



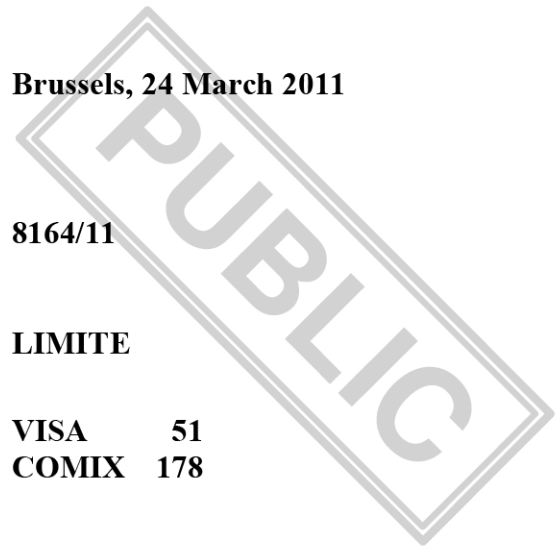
**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 24 March 2011

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LIMITE

**VISA 51
COMIX 178**



NOTE

from : Presidency
to : Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum/
Coreper/Council /Mixed Committee
(EU-Iceland/Liechtenstein/Norway/Switzerland)
Subject : VIS - state of play

At its meeting on 24 February 2011, the Mixed Committee at Ministerial Level took note of the state of play of the VIS as set out in doc. 6427/11 VISA 29 COMIX 91. The Commission confirmed, on the basis of the current test results, that the central Visa Information System (VIS) would be ready by 24 June 2011 in accordance with the schedule set out in doc. 14042/10 VISA 222 COMIX 607. The Commission, supported by the Presidency, referred on that occasion to the need for a discussion concerning the so-called go-live of the system. Go-live means in this regard the actual start of operations of the VIS, i.e. the collection of biometrics, including fingerprints, regarding visa applications lodged at consulates in the first roll out region (North Africa), and the consultation of the VIS at external border crossing points.

On the basis of the answers provided by the Member States to the questionnaires regularly circulated in the Friends of VIS group (FoVIS), expected that Member States will also be ready with the national preparations – including the border crossing points – by the date on which the central VIS will be ready for operations.

As indicated in more detail in doc. 6427/11 VISA 29 COMIX 91, the Commission shall determine the go-live date in accordance with the relevant provisions of the VIS Regulation. However, the Commission has highlighted on several occasions that the opinion of Member States would be crucial when determining the go-live date.

In order to ensure that the VIS can start operations soon after the central VIS has become ready, and without prejudice to the Commission's right of initiative, the Presidency invited all Member States to present their position on the possible go-live date at the FoVIS meeting held on 16 March 2011. Indeed, contrary to the date of the readiness of the Central VIS, the go-live date had not been previously discussed.

During the discussion, a consensus emerged on 11 October 2011 as a concrete date for this purpose. The preference for early October 2011 was based on a number of factors, taking into account all relevant circumstances such as the peak season in terms of the number of visa applications during the summer holiday, the change of personnel in certain consulates during the summer period, the need for training, as well as the general political situation in the region, the large majority of Member States, including those which, according to the relevant statistics, issue the largest number of visas in the region, preferred to start operations in early October. The Presidency therefore suggests 11 October 2011 as the go-live date of the system.

The Presidency underlines that based on this, notifications of their readiness proceed in accordance to the relevant provisions of the VIS Regulation as described in doc. 6427/11 VISA 29 COMIX 91 must be sent by Member States to the Commission by the end of July at the latest, allowing the Commission to adopt its formal decision on the go-live date in due course. In order to simplify Member States' notifications, the Commission intends to circulate a "notification template" in the upcoming weeks.

An information campaign coordinated by the Commission is scheduled to take place in advance of the go-live. The design and content of the information material concerned have been agreed on at the meeting of the FoVIS held on 16 March.

The Presidency will, as a matter of priority, continue to monitor the preparations for the VIS go-live at all levels.

The Presidency invites SCIFA/Coreper/Council (Mixed Committee) to take note of this report and in particular the above mentioned go-live date of 11 October 2011 to be proposed to the Commission as well as the deadline the end of July 2011 for notifications by Member States.
