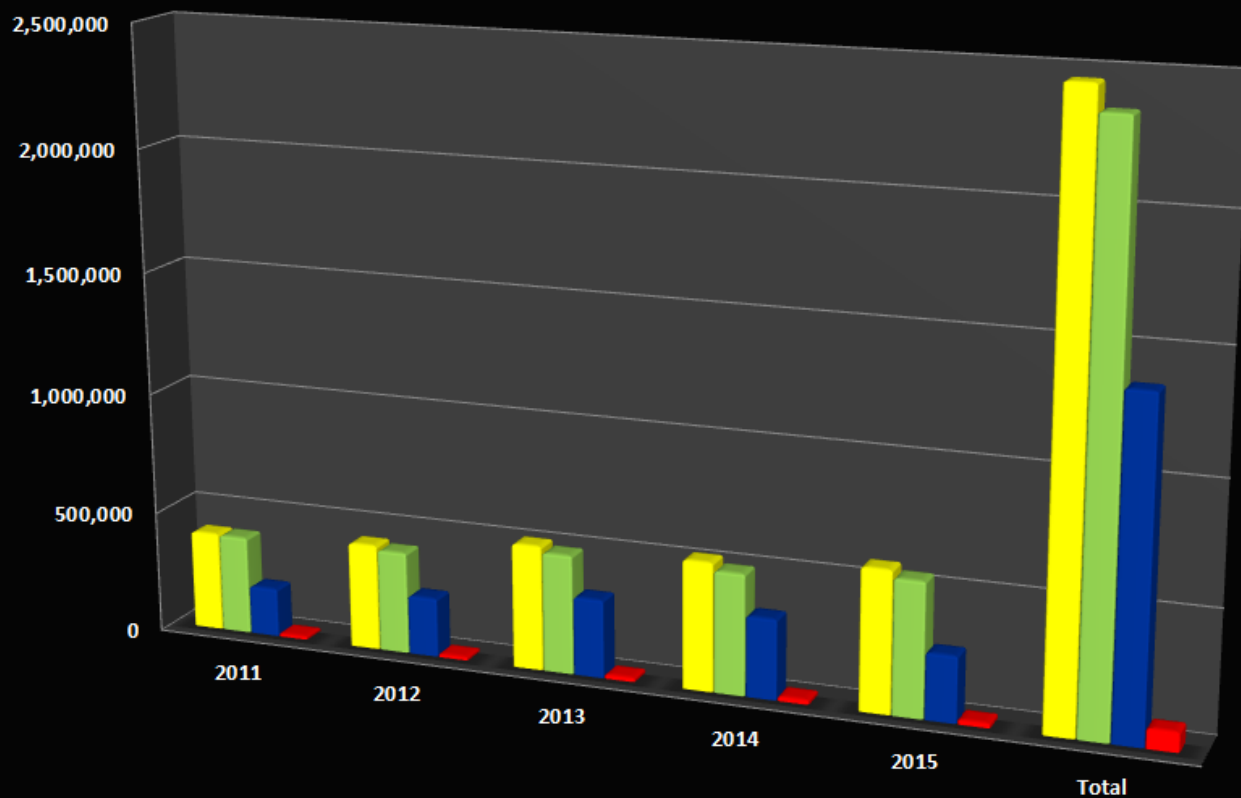
Overall visa statistics Ankara (2011-2015)



	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
■ C-Visa applied	137,418	142,895	154,594	175,132	186,541	796,580
■ C-Visa issued	122,340	116,983	135,693	134,080	185,604	694,700
■ Multiple entry	74,620	74,860	87,425	101,491	95,405	433,801
■ Visas not issued	14,660	14,262	15,798	12,616	12,705	70,041

Overall visa statistics in Istanbul (2011-2015)

Overall visa statistics Istanbul (2011-2015)

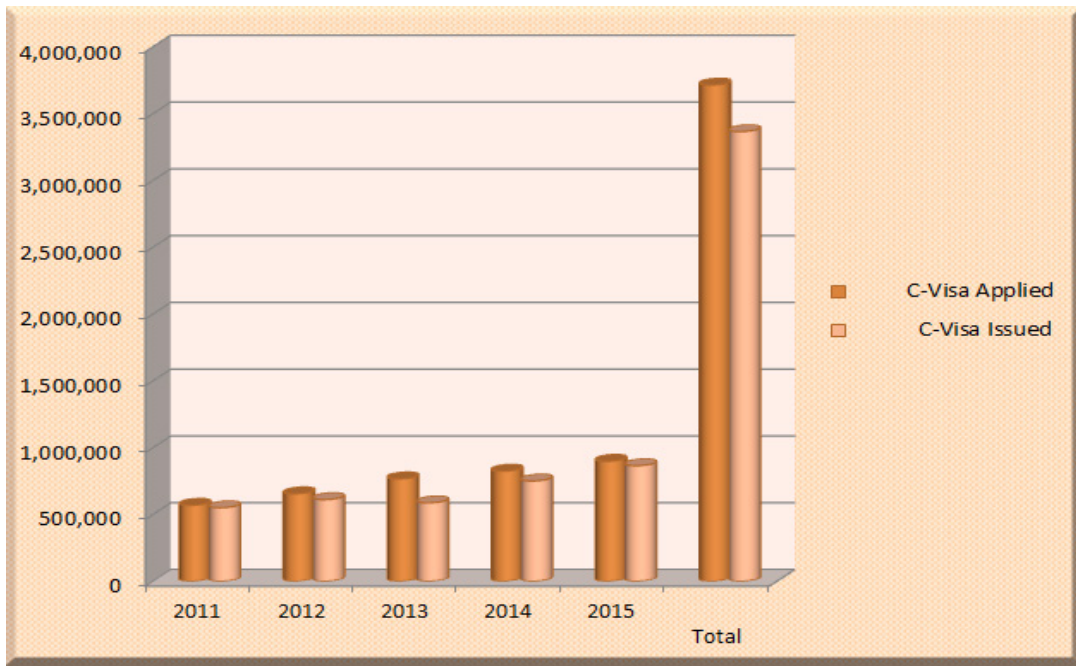


	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
C-Visa applied	405,356	434,884	511,669	526,394	579,309	2,457,612
C-Visa issued	402,838	418,758	488,373	496,036	549,292	2,355,297
Multiple entry	199,662	242,622	321,132	329,020	270,262	1,362,698
Visas not issued	12,739	13,423	16,565	18,581	19,013	80,321

C-Visa applied, C-visa issued, Total not issued and % of refusal rate

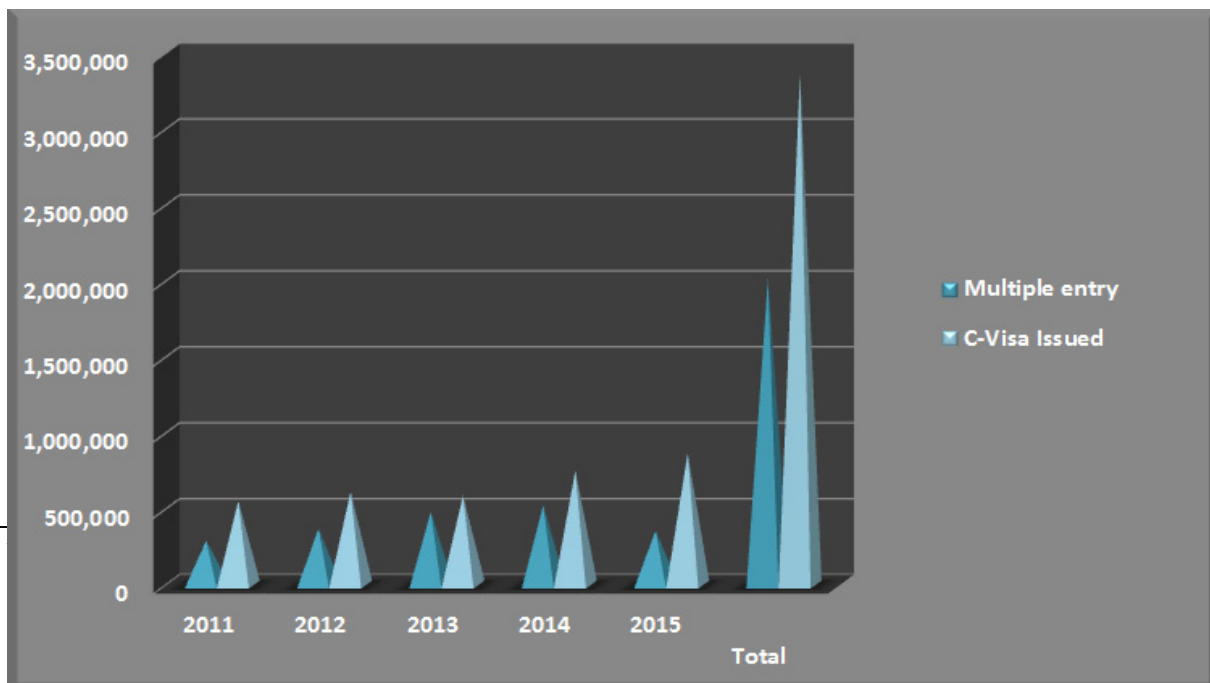
	C-Visa Applied	C-Visa Issued	Total not issued	% refusal rate
2011	568,917	550,338	28,007	4,90
2012	655,205	611,562	29,383	4,40
2013	766,610	586,848	33,811	4,40
2014	824,432	750,968	33,353	4,62
2015	899,851	853,724	34,129	5,35
Total	3,715,015	3,353,440	158,683	4,73

C-Visa Applied vs. C-Visa issued

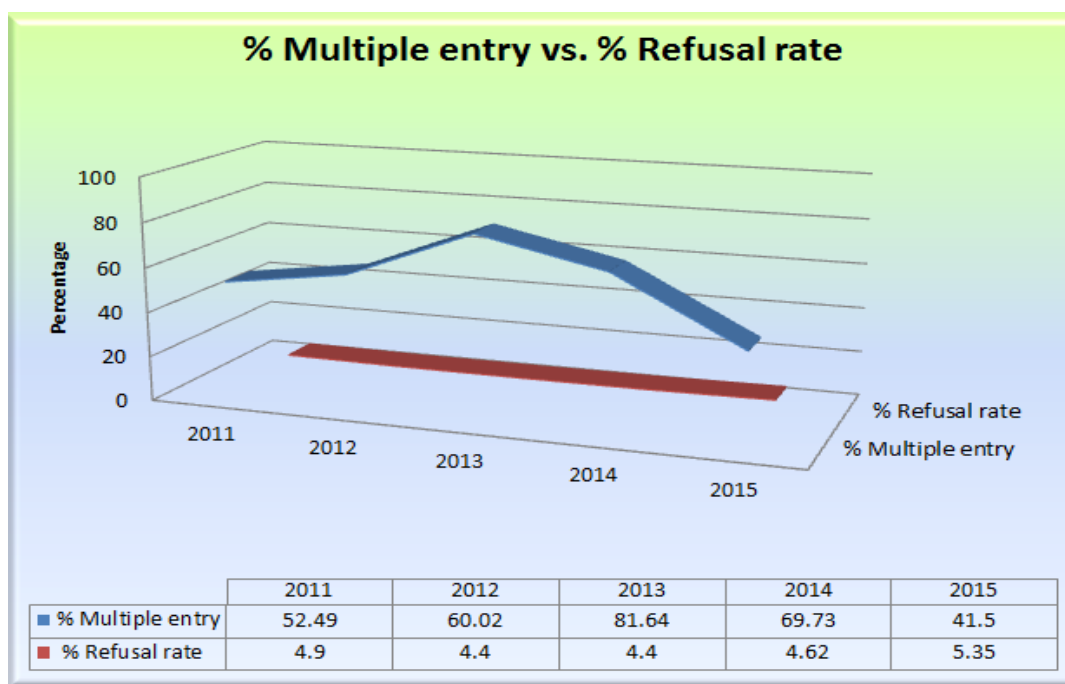


	Multiple entry	C-Visa Issued
2011	288,894	550,338
2012	368,481	611,562
2013	479,149	586,848
2014	523,690	750,968
2015	354,174	853,724
Total	2,014,388	3,353,440

Multiple entry vs. C-Visa Issued



% Multiple entry vs. % Refusal rate



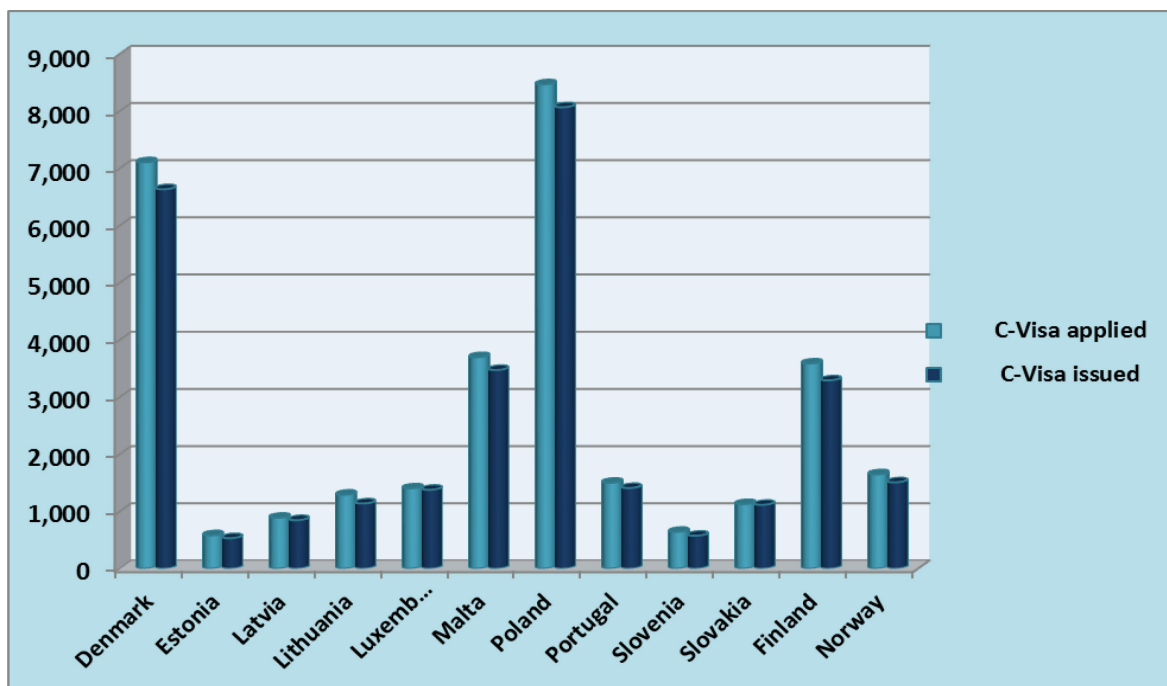
Overall of C-visa applied, C-visa issued and % of refusal rate per country in 2015

	C-Visa applied	C-Visa issued	% Refusal rate
Austria	25,974	23,711	5.9
Belgium	7,385	6,270	12.6
The Czech Republic	15,160	14,377	1.5
Denmark	7,105	6,634	8.1
Estonia	582	532	6.2
Finland	3,586	3,292	8.2
France	135,086	127,808	3.1
Germany	219,149	208,401	4.9
Greece	146,719	144,211	1.8
Hungary	16,979	15,661	0.9
Italy	151,879	148,772	2
Latvia	889	848	4.6
Lithuania	1,291	1,139	11.8
Luxembourg	1,402	1,379	0.8
Malta	3,697	3,473	4
The Netherlands	64,198	54,595	5.9
Norway	1,648	1,509	8.4
Poland	8,468	8,068	4.8
Portugal	1,500	1,409	2.4
Slovakia	1,127	1,115	1.1

Slovenia	642	575	5.5
Spain	53,705	51,794	2.4
Sweden	11,810	10,949	8.2
Switzerland	19,870	17,205	13.3
TOTAL	899,851	853,727	Average 5.35

Overall of C-visa applied and C-visa issued in 2015 per country (<10 000 visas)

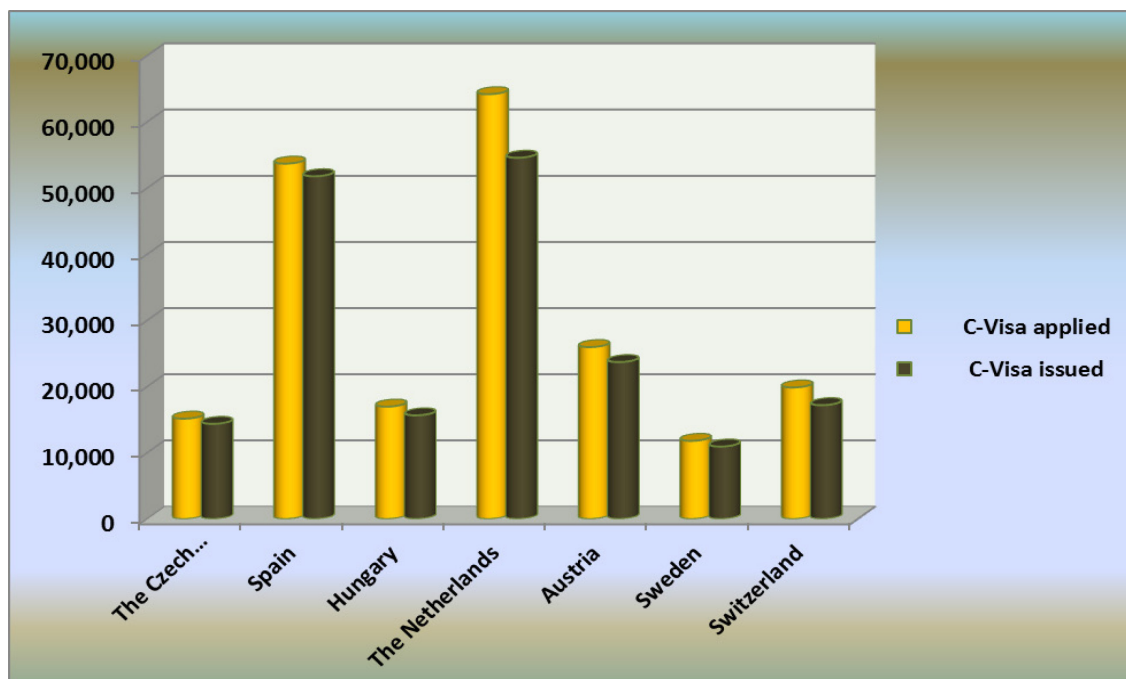
	C-Visa applied	C-Visa issued
Denmark	7,105	6,634
Estonia	582	532
Latvia	889	848
Lithuania	1,291	1,139
Luxembourg	1,402	1,379
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Poland	8,468	8,068
Portugal	1,500	1,409
Slovenia	642	575
Slovakia	1,127	1,115
Finland	3,586	3,292
Norway	1,648	1,509



Overall of C-visa applied and C-visa issued in 2015 per country

(10.000<visas<100.000)

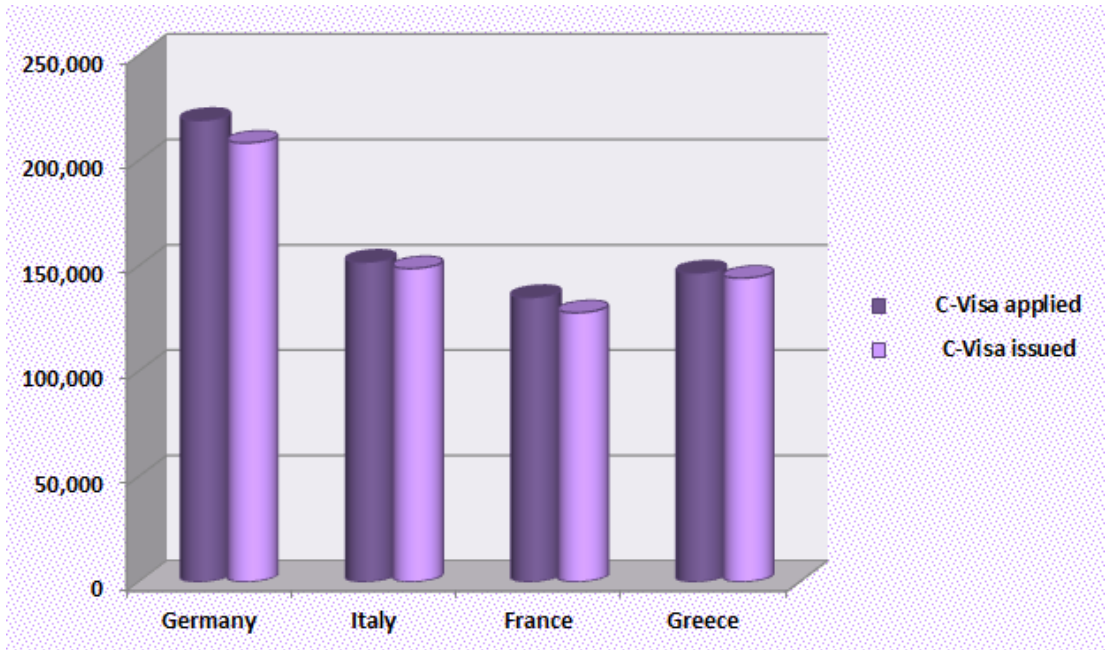
	C-Visa applied	C-Visa issued
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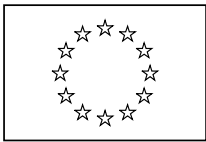


Overall of C-visa applied and C-visa issued in 2015 per country (100.000<visas)

	C-Visa applied	C-Visa issued
Germany	219,149	208,401
Italy	151,879	148,772
France	135,086	127,808

Greece	146,719	144,211
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LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN UKRAINE 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

Present in Kyiv: Republic of Austria, *Republic of Bulgaria*, Kingdom of Belgium, *Republic of Cyprus*, Czech Republic, Kingdom of Denmark, Republic of Estonia, Republic of Finland, French Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, Hellenic Republic, Hungary, Republic of Italy, Republic of Latvia, Republic of Lithuania, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Kingdom of Norway, Republic of Poland, Portuguese Republic, *Romania*, Republic of Slovakia, Republic of Slovenia, Kingdom of Spain, Kingdom of Sweden, Swiss Confederation, *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*.

Representation from Prague: *Ireland*, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Representation from Helsinki: Republic of Iceland

Representation from Warsaw: Republic of Malta

Visa Application Centres are run by:

- **VFS GLOBAL** for the following Schengen countries: Republic of Austria, Kingdom of Belgium, Czech Republic, Kingdom of Denmark, Republic of Estonia, Republic of Finland, French Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, Hellenic Republic, Hungary, Republic of Lithuania, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Kingdom of Norway, Republic of Poland, Republic of Slovenia, Kingdom of Spain, Kingdom of Sweden, Swiss Confederation;
- **Visa Management Service** for Republic of Italy;
- **Pony Express** for Republic of Latvia, Republic of Slovakia;
- **TLScontact** for the Swiss Confederation.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

The **EU Delegation** is in charge of the coordination of regular LSC meetings.

- Number of regular meetings held during the reporting period: 9
- Meetings were well attended. Croatia and Romania join regularly the LSC meetings.
- Meetings are chaired by the EU Delegation.
- At some meetings relevant guest speakers are invited (*e.g.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, State Migration Service, civil society representatives etc.).
- During the year the LSC Members were commonly invited to attend the preparatory meetings of the VLAP assessment missions.
- Minutes of meetings are drawn up by the EU Delegation.
- Sharing common reports with capitals: YES.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

- *Ad-hoc* meetings organised on specific subjects and with the participation of third parties:
 - Local preparation of Visa Information System rollout;
 - Upon initiative of one country holding the Presidency, a meeting with participation of State Migration Service and State Employment Service was held.
- Coordination with LSC in locations outside the capital is ensured through respective MS Embassies. Consulates located outside capital report regularly on the issued Schengen visas.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Visa Code is applied by Member States in accordance with the national instructions.

LSC meetings are generally dedicated to the coordination and harmonization of existing practices, in particular the list of supporting documents, exchange of information on insurance companies and cooperation with commercial intermediaries (travel agencies).

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonize the lists of supporting documents

As of 15 May 2014 a list of supporting documents is operational in Ukraine.

The 10th EU-Ukraine Joint Visa Facilitation Committee (23 April 2015) and subsequent meetings with the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Consular Department show that the practice of implementing the list of supporting documents may vary slightly among the individual LSC Members. At the same time, no individual complaints were formally conveyed by the Ukrainian citizens regarding the handling of Schengen applications by the LSC consulates, which is a positive development in the light of harmonized list implementation.

At the moment there is no need to amend the existing list of supporting documents.

3.3 Exchange of information

Monthly statistics are shared within the LSC, and the EU Delegation is processing the information sheets provided by the MS consulates and periodically report to MS on the matter.

The exchange of information within the LSC also covers implementation of the Visa Information System, cases of fraud, travel medical insurance, list of accredited travel agencies and the procedure of their accreditation, handling various requests from the Ukrainian MFA etc.

As an emerging trend, a number of MS decided during the year to halt or not to renew the cooperation with travel agencies, against the backdrop of the VIS rollout and in anticipation of further developments regarding the visa liberalisation for Ukrainian citizens.

4. Challenges

The LSC Ukraine listed as possible challenges for 2015-2016 the implementation of the Visa Facilitation Agreement (VFA) and application of the harmonized list of supporting documents, combatting fraud and visa shopping, shortening the length of procedures, and non-recognition of the international travel documents issued by the illegal Russian authorities in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.

During the reporting period the VFA continued to be applied without any major setback and the level of awareness within the group regarding the forgery of supporting documents increased significantly. No major complaints regarding the length of procedures or access to the premises of consulates were voiced. The activity of external service providers unfolds in a highly professional manner.

The illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol in March 2014 and the security situation in Eastern Ukraine continue to impact on the consular activity of the Schengen Member States and to add extra burden on their daily work. Usually the LSC Member States report about cases of applications from permanent residents of Crimea and Sevastopol, holders of foreign travel passports issued by the illegal Russian authorities after the illegal annexation.

The situation of the internally displaced people and people affected by the conflict in the East of Ukraine remains difficult. With 1,754,901 officially registered internally displaced people (cf. Ministry of Social Policy, 24 March 2016) and approx. 3.7 million affected people by the conflict in the East (UN estimates), it is expected that the Schengen visas refusal rates remains within the same margins as compared to the previous year.

The next Report will aim, among others, at taking stock of the trends in applications from permanent residents of Crimea and Sevastopol holders of Russian passports issued after the illegal annexation. In addition, the use of supporting documents issued from the non-government controlled areas in Eastern parts of Ukraine will also be subject to closer monitoring.

5. Other issues

The VIS rollout in the Eastern Partnership area (23 June 2015) went well. The EU Delegation coordinated an awareness raising campaign jointly with the LSC Members, which contributed to limit the negative perceptions locally and prevented adverse reflection by the media.

In January 2015 Ukraine started issuing biometric passports. A total of 749,339 such documents were issued during 2015 (vs. 962,504 non-biometric). In the first trimester of 2016, the ratio between biometric and non-biometric issued passports changed in favour of the first, against the backdrop of a better communication campaign conducted by the Ukrainian authorities and the perspective of the visa liberalisation. Ukrainian authorities expect an increase of 25-30% of applications for biometric passports in 2016 in comparison with 2015. Ukraine has enough manufacturing capacity to cope with the estimated increase.

On 20 April 2016, the European Commission proposed to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to lift visa requirements for the citizens of Ukraine, by transferring Ukraine to the list of countries whose citizens can travel without a visa to the Schengen area. The proposal came after the European Commission gave a positive assessment on 18 December 2015, confirming that Ukraine met all the benchmarks under the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan.

NB: The present Report has been approved by the EU Member States and Schengen Associated States.



March 2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) – UNITED KINGDOM (LONDON) 2015-2016 REPORT

1. Introduction

As regards Member States and associated states' presence in the United Kingdom, the situation remains unchanged compared to the previous reporting period: All are present in London. fourteen Member States cooperate with an external service provider for the purpose of the collection of visa applications. Eleven Member States are present in Edinburgh (six only via an external service provider); seven Member States are present in Manchester (five only via an external service provider); two MS are present via an external service provider in Cardiff.

The total number of visa applications handled lodged in the United Kingdom in 2015 was [...] [which is an increase of xx % compared to 2014 and of xx% compared to 2009.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

Since the last reporting period three meetings have been held (chaired by COM (DG HOME) and meetings are generally very well attended. Reports are drawn up by DG HOME after each meeting but Member States could make better use of the operational conclusions drawn and COM's clarifications of implementation of the Visa Code and, in particular, the Directive 2004/38/EC so as to avoid repetitive questions on the same subjects.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

No major problems with the implementation the Visa Code has been noted, but questions are regularly raised regarding specific issues of implementation. One issue is frequently on the agenda: the interaction between Directive 2004/38/EC on the free movement of family members of EU citizens on the agenda of each meeting. In June 2015, a representative of the UK Home Office presented the security features of specimen of the residence permits and cards issued by the UK. Member States appreciated the presentation but expressed a wish for are presentation of procedures for issuing these permits/cards. DG HOME committed to take contact with the UK authorities to seek to invite relevant Home Office representatives for such a meeting.

A representative of DG JUST participated in this meeting, mainly replying to operational questions regarding the implementation of the Directive.

3.2 Exchange of information

Thanks to the efforts of one Member State, the exchange of 'local' statistics has improved considerably but some Member States still omit to send their contribution timely. Member States have been encouraged to fulfil this requirement (provided by the Visa Code, Article 48 (3) (a)) so that information on fluctuations can be shared with the entire group.

Member States continue to exchange information on various operational subjects (e.g. cases of fraud) in the formal meetings and by e-mail.

DG HOME shares information from the relevant Council and Commission fora (Visa Working Party, Visa Committee etc.).

3.3 Other initiative taken in LSC

The "interest group", LSC London created by DG HOME on CIRCABC intended as a repository for documents. As no subscribers signed up in 2015, the interest group will be abolished.

4. Roll out of the Visa Information System (VIS)

VIS was rolled out in the United Kingdom on 20 November 2015 which implied the mandatory collection of applicants' fingerprints.

5. Challenges

High number of false/falsified supporting documents, e.g. university enrolment papers, bank statements, marriage certificates, hotel reservations and airplane tickets

6. Other issues

N/A.

This report has been approved by the Local Schengen Cooperation in London.



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in Washington, DC, USA 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

All EU Member States are present in Washington, DC, as well as Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. For the purpose of LSC in Washington, Estonia is represented by its sole consular post in the US located in New York City. Sweden issues Schengen visa in Washington DC for Iceland and Finland. Estonia issues Schengen visa in New York City for Latvia and Latvia issues Schengen visas in Washington D.C for Estonia. Liechtenstein is represented by Switzerland for LSC purposes.

Since US citizens do not need visas for short stays in the Schengen area, the issuance of Schengen visa is generally limited to third-country nationals legally staying in the US.

Some consulates ((Netherlands, as Regional Support Office, Estonia, Luxembourg²) also issue visas for third-country nationals residing outside the US), either due to non-representation in certain countries or following the centralisation of visa issuance in Washington D.C. as a regional support office.

So far only Norway and Sweden are using external service providers in the US.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

Two regular meetings were held between April 2015 and March 2016 (in May 2015 and in February 2016). These meetings were well attended. The meetings were chaired by the Justice and Home Affairs Counsellor of the EU Delegation. The reports were drawn up by the EU Delegation and circulated to Member States, who were invited to share the common report with their capitals and other consular posts in the US.

Member State colleagues are encouraged to hold LSC meetings in other US locations and to share information from Washington LSC with their US locations as well as headquarters. The setting into motion of the "Out of the Beltway cooperation" exercise with the designation of "Local Chairs" covering the whole US territory is helping this coordination as Local Chairs are competent for LSC coordination purposes. When such meetings take place, reports are however circulated locally and are not shared on a systematic basis with the Washington DC LSC group.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

² Luxembourg issues visas in Washington DC for citizens based in Canada, Mexico, and, in exceptional cases, for some countries of Central and Latin America.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Member States are well prepared to carry out LSC tasks under the Visa Code. Discussions in the group have allowed clarifying the practices of Member States, for instance on the issue of the personal appearance of previously known applicants whose biometric data had already been collected.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

MS have been implementing the supporting documents list approved on March 26th 2013, by the **Commission Implementing Decision (C (2013) 1725 final) establishing the lists of supporting documents to be presented by visa applicants in Jordan, Kosovo and the United States of America (Atlanta, Bedford, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, San Juan, Tampa, Washington).**

Member States continue to agree that there is **no need to amend at this stage the list of supporting documents required for visa applications.** However, clarity over insurance coverage requirements could be improved. It was noted, in that context, that US citizens travelling to the Schengen area without a visa were often travelling without insurance and that they represented the bulk of travellers to the EU originating from the US.

3.3 Exchange of information

The implementation of VIS did not constitute a problem. Member States did not express views regarding the merits or drawbacks of VISMail, launched in January 2016.

EUDEL collected **visa statistics** for the full year 2015. The group agreed that statistics were only giving a partial picture of the evolution of visa applicants: some consulates cover bigger areas than others, and the areas they cover evolve every year. Some suggested trying to collect data for the whole of the United States, so as to get a more comprehensive picture. This would entail increased coordination with LSC "out of the Beltway". Member States indicated, noting the discrepancies in the statistics compared to 2014, that diverging practices for short stays of official passport holders (notably the fact that some have waived the fingerprint requirements) had an impact on the increase of LTVs they issued last year.

Exchange of information constituted the main added value of the LSC. The group notably exchanged on the rule which requires applicants to have at least a 3 month residency requirement in the US, affecting in particular those in process of renewing their US visa. This was notably the case for students (usually with a valid I-20 but expired F1 visa).

The group also discussed cases of suspected fraud. In that context, some Member States were paying particular attention to hotel cancellations made right after applying for a visa (and without even waiting for the visa to be issued), noting that such practices could warrant further investigation. Similarly, flight itineraries presented by visa applicants were sometimes not genuine and appeared to be presented for the sole purpose of getting a Schengen visa. Therefore, some Member States indicated that they requested an issued plane ticket.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

The Group has approved over the reported period a common brochure which is distributed by all Embassies and Consulates in the US.

4. Challenges

Washington LSC has reached cruising speed. Over the last year, the exchange of information remains the area where the group has provided the biggest added value.

The designation of "Local Chairs" representing the EU has improved LSC coordination outside Washington DC, and could help in ensuring a more systematic flow of information from the Washington LSC to the rest of the US, and vice-versa. This constitutes an area to explore in 2016-2017.

5. Other issues

Whereas all EU Member States grant visa free travel to US citizens, citizens of five EU Member States still require a visa to travel to the US. A number of US citizens, alarmed by the possibility that the EU would reinstate visas for US citizens should cases of non-reciprocity persist after 12 April 2016, have approached consulates to clarify the rules which would apply to them. Reintroducing visas for US citizens would have far-reaching consequences for the LSC in Washington.

Legislative changes to the US Visa Waiver Program at the end of 2015 have also prompted a surge in requests from Member States citizens who, as they were not getting adequate information from US consulates, enquired whether they would be affected by the new rules. Dual nationals of certain countries (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan) and people who travelled to those countries or to Libya, Somalia and Yemen over the last 5 years are (with some exceptions) excluded from the Visa Waiver Programme and now need a visa to travel to the US.

This report was endorsed by all Member States present in Washington DC.



02/05/2016

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Uzbekistan 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

Currently the Republic of Uzbekistan hosts 7 diplomatic missions issuing Schengen visa (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia) and 3 missions applying the Schengen policy (Bulgaria Romania, Switzerland). In March 2016 the Hungarian Embassy opened its premises in Tashkent, however until now the consular section of the Embassy has not become fully operational. As previously indicated, starting from 1 July 2015, Switzerland has shut down its visa section (visas are issued by Latvian Embassy instead). There have been no further changes in representation arrangements in comparison to last year (see Annex 1). There are no Schengen visa consulates outside of the capital Tashkent. All Schengen embassies have been using VIS since its introduction in Uzbekistan on 14/11/2013 but continue to experience technical problems with quality of prints, sharing of information and the introduction of new Uzbek travel documents (see section 4. Challenges).

2. LSC meetings held in 2014-2015

LSC group continued to hold *regular coordination meetings* and met 4 times during the reporting period. The meetings are normally attended by all embassies issuing Schengen visa in Tashkent and in some cases also by representatives of the Romanian and Bulgarian Embassies. EU Delegation prepares agenda, chairs the meetings and drafts meeting reports. Members of the group maintain regular email contact. They also meet during the regular meetings of the Consul Club which brings together all Consuls performing their duties in Tashkent.

The coordination meetings in the reporting period were focused on the list of visa supporting documents, implementation of the VISA code and challenges faced by individual embassies.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The visa code was successfully implemented in Uzbekistan. The LSC members have finalized the harmonized list of visa supporting documents already in 2014 (adopted via Commission implementing decision on 4/9/2014). The list has been translated into local languages and posted on the websites of all LSC embassies. EU DEL has also issued a press release about the adoption of the list and informed the government via note verbal.

Some MS noticed that occasionally UZB side submits the request to grant the VIP treatment (visa issuance) to the personalities that do not fit the requirements of this procedure (according to Visa Code). Those applicants are requested to proceed according to ordinary procedures.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016. This report has been agreed with LSC members.

The LSC embassies continued to collect regular visa statistics. In the first 6 months of 2015 the LSC 8 embassies¹ issued 10,669 Visa C with the overall refusal rate of 5.27 per cent. This is roughly the same number of applications and refusal rate as in the same period of 2014.

There has been a good ad-hoc support of the EU Delegation from HQ – it would be useful to combine such support with a *practical more in-depth training focused on consular issues and implementation of the Visa Code* for relevant delegation staff. EU MS consular staff would also benefit from *FRONTEX training on detecting falsified documents* that had been organized in other parts of the CIS.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The LSC members have finalized the harmonized list of visa supporting documents already in 2014 (adopted via Commission implementing decision on 4/9/2014). The existing list of supporting documents is sufficient for the time being.

3.3 Exchange of information

There is a sufficient exchange of information among member states related primarily to the following issues; shopping/abuse of issued visa, introduction of new practices for issuance of visa (e.g. use of electronic lines or external service providers), visa refusals and general warnings on visa frauds. EU Delegation collects and shares visa statistics (bi-annually) and also contributes to the exchange of information by disseminating relevant information received from Brussels.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

The contact list of MS representations and representation agreements is being regularly updated by MS and EUD. It was agreed EUD would request a meeting with relevant UZB state entities to discuss the following issues: obligatory registration of EU citizens travelling to UZB; the updated list of banned medical drugs in UZB; emergency consular phone in MFA. Ideally the meeting should take place in June 2016. EU DEL continues to collect quarterly information about consular protection provided by EU embassies in Tashkent to EU nationals not represented in Uzbekistan via their own embassies.

4. Challenges

The roll out of VIS system and the introduction of new Uzbek travel documents (EIU common list needs to be updated) are still perceived by majority of LSC as main hiccups they face on a daily basis. Some visa supporting documents continue to pose a challenge – e.g. applicants are not always able to demonstrate sufficient credit card or bank account history (currently 3 months required). References from the place of work, medical certificates, invitations, deserve a special attention as there have been numerous attempts to forge it. Embassies in these cases decide on case by case basis whether or not to issue visa. That obviously requires conducting separate interviews which ultimately is a very time consuming task, decreasing effectiveness of particular visa sections.

Introduction of VIS has been a positive step – it provides reasonable amount of information about applicants and their history with other Schengen embassies. As time passes, the amount of available information about applicants will be further expanded and the value of the system will further increase. The embassies, however, continue to face problem with the *quality of prints taken for*

¹ Until 1 July 2015 Swiss visa section was fully operational and therefore we indicate the overall number of 8 LSC Embassies for this period.

VIS (30 per cent are too poor to register – usually applies to individuals above the age of 50). The embassies also continue to have **problems with sharing of VIS files** as data about country of origin of those born before the collapse of the Soviet Union differ from one embassy to another (some embassies use ex-USSR while others use Uzbekistan). This then prevents access of embassies using "ex-USSR" access to files of applicants that have already given finger prints in embassies using "Uzbekistan" and vice-versa.

CZ and LV have been striving to trigger cooperation with external visa centres (outsourcing for visa processing in Tashkent). It appeared to be impossible due to local legislation requirements (according to the local law the outsourcing company cannot collect consular fees in the hard currency). At the same time ES (physically placed in Moscow) uses outsourcing company assistance in Tashkent, however payments are made via Moscow placed bank. FR cooperates with external company but exclusively for registering of appointments. PL intends to explore the possibility of contracting the outsourcing company, but bearing in mind previous experience of other MS the prospects are rather pessimistic.

Some MS noticed there has been rapidly growing number of visa applications in their respective visa sections which may ultimately result in serious problems (longer queues) as the demand for Schengen visas exceeds the capacity of those particular Embassies.

5. Other issues

Not applicable.

Annex 1: Visa and consular representation arrangements in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Embassy of	Visa representation:	Consular representation:
Czech Republic	No other MS	Slovenia, Croatia
France	Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal	Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, EU DEL
Germany	Sweden, Spain, Finland, Austria	Austria, Denmark, Malta
Italy	Greece, Malta, Slovenia	Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus
Latvia	Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary; Switzerland as of 1/7/2015	Estonia, Lithuania
Poland	No other MS	No other MS
Slovakia	No other MS	No other MS
Switzerland		

UK – consular representation: Ireland, Sweden, Finland



Caracas, 20 April 2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC)
CARACAS, VENEZUELA
2015-2016 REPORT**

1. INTRODUCTION

The following nine Member States (MS) represented in Caracas issue Schengen visas: Austria (issues 'C' visas for Latvia, Malta, Slovenia and Switzerland), France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands (issues 'C' visas for Belgium), Poland, Portugal and Spain.

It is important to note that Italy and Portugal have consulates-general in Maracaibo and Valencia respectively.

A number of Member States' consuls in Caracas have jurisdiction in other Caribbean countries. Recently, Poland signed an agreement with the Netherlands for issuing visas in Trinidad and Tobago. Less frequent flights and fewer seats, along with high ticket prices, have made air travel to Venezuela difficult. These are major reasons why Member States are keen to reach agreements with other Member States so that those States will represent them in certain countries which come within their jurisdiction.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

Between April 2015 and March 2016, four LSC coordination meetings were held.

During this period, the MS finalised the harmonised list of supporting documents needed to apply for a Schengen visa; this was sent to DG HOME and presented at the COCON [the working party on consular cooperation] meeting held in March 2015.

LSC meetings are held four times a year and are chaired by the EU Delegation. The EU Delegation drafts the minutes and distributes them following agreement by those present at the meeting.

The Delegation invites consuls-general from outside the capital, but they do not attend the meetings due to the difficulty of travelling to Caracas. These consulates receive all LSC-related correspondence.

3. Current situation

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

The EU Delegation sets the agenda for the LSC based on the topics of general interest to the consulates.

During the meetings, information is exchanged on the practices of other Member States in relation to particular points of the Visa Code and on any specific problems that may have arisen. There is much discussion on the ‘waves’ of certain nationalities applying for visas at one or a number of specific consulates.

3.2. Assessment of the need to harmonise the list of supporting documents

- Comments have been received from COCON and all Member States agree to act upon them.

3.3. Exchange of information

- The EU Delegation gathers statistics from the MS; however, only a few MS exchange statistics with each other.
- Information is exchanged on specific cases to highlight any unusual procedures with a view to making other consulates aware of said practices; however, under no circumstances are names given or lists of persons drawn up.

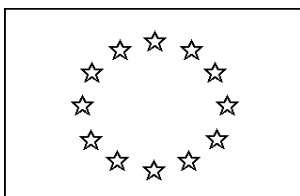
3.4. Other initiatives taken in the LSC

Not applicable

4. Challenges

For the 2015-2016 period, the challenge will be to implement the harmonised list of supporting documents needed to apply for a Schengen visa once the list has been approved.

Lastly, the consuls are awaiting the decision to lift the visa requirement for Columbian and Peruvian citizens, as well as for residents of the Caribbean Islands (Trinidad and Tobago, St Vincent and the Grenadines, etc.).



EUROPEAN UNION

Office of the European Union Representative
(West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA)

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) JERUSALEM 2015-2016 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

The area covered by the LSC is composed of the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Some Member States (MS) issue visas in Jerusalem and some in Ramallah whereas others only collect applications in those locations including Gaza and process them in Tel Aviv (Israel), Jerusalem, Ramallah or Amman (Jordan).

The members of LSC Jerusalem are therefore from either:

- Consulate Generals in Jerusalem (BE, SE, GR, ES, IT and FR),
- Representative Offices in Ramallah (AT, DK, SI, CH, DE, NL, HU, PT, and MT)
- Representative Offices in Dahiat Al-Bareed: (NO)

or from

- Embassies in Tel Aviv (FI, CZ, PL, SK, EE, LV and LT).

IS and LU have no representation of their own in this jurisdiction. IS is thus represented by DK and LU is represented by BE. CH represents EE, SI, LV and LT in the West Bank including East Jerusalem. SE represents CH and NL in Gaza.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

All LSC meetings in the jurisdiction are held in the office of the EU Delegation in Jerusalem irrespective of the location of each MS visa office.

Four LSC meetings were held between April 2015 and March 2016.

Compared to the meetings 2014 – 2015 the attendance slightly increased with an average of 15 MS present at each meeting. Certain MS did not attend any meetings .

Since the departure of the SE coordinator who co-chaired the LSC meeting in September 2013, the Office of the EU Representative continues to be solely in charge of the coordination/chairing of the meetings, of drafting agenda and communications for the different working groups as well as of elaborating the summary reports.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

MS are asked to share the LSC summary reports with their capitals.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS and EUD's preparedness to ensure the tasks to be carried out in the LSC under the Visa Code is high.

Since the roll-out of the new Visa Information System (VIS) on 14 November 2013 all applicants need to appear in person for the collection of biometry (photo and fingerprints).

A significant administrative and logistical problem is the fact that not all MS are present in all three areas covered by the LSC. This is a problem because not all visa applicants residing in one given area can travel to a visa office located in Jerusalem, Ramallah or Tel Aviv in order to lodge their applications in person (due to collective restrictions on movement imposed by the Israeli authorities), as made compulsory since the start of the Visa Information System (VIS) in the jurisdiction on 14 November 2013.

Considering the above, a number of MSs have contracted external companies to outsource the collection of visa applications for the West Bank and/or for Gaza. A few MSs currently with offices in Gaza are able to collect biometrics and/or receive visa applications there.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

The Commission Implementing Decision on the Harmonized List of Supporting Documents was adopted on 16/03/2015. The local date of implementation, agreed between MSs, was 01/04/2015.

Some MSs expressed serious concerns regarding the proposal of the Visa Committee to name the COM Decision "Palestine" with the following footnote: "This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue."

They suggested reverting to the initial proposition to name the decision "Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza". In their view, even leaving just "Palestine" in the name of the Decision could create potential problems for the local implementation of the decision as well as a potential diplomatic incident through the implied equivalence between "Jerusalem" and "Palestine".

Finally, there has been no need so far to amend the existing list.

3.3 Exchange of information

Monthly statistics

A new LSC working group has been created to collect and discuss statistics on Visa Applications and outsourcing practices and experience. Statistics regarding the number of Schengen Visa applications received from Gaza and West Bank are shared between LSC Member States.

Travel Medical Insurance (TMI)

The TMI working group has identified to-date seven companies active in the West Bank and Gaza that provide TMI which fulfil the criteria set out in the Visa Code. One other insurance company

submitted very recently a request in order to be added to the list of the recognized insurances companies.

The information on the approved TMI's regularly circulates within the LSC together with a standard text named – "*Travel insurance when applying for a Schengen visa*" for each mission's website, setting out which TMI's are accepted. A translation into Arabic of the above mentioned document is also available.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

LSC is looking into the possibility of organising a presentation on fraud issues to be given by MS Police Advisors.

4. Challenges

Since the roll-out of the new Visa Information System (VIS) in Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank which took place on 14 November 2013, the main challenge remains to continue ensuring full compliance with the obligation imposed by the Visa Code related to collection of biometric data, particularly in Gaza.

The Israeli closure of Gaza renders it de facto impossible for a resident of Gaza to travel to MS office in Jerusalem, Ramallah or Tel Aviv for the collection of biometry as part of a visa application process. Biometry must therefore be collected in Gaza, which poses a challenge to several MS.

The difficulties for MS to travel to Gaza for the collection of biometrics include: _

- lack of a portable biometry kit,
- lack of necessary resources (staff, armoured cars...),
- long and difficult procedures to obtain permits to travel to Gaza,
- the local security situation,
- the small number of applications for certain MSs.

These factors have made them favour outsourcing as soon as the company currently providing such services in Ramallah opens offices in Gaza.

5. Other issues

No other issues are reported from LSC Jerusalem.



29/04/2016

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in ZAMBIA
2015-2016 REPORT¹**

1. Introduction

There are six Schengen Member States Embassies present in Zambia: Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and Norway (which is expected to close its Embassy in June 2016).

Three Member States' Embassies issue visas for a total of 22 Schengen countries:

Embassy of Germany	Austria, Germany, Hungary, Slovenia.
Embassy of Italy	Greece, Italy, Malta, Slovakia.
Embassy of Sweden	Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

2. LSC meetings held in 2015-2016

Between April 2015 and March 2016, two Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) meetings were organized (in October 2015 and January 2016). The meetings were usually well attended by those Member States present in Zambia, with only one Member State that very rarely attends.

The meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation that also prepared the meeting reports. There is no co-chair. There is no LSC coordination outside Lusaka, as all visa issues are exclusively dealt with in Lusaka.

Member States (MS) in general do not share the meeting minutes prepared by the EU Delegation with their capitals, unless there is anything of essential importance or a need for further guidance.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Regular meetings and contacts via e-mail provide in principle relevant opportunities for carrying out the tasks requested from the Local Schengen Cooperation under the Visa Code. The meetings deal with operational issues in relation to the application of the common visa policy.

¹ April 2015 – March 2016

MS could potentially improve on the fulfilment of certain tasks in the future, incl. more regular exchange on visa statistics, on cases of irregularities or on local travel documents beyond the physical meetings that take place every three to four months. During the reporting period, progress somewhat stalled on the harmonisation of documents that commenced during the previous reporting periods.

3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

Mostly due to staff turn-over and loss of relevant documentation, the progress made on the harmonization of documents in previous reporting periods has stalled considerably. However, work is ongoing to retrieve the previous draft list and there is a strong commitment from the MS to finalise the list for submission to the Visa Committee in the next reporting period.

3.3 Exchange of information

The exchange of information within the LSC is regular. Meetings and other contacts within the group provide a forum for information exchange, when relevant, on statistics and trends, cases of irregularities, travel medical insurance etc. During the reporting period, the following was discussed in particular:

- Visa statistics were discussed at LSC meetings and the EU Delegation shared compiled updated information from Brussels in March 2016;
- Fraud cases/'visa shopping' were discussed at the LSC meetings;
- An exchange on visa fees in the local currency took place via email in response to the extreme volatility of the Zambian Kwacha during the reporting period;
- An updated list of representation arrangements was coordinated by the EU Delegation in November/December 2015, and shared via the EU Delegation's public newsletter.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

No other initiatives were taken during the period.

4. Challenges

1. Response to challenges listed in the 2014-2015 report:
 - Representation arrangements: Following the closure of several Embassies and new representation arrangements by the remaining three Embassies with visa services in the previous reporting period, the representation arrangements have been implemented and now form part of the daily LSC in Zambia.
2. Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2016-2017):
 - Harmonized list of documents: Work is ongoing to retrieve the previous draft list and there is a strong commitment from the MS to finalise the list for submission to the Visa Committee in the next reporting period.

- Closure of the Norwegian Embassy: While the Swedish Embassy has already taken over the issuance of visas for Norway since the closure of the Danish Embassy in 2013, Norway has remained an active member of the LSC group. After the anticipated closure of the Embassy in June 2016, Norway will then be represented in the meetings by the Norwegian Embassy in Malawi.

5. Other issues

No other issues to be reported.

This report was drafted by the EU Delegation to Zambia in consultation with MS present in Lusaka
