Council of the European Union

Brussels, 12 April 2023
(OR. en)

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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	5397/23
Subject:	Summary of the 44th meeting of the VIS Advisory Group

Delegations will find in Annex a summary of the 44th meeting of eu-LISA's VIS Advisory Group.

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Summary of the
44th meeting of the VIS Advisory Group
9 February 2023

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

44ᵗʰ meeting of the VIS Advisory Group of eu-LISA

9 February 2023, Strasbourg (hybrid meeting)

At the meeting of the **Visa Information System Advisory Group (VIS AG) of eu-LISA, held on 9 February 2023,** the new Chair and Deputy Chair of the AG were elected. Thereafter, eu-LISA presented the summary of the operational activities and statistics of VIS and gave a status update on the development of the Entry-Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). European Commission provided the status of VIS Implementing and Delegated Acts. Further, the Agency informed VIS AG about the implementation of the VIS Interface Control Document (ICD) as well as reported on several Project Management Forum (PMF) meetings – VIS-EES PMF, Revised VIS PMF and VIS-Interoperability PMF. In addition, eu-LISA provided an update on the Shared Biometric Matching Service (sBMS) project and the sBMS User Software Kit (USK) pilot as well as informed VIS AG about the planning for the VIS Exercise 2023. VIS AG adopted the VIS Operator Manual and gave positive opinion on the VIS Release Plan 2023. eu-LISA presented also VIS Training Activities Recap 2022 and VIS Training Plan 2023. Under AOB, Sweden announced a workshop on the USK pilot and the AG was reminded about the deadline for the Customer Satisfaction Survey 2022 on the functioning of the Agency.

Under the first agenda point, the voting of the new Chair and Deputy Chair for VIS AG took place. Mr Paul Sturm (NL) was elected Chair and Ms Tarja Nylander (FI) was elected Deputy Chair. For both positions the mandate is four years with the possibility to renew it once.

Thereafter, eu-LISA presented the **summary of VIS operational activities** covering the reporting period from 1 November to 31 December 2022. The system kept performing well and its usage was in line with the seasonal expectations and the situation caused by COVID-19. With around 12 million operations in December 2022, the **overall usage of VIS is at about 60% of the expected throughput** under normal conditions. The top countries where visa applications were lodged were Turkey, India, Morocco, Algeria, Russian Federation (a drop from a third place in the previous reporting period) and the UK. Under this agenda point, it was underlined that checking all Schengen visas with fingerprints is already mandatory but VIS still functions from a technical perspective if a Member State does not perform this check. However, after the entry-into-operation (EiO) of EES, checking visas with fingerprints will be enforced due to the risk that EES would otherwise not function properly.

Next, eu-LISA provided a **status update on the implementation of EES and ETIAS**. The EES-ETIAS AG Chair elaborated on the eu-LISA Management Board decision from January 2023 about EES and the latest status of its EiO preparations at central and national level. A new EiO schedule and a revised planning for the overall interoperability architecture will be prepared. The preparations as regards EES shall continue meanwhile, in particular the ones related to the readiness of border crossing points. It was highlighted that the Biometrics Working Group will be more engaged in the work of the different Advisory Groups to coordinate technical biometric related aspects.

The Commission briefed the VIS AG about the **progress of nine Implementing Acts (IA) and three Delegated Acts (DA)**. The text of most of the IAs and DAs are stable, but for some of them negotiations have been re-opened due to technical issues or as a consequence of the outcome of the Commission inter-service consultation.

eu-LISA provided an overview of the implementation of the **VIS Interface Control Document (ICD)** project and the outcome of the meetings of the **VIS-EES Project Management Forum (PMF)** and **Revised VIS PMF**, both held on 31 January 2023. The Agency informed the VIS AG about the workshop of 17 February 2023 aimed at discussing the availability of test environments, and addressing the cost efficiency aspect related to complying with the requirements of the Regulations. In addition, the planning for all the PMF meetings until the next VIS AG of 1 June 2023 was shared.

Next, eu-LISA provided information on the state-of-play of the **Shared Biometric Matching Service (sBMS) project,** including an update on the **sBMS User Software Kit (USK)** pilot. eu-LISA invited all AG members (i.e., of the EES-ETIAS, ECRIS-TCN, Interoperability, SIS, Eurodac and VIS AGs) and the USK Single Points of Contacts to a Biometric Working Group meeting on USK matters, to be held in the end of February 2023. The Member States were invited to share their experience with the deployment of national projects; the participants will be able to ask questions both from technical experts and business experts. This type of a meeting might be repeated later in 2023.

Thereafter, the VIS AG adopted the **VIS Operator Manual** and gave a positive opinion on the **VIS Release Plan 2023.**

eu-LISA also informed the VIS AG about the planning for the **VIS Exercise 2023** during which a security and business continuity test will be carried out with regards to VIS. The exercise is scheduled to the beginning of October 2023. The Agency encouraged Member States to take part in the exercise, noting that the effort requested from them in the preparatory phase has been reduced considerably thanks to the previous experience.

Next, eu-LISA gave an overview of the main statistics concerning eu-LISA´s **training activities in 2022,** including VIS, and the plans for 2023**.** eu-LISA delivered 48 training activities in 2022, up from 34 such activities in 2021. The trend is similar to the past years with e-learning format prevailing over face-to-face activities with 18 online courses and 19 webinars. Altogether 3793 people participated in the training courses of eu-LISA in 2022. **Six VIS training activities were held in 2022.** Among those, two were held in "virtual classrooms" - a delivery method being piloted by eu-LISA.

As per the practice, the Training Needs Analysis, completed in the end of 2022, provided input for the **Training Plan for 2023**. This year there are **50 training activities planned**, **four of them dedicated to VIS** - two webinars, one online course, and one face-to-face course. These training courses address also two additional target audiences: developers and experts of the Police and Border Guard Board as well as visa and immigration authorities.

Under AOB, Sweden informed the VIS AG members about a **workshop** on 2 March 2023 that is being prepared on the **USK pilot** that Sweden is running together with eu-LISA. In addition, eu-LISA reminded the VIS AG of the deadline of 26 February 2023 to reply to the **Customer Satisfaction Survey 2022** on the functioning of the Agency. The Agency also pointed out the **campaign** to be carried out in the coming weeks with SPoCs to **verify the contact details of the Member States**.

The next meeting of the VIS AG will be held as a hybrid meeting on **1 June 2023** in Tallinn.

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