

Technical reports on the functioning of VIS *

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eu-LISA • European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice

VIS

The Visa Information System (VIS) is an important element of the EU common visa policy, an essential part of the Schengen *acquis*. The system was started in October 2011, and on 1 December 2012, eu-LISA took over its operational management from the European Commission, as per the VIS legal framework.

Since the end of 2011, VIS has served as the technological solution that facilitates the visa acquiring procedure and helps Member State authorities to rapidly and effectively check the necessary information about third-country nationals who need a visa to travel to the EU as well as make decisions on visa applications. In particular, VIS aims to improve the implementation of the common visa policy, consular cooperation and consultations between central visa authorities by supporting the exchange of data amongst Member States.

The EU Member States connected to VIS are Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden. The Associated Countries connected to VIS are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The Schengen candidate-countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania) are not yet connected to the VIS system, but preparatory work is on-going.

eu-LISA's role

eu-LISA ensures the operational management of VIS thus guaranteeing the continuous, uninterrupted exchange of data between national authorities 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. eu-LISA is also responsible for providing technical training to Member State national VIS operators.



The *Technical reports on the functioning of VIS* are part of the eu-LISA legal reporting obligations, as per Article 50(3) of Regulation (EC) No 767/2008 and Article 17(3) of Council Decision 2008/633/JHA. These are submitted every two years to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

The technical reports include information available at a central level (operational activities, availability and performance, change management, releases, test activities, etc.) as well as statistical data provided by the Member States on the usage of the system. Furthermore, the reports provide information on the need and use made of Article 4(2) of the VIS Decision by Member States.

The Reports at a glance

The reporting period covered goes from 01 October 2015 to 30 September 2017. Member States contributed to the reporting exercise in particular with quantitative information on the usage of the system. eu-LISA provided information on the technical functioning of the Central VIS as well as on its security.

Several business critical projects were implemented during the reporting period covered, such as:

- In January 2016, the entry into operation of VIS Mail 2 Consultation Mechanism and consequently discontinuation of VISION;
- End of February 2016, VIS was deployed in the last region and the worldwide rollout was completed;
- In May 2017, following two years of intense efforts, heavy testing and, a data migration procedure, the VISA Code Plus project was implemented in the framework of the VIS 3.0 release;
- In September 2017, the complex migration from s-TESTA to TESTA-ng was completed.

The overall technical performance of VIS during the reporting period was very satisfactory, and no significant performance issues were registered. The BMS (Biometric Matching System is the Automated Fingerprint Identification System subsystem responsible for biometric operations) capacity and performance were also adequate for the use made by Member States. Capacity increases were carried out to align the system with the business requests coming in particular from consular posts and borders. At the end of the reporting period (30/092017), the VIS database stored over 49 million visa applications and almost 42 million fingerprint sets.

Based on the data provided by Member States, an important increase in the usage of VIS is clearly visible, in particular at consular posts and at borders. The peak for the consular usage was reached in May 2017 with almost 2 million visa applications registered, whilst at the borders the peak was registered in July 2017 with over 4.6 million border checks (first line checks) reported.



From its entry into operation to the end of 2015, almost 287 million VIS operations were performed in the system. For comparison purposes, solely in 2017 (the first year of worldwide operation) VIS operations totalled almost 269 million.

In the coming years, VIS will significantly evolve due to the recently adopted Entry/Exit System Regulation, the interoperability proposals currently under negotiations and the expected revision of the VIS legal instruments.

About the Agency

eu-LISA is the European Agency that ensures 24/7 operational management the European Union's (EU) largest IT systems and their respective communication infrastructure in the area of freedom, security and justice: Eurodac, SIS II and VIS. With information technology, eu-LISA safeguards the EU's internal security and supports the implementation of asylum, migration and border management policies for the benefit of citizens. www.eulisa.europa.eu