



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 7 January 2022
(OR. en)

5069/22

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: 13881/21

Subject: Summary of the 39th meeting of the VIS Advisory Group

Delegations will find in Annex a summary of the 39th meeting of eu-LISA's VIS Advisory Group.

Summary of the
39th meeting of the VIS Advisory Group
2 December 2021

European Union Agency for the Operational Management of
Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and
Justice (eu-LISA)

Summary of the
39th meeting of the VIS Advisory Group of eu-LISA

2 December 2021, videoconference

At the meeting of the **Visa Information System Advisory Group (VIS AG) of eu-LISA, held on 2 December 2021**, the Agency presented the summary of the operational activities and statistics of VIS, gave a status update of the development of the Entry-Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) as well as reported on the 8th meeting of the Testing Expert Group. The Agency also presented the alternative implementation scenario for EES, ETIAS and Interoperability, and briefed the participants about the status of the VIS ICD implementation. The European Commission informed the AG about the status of relevant Implementing Acts. A discussion was held on the implementation of VIS Recast and VIS-Interoperability. In addition, eu-LISA gave an overview of the state-of-play of the Shared Biometric Matching Service and the User Software Kit projects, and presented the outcome of the e-VISA project. The Agency presented its annual priorities for 2023 and asked the AG to give its opinion on eu-LISA's draft Single Programming Document 2023–2025. Under AOB the announcements on launching the Customer Satisfaction Survey 2021, the Conflict of Interest papers for 2022 and the VIS reporting exercise were made.

To start with, eu-LISA presented the **summary of VIS operational activities and statistics** in the reporting period from 1 September to 31 October 2021. The system kept performing well. The usage is in line with the seasonal expectations and the situation caused by COVID-19. The overall usage of VIS, with close to 10 million operations per month, is at about 38 % of the expected throughput. Asylum-related operations and law enforcement operations have increased compared to the same reporting period in the pre-COVID period. The top countries where the visa applications were lodged from were Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, India and Morocco.

Next, the Chairperson of the EES-ETIAS AG provided an **update on the implementation of EES and ETIAS and on the main outcomes of the EES-ETIAS AG meeting** held on 13 October. The official pre-Compliance Testing (CT) for EES will start in February 2022. Taking into account the current high number of MS in the last pre-CT slots for EES and VIS testing, MS were advised to complete the subsequent CT as early as possible to allow more time for the remaining preparation activities prior to the entry into operation. As regards carriers, eu-LISA started their registration in September 2021 and by the date of the VIS AG meeting 66 carriers were registered. In this respect the participants were urged to encourage the registration process at national level and ensure that carriers receive continuous information, including on the readiness of border control points. The VIS AG took also note of the status of the preparations for ETIAS.

eu-LISA reported on the **8th Testing Expert Group's (TEG) meeting** held in VIS and EES composition on 25 November 2021 with more than 75 participants. The project status of both systems and the state of play of the different phases of testing were presented. The dates for the next TEG meetings will be shared shortly by the Management Board secretariat.

The Agency provided an overview of the **VIS Interface Control Document (ICD) implementation project and about the outcomes of the 24th Project Management Forum (PMF)** meeting held on 16 November. It was noted that the vast majority of MS had tested Internet Protocol (IP) connectivity as well as application connectivity successfully.

The Commission briefed the participants on the **status of VIS Implementing Acts**. The progress is going on at a steady pace with four Implementing Acts (IA) and three Delegated Acts (DA) currently under preparation. The next meeting regarding IAs and DAs will be held on 17 December and the plan is to have one VIS Committee meeting and one Expert Group meeting every month in 2022.

Next, the status of the implementation of the **revised VIS Regulation** was discussed. It was underlined that as this VIS Regulation was adopted much later than expected, the implementation of the modifications to VIS stemming from this Regulation cannot go to production together with the implementation of the overall interoperability (IO) architecture. Therefore, within the agreed IO planning, only the changes stemming from IO Regulations will be implemented in VIS. The VIS Recast project is currently under contractual setup at eu-LISA. It was stressed that in order to start development activities all the associated IA and DA acts need to be adopted.

The Agency introduced the **alternative implementation scenario for EES, ETIAS and interoperability (IO)**. Following the respective decision of the eu-LISA Management Board, the Agency has proposed an alternative scenario for the implementation of the new systems and IO. This scenario is considered most feasible from technical, operational and political point of view and is discussed in all relevant governance bodies of the Agency, to be followed by the presentation at the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 9-10 December. According to the scenario the entry into operation of EES shall be moved to the end of September 2022, and the entry-into-operation of ETIAS to May 2023. The overall objective of having the IO architecture implemented by the end of 2023 remains intact.

Under the **VIS – Interoperability** item it was reiterated that from the planning perspective the implementation of the revised VIS Regulation is separated from changes to be made to VIS due to the IO implementation, as the IO will enter into force before the revised VIS Regulation. MS asked for efficient planning of these parallel tracks as it increases the complexity of the project and demands more resources. The VIS AG concluded that a dedicated workshop on VIS-IO should be organised before the next VIS AG meeting of 15 February 2022.

The VIS Advisory Group was informed about the successful implementation of the **Release Plan for 2021** regarding four releases; only one of them had an impact on MS. Taking into account that the majority of environments will be booked for VIS and EES related activities (Testing and Entry into Operation) in 2022, two VIS releases are planned for 2022.

eu-LISA presented the **Results and outcomes of the eVISA project**. Regarding the benefits, the Agency explained that the prototype allows for a harmonised, digital and seamless visa procedure for applicants and also facilitates efficient application management for central authorities and consular officers. The Agency noted the added value and high acceptance rate expressed by MS on the testing side. The work on the prototype platform will be taken into account in the upcoming Commission proposal on the digitalisation of visa procedures.

Thereafter, eu-LISA informed the VIS AG about the **state of play of the Shared Biometric Matching Service (sBMS) and the User Software Kit (USK) projects**. sBMS remains in the Development and Testing phase, and the configuration of equipment and infrastructure is ongoing. The final configuration of the USK for sBMS for all the MS is scheduled for spring 2022.

Furthermore, eu-LISA presented the **Draft Single Programming Document 2023–2025 and the annual priorities of the Agency for 2023**. The Agency has carefully considered the proposals from the AGs received in April 2021 and has provided feedback in October. eu-LISA has also informally consulted the Commission on the draft SPD 2023–2025. All applicable remarks of the Commission are reflected in the document. However, the Commission will send its full comments during the following month. After receiving the formal positive opinion from the Advisory Groups, the document will be presented to the eu-LISA Management Board in January 2022 for preliminary adoption. The VIS AG gave its positive opinion on eu-LISA’s draft Single Programming Document 2023–2025.

Besides, the VIS Advisory Group gave a positive opinion on the **Communication Infrastructure Security Plan** and on the Communication Infrastructure Business Continuity Plan. The documents, which were also presented to the SIS II Advisory Group for opinion, will be submitted to the Management Board for adoption.

The Agency presented the outcome of the AG consultation about **Communication Infrastructure Strategy, merging the SIS and VIS Domain**. Option A, a voluntary merger where a SIS and a VIS TAP are on the same location was chosen by all AGs. The following step will be the discussion of a design that fits for option A while respecting at the same time the legal requirements.

Under AOB, the Agency informed the VIS AG that the **Customer Satisfaction Survey for 2021** will be launched in mid-January 2022. The Member States were requested to reply by 25 February 2022, whereas the survey results will be presented to the VIS AG meeting of 3 May 2022.

In addition, eu-LISA announced the launch an annual call for submission of the **Conflict of Interest declarations**. The VIS AG members were requested to fill them in and return the forms to eu-LISA by 31 March 2022.

Finally, the Agency launched the **VIS reporting exercise** as per Article 50(3) of the VIS Regulation and Article (1)3 of the VIS Decision, covering the period 10/2019 - 09/2021. MS were requested to provide data to eu-LISA by 20 January 2022, via the template shared. Similar to the past, eu-LISA will support the MS in providing statistical data.

The next meeting of the VIS AG will take place on **15 February 2022**.