



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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5059/14

VISA	2
COMIX	3

NOTE

from :	General Secretariat
to :	Delegations
Subject:	Local Schengen cooperation between Member States' consulates (Article 48(5), first subparagraph of the Visa Code) - Compilation of the annual reports covering the period 2012-2013

Delegations will find attached the annual reports covering the period 2012-2013.

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION
ANNUAL REPORTS - 2012-2013**

AFGHANISTAN*
ALBANIA
ANGOLA*
ARGENTINA
ARMENIA*
AUSTRALIA
AZERBAIJAN*
BELARUS*
BENIN*
BOLIVIA*
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
BRAZIL
BURKINA FASO*
CAMBODIA*
CAMEROON*
CANADA
CAPE VERDE*
CHILE
CHINA*
COLOMBIA*
COSTA RICA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE*
CROATIA
DJIBOUTI*
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC*
ECUADOR*
EGYPT*
ERITREA*
ETHIOPIA*
FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
HONG KONG
GABON*
GEORGIA*
GHANA*
GUINEA CONAKRY*
INDIA*
INDONESIA*
IRAQ*
JORDAN*
KAZAKHSTAN*
KOSOVO*
MADAGASCAR*
MAURITANIA*
MOLDOVA*

MONTENEGRO
MOZAMBIQUE*
NEPAL*
NICARAGUA
NIGERIA*
PANAMA
PARAGUAY
PHILIPPINES*
RUSSIAN FEDERATION* (2 LSC reports: Moscow and St. Petersburg)
SAUDI ARABIA*
SENEGAL*
SERBIA
SINGAPORE
SOUTH AFRICA*
SOUTH KOREA
SRI LANKA*
SUDAN*
TAJIKISTAN*
THAILAND*
TUNISIA*
TURKEY*
UGANDA*
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.



10 April 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC)
Afghanistan

2012-2013 REPORT¹

1. Introduction

Kabul enjoys the presence of 16 Schengen Members States of which 8 have a fully fledged consular service. 3 of them have representation arrangements with 6 MS. In other words 14 / 25 MS are locally operational.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Meetings take place systematically on a bi-monthly basis, six meetings have taken place during the reported period. They are chaired by EUD. Taking into account non-Schengen MS are invited as observers and appreciated to be welcome meetings are well attended. That said certain MS never attend. MS draw up their own reports when necessary. And there is no need to ensure coordination outside the capital.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS are willing to ensure the tasks under the visa code are carried out in LSC. Specific issues are discussed to find a common position:

- 1) the different rates of conversion of the visa fee amount fixed in euro do not create any kind of visa shopping,
- 2) there is no list of VIP exempted of visa fee.

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

Work is on-going:

- 1) A list of common supporting documents is under preparation,
- 2) A common information sheet is under preparation.

¹ April 2012 – March 2013

3.3 Exchange of information

Information is exchanged on the following topics:

- 1) the biometric system has been fully implemented since 2nd Oct. 2012 with a lot of reticence from the MoFA Protocol who considers that the compulsory fingerprint is discriminatory against the Afghan civil servants: EUD has sent a new NV on behalf of all MS to confirm no exception will be accepted;
- 2) the national treatment of the local employees of the respective armies has been shared on a regularly basis,
- 3) monthly statistics,
- 4) cases of fraud,

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Some preliminary exchange of views have taken place on the possible opportunity to open a visa outsource agency that would obviously remain optional each MS being totally free to choose to be part of it or not. It looks like at this stage a critical mass could be achieved.

4. Challenges

As the majority of the MS has their consular service located in Islamabad where the biometric system will become compulsory from Oct. 2013 it will be quite challenging for the Afghans who want to travel for genuine reasons to get their visa. A Schengen house could be a well appreciated common solution.

5. Other issues

The two major events of 2014 namely the presidential election and the end of the ISAF mandate could have an impact on the number of visa requests to be dealt with in a volatile security environment.



30//05/2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC)

Tirana, Albania

2012-2013 REPORT²

1. Introduction

In addition to the EU Delegation to the Republic of Albania, there are 17 Member States with diplomatic representation to Tirana. 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 has one Honorary Consulate in Shkodra. Since the entry into force of the Visa Code in April 2011, the EUD is in charge of the coordination of meetings of the Local Schengen Cooperation which usually take place every six months. Visa Liberalisation is into force since December 2010.

In the years 2009 en 2010 a Belgian visa agent was posted in the Dutch Embassy in Tirana and dealt with all C-visa for the Benelux area and long-stay visa for Belgium. Long-stay visa for the Netherlands were handled by the Dutch themselves and long-term visa for Luxembourg were handled by the Embassy of Luxembourg in Vienna. After visa liberalization, the Belgian authorities decided to terminate the posting of the Belgian visa agent in the Dutch Embassy of Tirana due to lack of sufficient applications for such a purpose. The Dutch took over again C-visa for Benelux (like they did before 2009), handled their own long-term visa and long-term-visa for Belgium were handled by the Belgian Embassy in Sophia. Starting 15 June 2013, the consular service at the Dutch Embassy will be closed. Consular services will be covered by the Embassy in Skopje.

Switzerland has closed the consular section of the Embassy since 2011. Consular services are delivered from the regional consular centre in Pristina. Switzerland is represented by the Austrian Embassy for Schengen C type visa.

A general downsizing of consular offices has been experienced in Albania.

² April 2012 – March 2013

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

During the reporting period three LSC meetings took place. They were well attended by EU MS and chaired by the EU Delegation. Generally, meetings are held back to back with consular protection meetings, chaired by Italy. In one occasion, one joint meeting with EU police liaison officers was held, in the frame of a post visa liberalisation mission focusing on document security (February 2013).

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

EU MS did not report any particular issue/problem related to the application of the Visa Code.

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

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

3.3 Exchange of information

Information is usually exchanged during LSC meetings, in bilateral meetings or exceptionally by email.

During the reporting period two main issues have been discussed in the frame of the LSC: the name change in travel documents and the issues of the rise in asylum requests to some EU Member States. At the beginning of 2012 IT expressed concerns as to the issue of name change in the Albanian travel documents as a possible way to circumvent a Schengen ban. IT authorities reported that in some occasions Albanian citizens had been found travelling into Italy despite having previously been banned from entering into the Schengen area under a different name. This matter was immediately taken into consideration and given priority by the EU Delegation. Two visa liberalization missions took place in order to address this concern and a meeting with an EU expert was organised with both the EU MS consuls and EU police liaison officers.

As regards the raise of asylum seekers, the EU Delegation has maintained close contacts with those EU MS experiencing a raise in asylum seekers, in particular with BE and SE representatives.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Nothing to report

4. Challenges

Nothing to report

5. Other issues



May 2013

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) ANGOLA
2012-2013 REPORT³**

- **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. Sweden is currently still represented by Norway consular services. Portugal accepts collection of applications through duly accredited commercial intermediaries.

In terms of local representation of non-resident Schengen: Norway represents Denmark and Sweden; Belgium represents Luxembourg; Poland represents Slovenia; Germany represents Estonia; and Portugal General Consulate in Luanda represents Austria, Greece and the Czech Republic, and its Consulate in Benguela represents Austria and Italy.

- **LSC meetings held in 2012-2013**

During this reporting period, there have been three meetings between Schengen MS, which were attended by most MS. These meetings served for exchange of information on visa concession and related activities and for a discussion of other points of common interests, as well as drafting of common reports requested by Brussels.

So far, we haven't been able to establish the list of contacts of non-resident MS, so the information circulates only among MS residents in Angola.

Germany is responsible for collecting visa statistics.

- **State of play**

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The tasks foreseen for Local Schengen Cooperation under the Visa Code are being implemented by MS and EU Delegation, without some problems with the introduction of VIS.

Indeed, the ongoing introduction of biometric procedures in the collection of visas by MS is a challenge. Energy shortages and low quality of communication infrastructures in Angola makes biometric collection procedures a lengthy task that slows down the visa application process, creating problems for both consular services and applicants. Due to the time needed to process an application, fewer can be done each day, which results in longer waiting lists to get an appointment.

³ April 2012 – March 2013

As a result, applicants are turning to other Consulates that face significant rise in demands. The payment of consular fees in local currency continues to be problematic for some MS. Although Angola demands that all transactions should be made using local currency, this creates problems of establishing a fixed visa fee due to the variation of the exchange rate. Therefore, some MS continue to accept only USD or EUR for payment of visa fees.

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

Draft lists have been agreed upon and forwarded to the Visa Committee in March 2013.

3.3 Exchange of information

During LSC meetings, MS exchange information and discuss problems related to visa concession, including problematic visa applications, fraud cases they have taken notice of, relationship with the Angolan authorities, any relevant change in the dynamics of visa applications, etc. These discussions are very important to ensure coordination and achieve common ground between MS and avoid "visa shopping".

EUDEL also uses that opportunity to inform MS of any initiatives or new legislation that may have been published and which affects consular activities.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Nothing to mention.

4. Challenges

The major challenge for 2013 will definitely be the VIS implementation and management of its negative consequences in terms of time needed for processing applications and prevention of the correlated abovementioned "visa shopping".

Another aspect to be followed will be the evolution of the refusal rate. Most Consulates currently refuse about 30% to 35% of the demands and some have seen slight increases.

5. Other issues

Nothing to mention.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF ARGENTINA

Buenos Aires, 14 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Buenos Aires/ARGENTINA

2012-2013 REPORT⁴

1. Introduction

In Buenos Aires, consular meetings are organised by the Member States in charge of the EU rotating presidency, in cooperation with the EU Delegation. To date, and since the EU Delegation took on Lisbon competencies in January 2011, the local Schengen cooperation meetings have been held together with the consular meetings, which are organised by the Member State holding the presidency, with the support of the EU Delegation.

Please note that Argentinian citizens do not need a visa to enter Schengen territory for a period of 90 days (in the space of 180 days) which, together with the large number of people with multiple citizenship, sets the tone for local cooperation. In addition to visas granted to Argentinian citizens for longer stays, visas are granted to citizens of third countries who are resident in Argentina, for visits and transit purposes. It should also be noted that there are many citizens of European Union Member States and dual nationals resident in Argentina (in total more than one million), who are the priority for European consulates. For this reason Schengen cooperation is not a tricky issue in a country which presents virtually no risks as far as migration is concerned, either for Member States or for the EU Delegation, which has no resources on this issue.

A large number of EU Member States are represented in Argentina, with 21 embassies in Buenos Aires carrying out a variety of consular tasks. Croatia has just been added to this list, as it is will shortly be a new EU Member State, as well as Norway and Switzerland, which are Schengen countries outside the EU:

1. Germany
2. Austria (also represents Malta)
3. Belgium (also represents Luxembourg)
- (4. Bulgaria)
5. Denmark (represented by Norway)
6. Slovakia
7. Slovenia
8. Spain
9. Finland
10. France
11. Greece

⁴ April 2012 – March 2013

12. Hungary
- (13. Ireland)
14. Italy
15. The Netherlands
16. Poland
17. Portugal
- (18. United Kingdom)
19. Czech Republic
- (20. Romania)
21. Sweden (represented by Norway)
22. Norway (represents Denmark, Iceland, Sweden)
23. Switzerland
- (24. Croatia)

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

2012 was a difficult year in Buenos Aires as regards organising consular meetings in general, and particular as regards Schengen cooperation, given the absence of one of the countries holding the presidency (Cyprus has no representation in Argentina) and the limited resources of another (Ireland has a limited number of staff who perform duties for other countries, and it is not part of the Schengen area).

Consequently, in mid-2012 the Irish Presidency and the European Union Delegation to Buenos Aires requested France's assistance with organising the consular and Schengen cooperation meetings. France agreed and provided support from then on.

Between the beginning of April 2012 and the end of March 2013, a plenary meeting on consular matters, followed by a Schengen cooperation meeting, was held in Buenos Aires. These were well attended. A meeting convened by the Irish Presidency, with the assistance of France, was held in the EU Delegation on 10 December. The meetings took the form of consular meetings, so the EU Member States that are not part of the Schengen Convention were invited. The report was drafted by the Member States. To date, there has been no formal coordination outside Buenos Aires. At all events, no such coordination has been requested by the parties in question.

3. Current situation

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

It appears that the Visa Code in Argentina is applied effectively. However, the EU Delegation and the Member States are not very well prepared to carry out LSC tasks, in particular as regards the Visa Code, as they lack targeted training on issues other than sending circulars or generic instructions from headquarters.

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

This does not seem to be a priority in Argentina's case.

3.3. Exchange of information

The Member States exchange information on ad hoc issues by email or telephone.

The Member States regard these exchanges as useful, positive and efficient, particularly where passing on information about cases of visa rejections is concerned.

3.4. Other initiatives taken under the LSC

Not applicable.

4. Challenges for 2013-2014

As was the case last year, an obvious challenge would be to include an item exclusively concerning Local Schengen Cooperation to every consular meeting agenda. This challenge was taken up at the meeting held in December 2012 and at the most recent Schengen cooperation meeting, held in April 2013.

5. Other issues

There are no particular issues requiring attention.



20 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Armenia 2012 REPORT

1. Introduction

Six Schengen countries have consulates in Armenia: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania and Poland. The Czech Republic and Switzerland have an embassy, but visas are currently still issued in Georgia. Of the non-Schengen member states, Bulgaria (also represents Montenegro and in future Croatia), Romania and the UK have embassies in Armenia, which issue visa. The Cyprus consulate also issues visa. All visa-issuing consular departments are in the capital, Yerevan.

For visa purposes, France represents Portugal, Norway, Iceland and Latvia; Germany represents Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxemburg, Sweden and Austria; Italy represents Finland and Malta; Lithuania represents Hungary, Spain and Estonia. Poland represents Slovenia, Slovakia and soon also the Czech Republic and Switzerland. Visa applicants have to apply in person at a consulate. In the reporting period, Schengen meetings were coordinated by the EU Delegation. Armenia introduced visa-free travel and short stay for the citizens of the EU and Schengen acquis starting from January 13, 2013.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012

Three LSC meetings and one consular meeting about the security and evacuation issues were held. The Regional Security Officer of the Commission was also present at the ad-hoc consular meeting. The reports of the meetings are prepared by the Delegation; MS draw up their own reports. Attendance was variable, but is improving. The meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation. There are no coordination problems with the LSC outside the capital, as all consulates are in the capital.

3. State of play

3.1 Start of application of the Visa Code - April

Several Member States and the Delegation lack sufficient staff to be fully prepared to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code. Exchange of visa statistics is now on a weekly basis, including refusals. Data on suspect persons is exchanged.

3.2. Exchange of information on the visa fee charged – possible need for harmonisation

In the LSC framework, statistical trends are regularly exchanged. Information on cases of fraud is discussed and information is exchanged. Member States tend to prescribe the same medical insurance providers.

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

All MS that are part of Schengen require more or less the same list of the supporting documents in compliance with the Visa Code. The differences are in particular in requiring originals of the submitted documents. The Delegation initiated compilation of the documents required for short term visas so that a single harmonized list is drawn up as a result. The work was completed in May 2013 and the draft Common list sent to Brussels.

3.4 Common information sheet

The MS agreed to have a common list for security and evacuation containing information on evacuation plan, crisis network, rally points etc.

3.5. Exchange of information

MS exchange information within the LSC on persons denied visas as well as visa statistics.

4. Challenges in 2013-2014

The challenges in 2013 and most probably in 2014 will be the new state-of-play after the Visa facilitation and Readmission agreements enter into force.

5. Other issues

Partly due to staff constraints, not all Member States regularly attend local Schengen meetings, although there is frequent e-mail contact with most.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO AUSTRALIA

15/05/2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) AUSTRALIA 2012-2013 REPORT⁵

1. Introduction

In Australia there are 23 Schengen countries participating to the LSC Group namely all EU Member States except Luxembourg, the three Baltic States and of course the UK and Ireland. In addition the associated states present in Canberra, Norway and Switzerland are also participating. Until 2012 the LSC and the Consular group were merged and meeting as a group together under the chairmanship of the EU rotating Presidency. Since 2012 the two groups have been separated and the LSC has started to meet as a self standing group under the chair of the EU Delegation.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

In 2012 there were three meetings of the Consular/LSC joint group chaired by the rotating EU Presidency. In addition on 30/10/12 the first meeting of the LSC took place chaired by the EU Delegation. The general attendance was good with the bulk of participants being present. The minutes of the meetings were prepared by the respective chair and shared with all participants. It is our understanding that in general MS share the minutes with their capitals. There are no regular LSC meetings outside the capital Canberra.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS see two problems with the application of the visa code in Australia - Firstly the issue of queue hopping whereby applicants will change their itinerary so that their longest stay (even if only by a few hours) is in the country with the smallest queue. Secondly, the need for biometrics will mean that only certain consuls will be able to issue these visas and this will mean more expense for applicants in having to travel very large distances to get the visa.

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

The MS themselves have not responded to us on this particular issue however, from discussion in the various meetings it seems that a high degree of harmonisation of practices is already acquired.

⁵ April 2012 – March 2013

3.3 Exchange of information

Visa statistics are being collected and compiled on a quarterly basis by the EU Delegation on the basis of information provided by the LSC member countries. The information will be also uploaded on the LSC Group secure AGORA Intranet facilitating compilation of the report and access to information.

Other information is shared on an ad hoc basis.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

One specific initiative taken over the period was to intervene with the Australian Department for Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) following the decision to routinely issue electronic visas only without a label affixed in their passports. This was causing problems for consulates that need to verify the validity of the Australian visa before they can issue a Schengen Visa. Following the Local Schengen Group Meeting on 30th October, the EU Delegation asked for a meeting with DIAC to outline the particular concerns of the Schengen group with regard to issuing Schengen visas to Australian residents. Following the LSC group intervention a system has been put in place which now allows visa applicants to ask DIAC to send a mail to diplomatic missions confirming their residency status in Australia.

4. Challenges

One particular challenge over the 2011-2012 reporting period was to finalise the visa information sheet - this will continue to be a challenge since not all MS see the need for such a sheet

5. Other issues

No other issues at present



24 June 2013

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC)
IN AZERBAIJAN
2012-2013 REPORT⁶**

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 15 diplomatic missions of EU member states accredited to Azerbaijan. Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden 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. There are no LSC consular sections outside Baku.

The following 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).

None of the LSC members are using external service providers for the collection of applications.

LSC meetings are organised on a regular basis since September 2010. They are, as a rule, all held in the premises of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan (EUD) and occasionally held back to back with EU consular meetings. Ad hoc meetings were also organised at the request of MS.

During the reporting period, the negotiations on the Agreements on Visa facilitation and readmission between EU and Azerbaijan and Norway and Azerbaijan were launched and after few rounds of negotiations there is only a small number of provisions still open for discussions. Most likely both packages of the Agreement could be initialled and signed in near future.

⁶ October 2011-May 2013

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

In the reporting period, The LSC meetings were held regularly every 2-3 months. As a result there were 7 regular meetings (27/01; 01/03; 07/05, 19/07, 15/11 2012 and 28/02 and 30/04 2013) in 2012-2013. The meetings are called upon and chaired by the EUD. The LSC meetings are usually well attended, gathering 10 to 12 MS on average. Among the LSC member states accredited to Azerbaijan and seated abroad none attended the LSC meeting. They are nevertheless invited and debriefed on the outcomes of meetings. Bulgaria, Romania and U.K. participated on the meetings upon the common agreement of the LSC participants.

In addition to regular meetings, the EU Delegation also organised an ad-hoc meeting with the consular services of AZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One meeting was organised on the specific subject (Consular protection of EU nationals) by initiative of German Embassy in January 2013.

Meeting agendas, working drafts and agreed drafts of documents drawn up by the EU Delegation have been sent for consultation to all MS before circulating them to Brussels.

The meetings addressed general issues in connection to the application of the Visa Code as well as specific concerns of the participants in connection with local issues. The elaboration of a harmonized list of supporting documents and multiple redrafting occupied major part of all LSC meetings since 2010 and until late autumn of 2012. EUD also debriefed on the state of play on visa facilitation/readmission agreement negotiation. Matters of interest covered the updating of the contact list for LSC consuls, visa statistics, relation with MFA, translation of forms and documents in Azerbaijani, exchange on suspicious applicants, harmonisation of visa fees and fee exemptions, harmonisation of supporting documents, AZ visa practices in particular countries etc.

Some LSC consuls have direct access to the CIRCA extranet (EU Commission collaborative software tool) and can follow uploads prepared by DG Home in JHA section, but majority of consular posts and receive information exclusively from their capitals.

The reporting practice on the LSC meetings did not change from the previous period. Due to the fact that elaboration of a harmonized list of supporting documents dominated all LSC meetings, the main document distributed to MS was a latest version of the document, which was transmitted for consideration and acceptance by the Visa Committee. The EUD distributed comments of the Visa Committee with regard to afore-mention harmonized list issue. 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 discusses meeting conclusions with their own hierarchy in embassies (DHoMs and HoMs meetings) and in capitals.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The process has been handled relatively smoothly and the system is up and running efficiently. 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 on-going working process. Mutual efforts were made a.o. to ensure standardisation of forms, translations and harmonised lists of supporting documents for all major groups of applicants.

The LSC in Azerbaijan has an interest to participate in the trainings recently organised by Frontex in some EUDs for the EUMS consular representatives regarding detection of falsified documents. By initiative of some Schengen MS (NL, FRA), training seminars for LSC consular offices local staff to share experience and good practices of implementation of Visa Code took place. Risk analysis of the Azerbaijani border management indicates that the AZ State Migration Service has good capabilities to discover falsified documents. Schengen MS consulates are sharing the opinion, that AZ is posing low risk of illegal migration from and via Azerbaijan to Schengen area. Compared to 2011, the number of Azerbaijani citizens applied for asylum in the European countries decreased by 12% - from 2299 to 2015. According to the new report of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Azerbaijan ranks the 34th for the number of asylum seekers in Europe and is ranked far beyond other CIS, Eastern Partnership and even South Caucasian countries. The most attractive European countries for asylum seekers from AZ are Germany, France, Sweden and Norway. LSC countries discovered that a big risk of illegal migration related to the large groups of sportsman (over 25 people), participating on some outreach diplomacy events.

The DG Home experts informed the LSC MS that the Handbook for processing of visa applications and Visa Code could be modified. The LSC attendants were notified that DG HOME intends to launch a public consultation on the implementation of the Visa Code in order to gather information from AZ citizens (potential and factual applicants) of the common visa policy, namely individual visa applicants, interest or advocacy groups and professional organisations.

The LSC in Azerbaijan discussed *specific problems related to the implementation of the Visa Code*. Germany, France and Norway were the most frequent interlocutors, as they have the largest number of visas issued in the host country. In addition, exchange of information took place a.o. on issues such as asylum seeker statistics, new system of Azerbaijani e-visas, the treatment of official notes from government bodies in general. Discussions also led to new consuls being fully briefed and trained on the job by colleagues (CH, HU, PL, NOR). The issuing of visas for minors and the consent of parents / legal guardian also differs in practice.

Different approaches continue to be applied for the booking of meeting time in *Schengen consulates*. In general, it is easy to get appointments in a major number of consular posts with some minor exceptions due to (a) large nr of applications at FRA, DE consular posts (b) some peaks prior to local public holidays.

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

During reporting period, The LSC in Azerbaijan took inspiration from templates (already approved lists for other countries) and elaborated own versions of harmonized lists (4 drafts) of supporting documents with comments of LSC MS, which were submitted to DG Home for onward communication to Visa Committee meetings (29/11 2001, 14/02; 30/5 and 05/11 2012 and 26/03 2013). The MS discussed the issues of "*proof of will of return*"; travels of third country nationals with valid residents' permits of AZ; list of particular official documents related to applicant's family member status. LSC accommodated all principal proposals and recommendations made by DG Home and Visa Committee. Finally, Visa Committee came to conclusions (05/11/12) that pre-approved draft of the harmonized list (with small modifications proposed) should be used by local LSC consulates in daily practice. Once the negotiated Visa Facilitation Agreement (VFA) will be signed and becomes applicable, the final version of list will be formally adopted by Commission. MS discussed an option to start immediately an implementation of the pre-approved list of supporting documents, but they reached consensus that use of draft will create unpredictable legal consequences and unanimously refused to accept this particular suggestion of the Visa Committee. However, MS feel a general need for harmonisation of supporting documents and their practices in this regard, because different approaches create space for visa shopping and put Schengen states consuls in a vulnerable position. MS are looking for a COM Implementing Decision once VFA will become applicable.

3.3 Exchange of information

Monthly Statistics

Statistics, in line with requested format, are provided regularly to the EUD on a monthly or quarterly basis. EUD then compiles these statistics into an annual overview. Some embassies with limited number of applicants provide the information regularly. Others with more applications per month, such as FR or IT, have to extract the information needed from their own electronic systems. The process takes time and data are not always readily available. All however endeavoured (and succeeded) in providing data at regular intervals over the last months.

Anti-fraud activities

Over the last years, a system of information exchange between MS has been established. 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 reported during the reporting period (falsified supporting documents). This led to more attention being paid to specific applications and cautious exercised vis-à-vis some supporting documents. Third country nationals (mostly Pakistani and Bangladeshis) visited few consulates to find the weakest points in the system, but never returned back. The issue of falsified regular income papers was discussed and the attention of the MS was drawn to the matter.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other authorised institutions has been issuing several thousands of diplomatic and service passports. DG Home forwarded official requests to MFA to provide detailed information, legal basis, statistics about diplomatic passport system, but official letters were unanswered. EUD raised this issue with contact persons from MFA, but received no official feedback. The issue is a pressing one as Azerbaijan is interested in promoting visa free regime also for service passport holders with as many Schengen (mostly EU MS) countries as possible. In the time of negotiations of VFA/RA all other bilateral negotiations on this matter were suspended due to valid mandate of COM negotiating team. The matter have been discussed in the context of the Visa Facilitation/Readmission Agreements with the EU (COM) and Norway. AZ Delegation demanded that DG Home will incorporate in VFA body political declaration insisting MS continue bilateral talks on visa free regime for service passport holders.

Unofficial visits of officials and misuse of ex officio position for issuing Note Verbal were another topics discussed on LSC meetings. The Consular Department of MFA proposed to accept NV for official visits only initialled by the Director of Consular Department.

Several approaches are still presented *regarding Schengen travel medical insurance* (TMI). All MS required having the TMI valid throughout the period of the visa validity. Austria requested the special athletic insurance for the sport and sporting events, informing the applicant or whole team that the specific insurance police provides not only "*general and accident medical coverage*", which offers also *participant liability* referred as additional coverage for injury and/or occurrences for the camp/event participants/volunteers/spectators as well as coaches and staff. MS reported no problems in cooperation with the local insurance companies due to the fact that policies in AZ correspond to the requirements of the Visa Code.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

EUD proposed to continue with regular meetings with Azerbaijani MFA Consular Department staff. One informal meeting with AZ colleagues was organised in reporting period. Contribution of the LSC to visa facilitation/readmission negotiation and exchange of views with negotiating team after negotiations rounds were very beneficial for all sides.

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.

Migration and Mobility partnership

The EU-Azerbaijan Dialogue on mobility partnership has been promoted by EUD and recently AZ agreed to start formal talks on mobility and legal migration cooperation issues (March 2013).

4. Challenges

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

- Harmonisation of lists of supporting documents – prepare and start implementation.
- Effort towards upgrading the mechanism to address suspected cases of visa fraud or migration alerts.
- Continuous exchange in matters of relevance to the LSC consuls to ensure standardisation of practices.
- Establishment of a common information sheet, as per guidelines, and Local Schengen Manual that would serve as country introduction for new consular staff/ new MS.
- Enhance cooperation between consular offices through exchange of personal/on the job training.
- Organise training sessions in Baku with participation of competent Commission DG and MS experts on LSC issues.

5. Other issues

Visa application centres: IOM made the presentation of regional visa centres as external service providers, which could process visa applications outside Baku and in the Nakchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan. MS took information into consideration. The AZ Government refused to discuss this topic prior to adaptation of a new Migration Law Code (*adopted by Parliament after third reading on 14/06/2013*).



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) MINSK (BELARUS) 2012-2013 REPORT⁷

1. Introduction

Ten Schengen Member states deliver visas (Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia) out of twelve (+ Finland and Switzerland) present in Minsk. Bulgaria, Romania and the United Kingdom are also present and deliver visas. Swedish diplomatic and consular staff were de facto expelled from Belarus at the end of August 2012. As representation is concerned, please note the following:

- Estonia represents Finland and Sweden;
- France represents Iceland, Norway, Portugal and Spain;
- Germany represents Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Slovenia;
- Hungary represents Switzerland;
- Italy represents Malta;
- Latvia represents France and Poland in Vitebsk consular district;
- Lithuania represents Greece; Lithuania also represents Estonia in Grodno (Grodno and Brest regions).

The MS work towards the full implementation of the Council conclusions of 23 March 2012 on Belarus.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

During the reporting period (past 12 months), there have been five LSC meetings (April, June, September, December 2012 and February 2013).

Attendance: the meetings are generally very well attended; between 8 and 10 MS were always present in the meetings.

As previously, EUDEL is organising and chairing these meetings in its premises. BG, RO and UK are always invited to the meetings. EUDEL draws up the meetings' minutes and disseminates by ACID first draft among LSC members for comments before their final adoption. Also, EUDEL asks MS for input to the meetings' agenda before each meeting. Some MS send the minutes of the meetings to their capitals.

The four MS consulates generals outside Minsk are fully informed about the LSC meetings via e-mail (receive meetings' agenda, minutes, questions by one MS to other MS, etc.).

⁷ April 2012 – March 2013

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS and EUDEL are used to work on the implementation of the Visa Code, and discussions in the meetings are professional and focussed. The tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code are well understood and taken seriously. EUDEL sent questions on the implementation of the Visa Code and the answers were collected in a table agreed by all.

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

The last draft list is under review in the Visa Committee. The LSC is waiting for a decision to be taken in Brussels.

3.3 Exchange of information

LSC members exchange visa statistics on a monthly basis (coordinated by EUDEL). They also use e-mailing when trying to investigate any questions concerning cooperation with certain travel agencies, cases of fraud or any other issues related to visas activity.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Following the table on the implementation of the Visa code and the last statistics that show some differences in their approach towards Belarusians and in their practices, LSC members have decided to launch a review of the way and to whom multiple-entrance visas are issued, with an aim to harmonise.

4. Challenges

1. Response to challenges listed in previous report:

The LSC has completed the work on the harmonised list of supporting documents (art. 14 and 48(1)a), but has not been able to harmonise completely the application of visa fee waiver (art. 16(5) and (6)).

As mentioned above, the LSC has faced the challenges regarding the implementation of the Visa code, particularly articles 9 (2) and (3), 10, 23 and 24(2) and established a table on the practices that shows some differences. At this stage further harmonisation seems difficult.

2. Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2013-2014):

- 24(2): Facilitation of issuing multiple-entry, long-term visa
- Maximal use of flexibility of the VC regarding visa fee waiver and visa fee reduction
- Common criteria (art. 48(1)(b)) (visa fee waiver and translation of application form)
- Fraud issues and training



UNION EUROPEENNE

DELEGATION EN REPUBLIQUE DU BENIN

30/05/2013

COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) BENIN RAPPORT⁸ 2012-2013

1. Introduction

Au Bénin, cinq Etats Schengen ont des représentations diplomatiques habilitées à délivrer des visas : l'Allemagne, la Belgique, le Danemark, la France et les Pays Bas.

En outre, par accords particuliers bilatéraux signés entre les pays :

- la Belgique représente le Luxembourg (long séjour) et la Suisse (court séjour);
- la France représente l'Autriche, l'Espagne, l'Estonie, la Grèce, la Hongrie, l'Italie, la Lituanie, Malte, le Portugal et la République tchèque ;
- les Pays Bas représentent le Luxembourg (court séjour) et la Finlande.

Aucun visa Schengen ne peut être délivré à Cotonou pour la Lettonie, le Liechtenstein, la Pologne et la Slovaquie. Il faut s'adresser à leur représentation diplomatique dans un autre pays.

En nombre de demandes traitées, la France traite environ **11.500** demandes /an, la Belgique environ 2.000 (2012) avec une augmentation de 20% expliquée en partie par la représentation de la Suisse, l'Allemagne environ 1.000, les Pays Bas 600 et le Danemark 700.

Le consulat de France a mis en marche depuis le 15 mars 2012, un système de gestion des rendez-vous par téléphone avec un service payant de 5.000 FCFA (=7,62€) assuré par un prestataire de services. Le constat général est que le service améliore la qualité de prestations et réduit les "traditionnelles" queues au consulat. Les services consulaires restants font tout le processus eux-mêmes.

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2012-2013

En janvier 2013 le groupe LSC Bénin, s'est constitué comme tel (précédemment, ce groupe était nommé Groupe affaires consulaires). La Suisse est désormais aussi invitée (même si au Bénin la Suisse n'octroie pas de visas).

⁸ Avril 2012 – Mars 2013

Les réunions qui étaient à caractère semestrielle, sont devenues désormais bimensuelles. Pendant la période Avril 2012-Avril 2013, quatre réunions ont eu lieu (deux en 2012: mai et novembre et deux en 2013: mars et avril sur le nouveau format).

Les 5 EM participent activement ainsi que la Délégation par le point focal nommé par le Chef de la Délégation depuis mars 2010.

Jusqu'à la création de ce nouveau groupe spécifique Local Schengen Coopération en janvier 2013, la présidence était assurée par la France et la DUE officiait le rôle du secrétariat, partageait les compte rendus et compilait les statistiques.

Depuis janvier 2013, la Délégation de l'UE assume la présidence et le secrétariat du groupe LSC au Bénin et le groupe se réunit de façon bimensuelle. La Suisse est désormais invitée aux réunions du groupe LSC. Chaque EM rapporte à son siège directement.

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

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Les EM présentes au Bénin appliquent le code des Visas en accord avec les instructions reçus par leurs sièges. Les 5 EM ont démarré comme prévu le VIS au 14 mars 2013, sachant qu'à l'exception des Pays Bas, les autres EM utilisaient déjà la biométrie pour les visas (France et Belgique) ou pour la délivrance des passeports (Allemagne et Danemark), donc la mise en place du VIS s'est bien déroulée dans l'ensemble.

Bien que le taux pour le visa Schengen soit le même pour les 5 EM (60€), la Belgique applique un taux de change inférieure à celui appliqué par les autres pays, ce qui suppose une différence d'environ 60 centimes d'euro par visa. La représentation belge ne peut pas changer la disposition car elle est appliquée au niveau de Bruxelles.

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

- Les différents documents admis par des EM non représentés dans le pays et qui sont représentés par l'un des 5 EM, entraînent quelque fois des problèmes et retards.
- L'augmentation dans la fraude documentaire qui est observée depuis quelques mois, des faux dossiers de plus en plus performants, touchant en particulier des fausses déclarations d'importation et des relevés bancaires. Les réunions LSC servent aussi de cadre d'échange d'informations, des pratiques communes et des discussions sur des dossiers frauduleux.

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

Les travaux d'harmonisation de la liste de documents justificatifs sont terminés et appliqués par les 5 EM. Les différents EM publient les documents sur les sites webs. Des questions subsistent sur le besoin de mieux connaître les documents administratifs des pays qui sont représentés par les EM présents au Bénin, car les documents arrivent dans la langue du pays représenté et il n'existe pas un vademecum reprenant la liste de documents officiels de tous les pays (attestation d'accueil, ou de prise en charge, lettre d'invitation, documents bancaires...) ce qui faciliterait la tâche des consulats qui délivrent des visas en représentation.

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 en mettant systématiquement en copie la DUE.

Dans les réunions, les cas de fraudes sont mentionnés et parfois aussi présentés. L'ancienne périodicité semestrielle des réunions faisait que la communication par mail entre les responsables était plus utilisée pour l'échange d'informations spécifiques ou générales.

Actuellement avec la nouvelle réunion bimensuelle, cet échange est plus vif.

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Dans le cadre de la mise en place du nouveau système VIS, une conférence de presse commune entre la DUE et les 5 Etats Membres a été organisée le 11 mars 2013 afin d'informer le grand public des nouveautés du système. Cette conférence de presse a été longuement médiatisée par la presse béninoise.

4. Défis pour 2012-2013

Les défis identifiés dans le précédent rapport étaient:

- l'absence d'un système informatique commun aux consulats
- L'augmentation importante des cas de fraude documentaire
- Le manque de connaissance des procédures des pays qui sont représentés par les 5 consulats en place. L'absence d'un vadémécum par pays des documents qui peuvent servir pour délivrer le visa (attestation d'accueil, ou de prise en charge, lettre d'invitation, documents bancaires...)
- Absence de retour sur les demandeurs qui restent sur place. Les pays du nord ne sont pas inquiets car d'habitude les immigrés décident d'aller plutôt dans les pays du sud... donc il y a une absence de contrôle réel.
- Pays-Bas: A partir de janvier 2014 les demandes de visas introduites à l'Ambassade à Cotonou seront envoyées pour décision au « Regional Support Office » à Accra. Les dossiers seront temporairement envoyés et retournés par DHL, ce qui allongera le délai de traitement des dossiers à deux semaines, en attendant la mise en place d'un système permettant d'introduire une demande de visa à Cotonou et de prendre une décision à Accra par accès direct au même système informatique

A ce jour, la mise en place du VIS répond au premier défi et contribue aussi à lutter contre les cas de fraude documentaire, mais des mesures complémentaires sont en cours (discussions avec les banques de la place pour lutter contre les faux relevés de comptes bancaires, échange d'informations sur les dossiers avec les autres EM ainsi qu'avec des organisations comme le conseil des importateurs...).

Les trois autres défis sont toujours d'actualité et à ceux-ci il faut aussi ajouter:

L'efficacité dans l'utilisation du système VIS qui met plus de temps dans le cas de certains EM (moyenne de 30', contre 2-3' auparavant).

- Un autre défi pour certains EM est le délai de réponse dans les consultations par certains pays tiers (pour les demandes de visa des citoyens Libanais et Nigériens ...).



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN BOLIVIA

La Paz, 30 May 2013

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COORDINATION (LSC)
IN LA PAZ, BOLIVIA
2012-2013 REPORT**

1. Introduction

The Local Schengen Coordination meetings are held back-to-back with the Consular meetings every other month and take place at the EU Delegation. Nine MS are represented in La Paz, but six participate in the meetings: Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. The UK, as non-Schengen, participates upon invitation; Belgium has a cooperation office in Bolivia but no Embassy, and Sweden doesn't have a consular section. In addition, Switzerland actively participated in all meetings so far, but the decision to close the Swiss Consular Section in Bolivia as of 2013 has reduced the group's size not only in quantity, but also in quality.

The meetings are called by the EU Delegation.

Honorary Consuls are invited to take part in the meetings only when security issues are discussed with the EU Group on Security. This takes place every six months.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Five local Schengen Coordination meetings were held in La Paz between April 2012 and March 2013. They were all well attended. The meetings are chaired by the EU Delegation (by the Head of the Political, Commercial and Press /Communication Section) for the Schengen part, by the MS assuming the Presidency for the Consular part.

Minutes of the meeting are taken by the EU Delegation for the Schengen coordination, by the Council Presidency for the Consular issues.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The Member States present in Bolivia implement the Visa Code in compliance with instructions from the capitals. This situation may lead to some differences on a number of issues like the exchange rate used for visa fees which can vary among Member States. Other matters of coordination emerging from the implementation of the Visa Code include:

- collecting biometric data: Only a few Member States use the biometric system. There is no harmonized approach to collecting the biometric data and the computer applications used differ from MS to MS.
- Invitation letters: some MS do mention the dates of stay of the traveller, some don't. The inviting host is responsible for the traveller; this concept varies from MS to MS.
- Proof of financial resources: the minimum required varies, possibly resulting in visa shopping.
- Interviews of travellers: they are done at different moments and with different contents according to MS

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

The harmonization of the list of supporting documents is recognised as a major issue and was the subject of several discussions until consensus was reached to start a working group in order to build up a harmonized list of supporting documents. The working group is still active and progress has been made in designing the list, but further work is needed in order to produce a final document.

3.3 Exchange of information

Visa fees

The group regularly exchanges information on the visa fees charged to try to avoid visa shopping.

Visa requests rejected

The MS and Switzerland regularly circulate the list of visa requests they have rejected every month.

Falsification attempts

The MS and Switzerland inform each other of cases and types of forgery related to Schengen issues. The most common types of falsifications experienced in Bolivia are: fake institutions or fake companies, forged bank statements.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Outsourcing is being used with success for the Schengen visas for the first time in Bolivia by the Spanish Embassy, who also represents Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Lithuania, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, and Portugal. Denmark and Italy are in turn considering using the same outsourcing service as Spain.

4. Challenges in 2012-2013

- The completion of the task of harmonizing the list of supporting documents will remain an important challenge for the year ahead.
- Roll out of the Visa Information System. Bolivia is part of the 8th region that will implement the system as of September 2013. Member States present in Bolivia will be ready, but will the region as a whole be ready?
- last year's proposal to create an intranet common to all Schengen member countries for best practice on Schengen and consular issues remains valid. This goes beyond the LSC.

5. Other issues

No other issue to report upon.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Head of Delegation

Sarajevo, 9 April 2013
DELBIH/ADL/ETO D(2013)

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) - BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

1. Introduction

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

There are 16 Schengen States' diplomatic missions present in Bosnia and Herzegovina [Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), France (FR), Italy (IT), Hungary (HU), Netherlands (NL), Poland (PL), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Sweden (SE), Norway (NO), Switzerland (CH)]. ES covers visa issues for citizens travelling to Portugal (PT). The consular section of NL covers Luxembourg (LU) and BE in terms of visas, while the consular section of HU covers Latvia (LT) and Estonia (EE), AT covers Malta (MT), SE covers Denmark (DK) and CH covers Liechtenstein. Even though Romania (RO) and Bulgaria (BG) are not yet part of the Schengen area, those countries have consular sections in Bosnia and Herzegovina and are invited to the LSC meetings⁹.

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

The year of 2012 was the second year when citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina could travel visa free to Schengen area and BU and RO. The visa free regime is only for citizens which are holders of a BiH biometric passport. During the first year of visa free regime, most of the visa applicants were citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had not yet changed their passports to a biometric one. However, with less and less old passports in circulation, the main category of visa applicants are third country nationals. Most of the third country nationals are Turks and Chinese, with temporary or permanent residence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, there are a number of diplomats or holders of service passports from Saudi Arabia, Liberia and Iran. The number of visa applicants has continued to drop. In 2012, there were 1,325 citizens who applied for a short stay visa [C] and 1,228 visas were issued, compared to 2,161 who applied for a short stay visa in 2011 and 1,900 visas were issued. These figures could further be compared with the 2010 figures (before visa free regime) when 102,234 citizens applied for a short stay visa [C] and 80,371 were issued.

⁹ 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.

2. LSC meetings held in 2011

During 2012, EUD chaired four regular Local Schengen Cooperation meetings (16 February, 31 May, 04 October and 13 December). The number of meetings have slightly decreased, mainly due to that most of the tasks from the Visa Code has been implemented. The two main topics throughout the year were: i) the implementation of the Visa Code and ii) Post Visa Liberalisation Monitoring Mechanism (PVLMM). In the absence of Local Consular Protection (LCP) meetings throughout 2012 and due to the fact that many of the representatives of the EU Member States / Schengen States cover both LSC and LCP, issues linked to consular protection has been raised under AoB in the LSC meetings. The key issues linked to LCP which were discussed are mentioned under heading 5 - other issues discussed.

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 ELARG]. CH, HU, NO, RO, SE and SI share the minutes of the LSC meetings with the Capitals, while CZ, EE, ES, NL and PL report to the Capitals on certain issues. NL further shares the minutes with BE. PL also prepares its own quarterly report on LSC to the Capital. AT, 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. UK share LCP issues with the UK Consular Office in Zagreb.

3. Visa Code

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

3.1 Harmonisation of visa fee

The issue was dealt with during 2010 and even though some Schengen states ask for 1, 50 BAM more in order to avoid returning coins, it is not considered that the visa fees would encourage citizens to go “visa shopping”.

3.2 Harmonisation of visa waivers

The Schengen States have always been generous on applying visa waivers for citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina in accordance with the Visa Facilitation Agreement. However, it shall be stressed that the number of visas applied for by citizens from BiH is insignificant.

3.3 Common list of BiH health insurance companies

Article 15 of the Visa Code says that health insurance shall be valid for all the EU MS and shall be valid for the entire period of stay. Some of the issued health insurance does not stipulate for which countries there are valid, others does not spell out the premium rate, which should be 30,000 EUR. Review of the common list of BiH health insurance companies is underway.

3.4 Harmonisation of a list of supporting documents

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

3.5 Common information sheet

Common information sheet has been drawn up by each consular section that is present in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3.6 Visa statistics

EU Delegation is collecting visa statistics from all the Schengen states. BG and RO also share statistics with the EU Delegation on a monthly basis. The table prepared by DG HOME, which asks for statistical information on visa A and C and LTV, is used.

The table below shows the situation among the Schengen States month per month on visas applied for and issued in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During 2012, none of the Schengen states based in Bosnia and Herzegovina have had any applicants for visa A. The average of a short stay visa [C] applied for is 110 per month, while the average of 102 short stay visas is issued per month. Out of the issued visas, 64 were multi-entry short stay visas. June (247) was the month when most short stay visas were applied for, while January (64) was the month when least short stay visas were applied for. Overall 6, 3 percent of all short stay visas applied for were rejected. In total, there were 34 LTV issued during 2012.

Visa statistics in BiH during 2012 (month per month)

Month 2012	A visas	C visas applied for	C visas issued	Multiple-entry C visas issued	LTV issued	C visas not issued
January	0	64	64	46	0	1
February	0	112	76	56	3	36
March	0	102	83	61	2	19
April	0	116	114	78	3	2
May	0	92	84	52	5	1
June	0	247	239	104	3	4
July	0	134	130	62	6	5
August	0	65	63	34	0	6
September	0	81	80	62	0	0
October	0	132	123	79	0	3
November	0	114	108	89	1	6
December	0	66	64	50	11	0
Total	0	1325	1228	773	34	83

Visa statistics in BiH during 2010, 2011 and 2012 (per Schengen state)

Please see annex A, which table shows short stay visas [C] applied for and issued as well as multiple-entry C visas issued and the refusal rate. The table compares the statistical data for 2010, 2011 and 2012.

As the drop of short stay visas were significant following the entering into force of the visa free regime and the table shows that the number of visas applied for and issued has continued to decrease throughout 2012.

While, 1,325 citizens applied for a short stay visa [C] out 1,228 visas were issued in 2012, 2,161 citizens applied for a short stay visa [C] out of 1,900 visas were issued in 2011. These figures could be further compared with 2010 figures which showed that 102,234 citizens applied for a short stay visa [C], out of 80,371 visas were issued.

The average refusal rate has increased to 4.66 percent in 2012 compared with 3.12 percent in 2011. The year before the visa free regime entered into force, the average refusal rate was 3.85 percent.

4. Post Visa Liberalisation Monitoring Mechanism (PVLMM)

4.1 Awareness of visa free regime

Since the start of comprehensive BiH / EU awareness campaign in December 2010, BiH-EU has continued with smaller scale awareness campaign aiming that citizens' of BiH is aware of the rights and obligations which go with the visa free regime. The police administrations have continued distributing leaflets informing the citizens of the visa free regime when citizens pick up their biometric passports. The competent minister appears in media on the subject and has also carried out targeted campaign in some of the areas from where many BiH citizens left to seek asylum in Schengen. Further, the EU delegation as well as Member States answered questions in media in regard to issues linked to BiH asylum seekers in Schengen, on visa free regime put at risk and the ongoing discussion in the Council and European Parliament on the introduction of a suspension clause of the visa free regime.

4.2 Asylum seekers

Even though the great majority of the citizens travelling to Schengen are bona fide travelers, some are abusing the visa free regime, by applying for asylum in the Schengen States. In complement to the FRONTEX reports, the participants in the LSC meetings are exchanging statistics of asylum seekers from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During 2012 there was an increase of asylum seekers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in Germany and Sweden, but also to some extent in Switzerland and Luxembourg. Belgium was the only country where the number of BiH asylum seekers decreased compared to last year.

In **Germany**, 2,025 BiH citizens claimed asylum during 2012, which is an increase of 564 percent compared to last year. In **Sweden**, 1,551 BiH citizens applied for asylum during 2012, which is 57 percent more than in 2011. The number of asylum requests in **Switzerland** in 2012 was 463, which is an increase of 99 percent compared with the figures from 2011. Another 257 citizens from BiH applied for asylum in **Luxembourg**, which is an increase of 351 percent compared to 2011. In **Belgium**, 136 citizens from BiH applied for asylum which is a decrease of 52 percent compared with the number from 2011.

In total 4,432 BiH citizens applied for asylum in the top five Member States and Schengen Associated Countries in 2012, which is an increase of 136 percent compared to the figures presented in 2011.

The return of those asylum seekers which received a negative decision is ongoing. While most of the return is voluntary, there are also a number of forced returns. Most of the EU MS is applying the return directive and provide the returned and unfounded asylum seekers with a ban to enter Schengen for a period of 2-5 years. EU MS counsellor offices have paid attention to an increase of BiH citizens asking whether they are in the Schengen Information System (SIS). The reason for this could be that many of the BiH asylum seekers which have been deported during 2012 have received a SIS ban.

4.3 Travel documents

There are two passports in circulation; i) old passports, valid until 15 October 2014 and ii) biometric passports, which were introduced from 15 October 2009. The visa free regime is applied only for holders of biometric passports. In March 2013, there were 1.408.745 biometric passports issued in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 156.402 old type passports still in circulation. Comparing these figures with last years figures, it can be noted that the total number of passports in circulation has increased with 38.679. The total figure means that 46 percent of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have a valid BiH passport. It shall be noticed that many BiH citizens residing in BiH have double citizenship and therefore have access to a Croatian, Serbian or other EU Member State passport, which means that much more than 46 percent of the citizens of BiH are holders of a valid travel document.

Bosnia and Herzegovina introduced Extended Access Control in line with EC Directive on 1 June 2010. Biometric passports issued since include better digital certificates and special protection of fingerprints compared to previous generations of biometric passports.

The BiH ID cards are in line with ICAO standards and is currently used as a travel document to i) Croatia, ii) Montenegro and iii) Serbia. A new generation of ID cards started to be issued on 1 March 2013. The new BiH ID card harmonises the biometric elements with the BiH biometric passports and include i) Basic Access Control, BAC (BAC is a mechanism specified to ensure only authorised parties can wirelessly read personal information) and ii) Extended Access Control, EAC (EAC allows authorised inspection systems to read sensitive biometric data such as fingerprints). The new ID cards also include a digital profile. The ID card has optional qualified electronic signature (signature in relation to data in electronic form treated in the same manner as a hand-written signature in relation to paper-based data). In addition, it includes optional stipulation of blood group and entity citizenship. The current ID cards will be valid until the expiring date stipulated at the card. However, more than 700,000 BiH citizens' ID cards will expire in 2013 and another 1,750,000 in 2014, which means that more than half of the BiH citizens are to change their ID cards in the next two years to come.

Croatia launched an official request to the Irish EU Presidency on 6 March 2013, asking to continue its current border regime with Bosnia and Herzegovina where citizens can travel with ID card only across the border following Croatia's accession. As the current regime is not in line with Schengen border code where you have to stamp the travel document on entry/exit, EU Member States would need to give its political consensus to the request. Discussions are currently ongoing and a decision is likely to be taken in the Council in June 2013.

5. Other issues discussed

5.1 "Statement of Impunity" issued by the RS Ministry of Interior does not contain the name of the country

It was noted in the beginning of 2012 that RS ministry of Interior issued "Statement of Impunity" only including RS Ministry of Interior logo, without mentioning Bosnia and Herzegovina. As these documents are used as supporting document for the residence permits application in Schengen, the document shall stipulate the name of the country. The issue was raised with the RS Ministry of Interior and ever since, the situation has improved.

5.2 New decision on visas adopted by the BiH Council of Ministers

5.2.1 BiH visas for holders of Kosovo passports

Since 2009, the BiH Council of Ministers has taken decisions on granting visas for individual requests from citizens of Kosovo. On 20 June 2012, the BiH Council of Ministers adopted a new decision on visas, making the Ministry of Foreign Affairs competent for issuing BiH visas for holders of Kosovo passports. Holders of Kosovo passports can now file a visa application for a BiH visa in any Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Apart from necessary supporting documents, the applicants need an invitation letter stamped by the Service for Foreigner's Affairs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is competent for the final decision on the visa application. If the visa is granted, the visa will be issued on a specific piece of paper instead of pasting it in the Kosovo passport.

5.2.2 Visa exemption to BiH for third country citizens from 67 countries

The same visa decision also foresees visa free entering to BiH of third country citizens from 67 countries, providing that they have a valid Schengen visa or a residence in a Schengen country. The visa exemption is only valid for 7 days, but should facilitate short term visa for persons of third country national to engage in sport, culture and business events.

5.2.3 BiH introduced visa free regime with Taiwan

The decision also includes visa free regime with Taiwan, which further harmonises the BiH list of countries with the visa free regime with the list of Schengen countries.

Due to absence of Local Consular Protection Coordination meeting during 2012, the Local Schengen Cooperation forum also discussed a number of LCP issues raised under AOB in the regular LSC meetings. Following issues were raised:

5.3 Issuance of police reports

The number of EU MS tourists has increased over the past years and so has the consular protection issues linked to citizens of EU MS. Common consular protection issues, such as thefts, car accidents, burglary etc. are issues linked to the BiH police authorities. The police in BiH are not equipped with language skills and therefore the EU MS consular personnel needs to intervene to get the police reports right. Another issue is that it takes too long time for the competent police commissioner to sign and release police reports, which often lead to that the EU citizens, has to change his/her travel plans.

Even though NL and EU delegation on behalf of the LCP group followed up with the Police Commissioner of the Sarajevo Canton, the issue shall be followed up also with the Federation Police Commissioner in order for him to raise it in one of the coordination meetings with all Cantonal police units. The RS police seem to be less of an issue for the time being.

5.4 Confiscation of citizens of EU MS passport/ID card

During the summer of 2012, there have been a number of confiscated EU MS passports and Identity Cards by the BiH border police. The main reason for this seems to be EU MS tourists who in the past have reported their travel document as lost/stolen and later on found the documents and used it for travel. However, once reported lost/stolen, the information is shared with Interpol, whereby BiH border police reacts. EU delegation invited BiH border police to one of the LSC meetings to present the legal base and procedure used when BiH border police confiscate travel documents of EU MS citizens at border crossing points. Readout of the presented rules can be found in the minutes from LSC meeting held on 13 December 2012.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO BRAZIL

Brasilia 11 April 2013

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Brasilia/BRAZIL
2012-2013 REPORT¹⁰**

1. Introduction

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

1. Austria (also issuing Schengen visas on behalf of Malta)
2. Belgium (also representing Luxemburg in consular issues; there is no consular department at the Embassy in Brasilia, so Schengen issues are dealt with by the General Consulates of BE in Sao Paulo)
3. Bulgaria
4. Cyprus (Cyprus Embassy representative participates in the LSC meetings, although Cyprus does not issue Schengen visas - not a member yet)
5. Czech Republic
6. Denmark (all visas for Denmark are issued by Norway)
7. Finland (short-stay visas for Finland are issued by Norway)
8. France
9. Germany (due to limited consular department at the Embassy in Brasilia, all visa and passport issues are dealt with by the General Consulates of DE in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Porto Alegre and Recife).
10. Greece
11. Hungary
12. Italy
13. Netherlands
14. Poland (holds representation for Latvia at the Consulate general in São Paulo)
15. Portugal (also issuing Schengen visas on behalf of Slovenia)
16. Romania
17. Slovakia
18. Slovenia
19. Spain
20. Sweden (short-stay visas for Sweden are issued by Norway)
21. Norway (also representing Sweden and Finland for short-stay visas and Denmark for all the visa related issues)
22. Switzerland

As of December 2011, the Embassy of Croatia in Brazil was invited to participate in the LSC group, but until now its representative did not attend any LSC meeting.

Due to the large size of Brazil and very limited resources of the EU DEL, it is impossible to coordinate the LSC in the whole country and in all the cities where MS have their consular representations (Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre, Recife, Curitiba, Salvador, Belem, Fortaleza and Belo Horizonte). In the reporting period the EU Delegation had no specific contact with any other LSC group (São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro).

2. LSC meetings held in 2011-2012

During the reporting period (March 2012 – April 2013) the scheduled EU Schengen meetings were held in Brasilia on: October, 18th 2012 and April, 10th 2013

The LSC meetings normally take place at the EU delegation in Brasilia, are very well attended and are chaired by the EU Delegation. Minutes are drafted by the chair. Some MS draft their own minutes to their capitals. During the reporting period, there were no requests for any LSC meetings outside the capital (i.e. Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo).

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Due to bilateral (and now EU) visa waiver agreements, visa related problems do not constitute a major issue in local consular work. The launching of a programme for BR students to study abroad has created a sudden building up of student visa requests, often at last minute. Many problems are caused by the very late response that is given to students regarding the attribution of the grant, which is made worse with the mismatch between university calendars in BR and EU; the fact that students have poor information and are left on their own to sort out their situation. The fact that travel agencies don't issue reservations and the students need to purchase the tickets immediately causes extra pressure on the visa delivery times. The requirement for collecting biometric details, which will further complicate things for applicants, as they will have to travel to (further/ fewer) Embassies/ Consulates to deal with this

MS 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 local currency. The differences in fees not being significant they don't lead to visa shopping.

The issue of treatment of EU nationals entering Brazil regularly is the object of criticisms towards BR authorities. ES complains of the discriminatory treatment that has been receiving with the reciprocity that BR applies on ES citizens. Specific cases of questionable refusals upon arrival in Brazil and a lack of knowledge regarding diplomatic and service passports were also raised. Often these would occur for a clear lack of training of immigration officers.

BR authorities failed to comply with the VWA in the first days of its entry into force. Cases of Latvian and Cypriot tourists that were refused entrance caused a diplomatic stir. The EU Del contacted the relevant services and in a few days the situation was solved.

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

Regular calls for exchange of information on supporting documents (and visa fees) were launched by the EU Delegation in the past, but with mitigated results. EU Del has prepared and distributed an overview table and compilation of the information available in MS websites regarding the requirements for admission. This highlights the disparity in different countries of requirements needed to justify the purpose of the trip, duration, means of subsistence and accommodation. No MS has shown interest in harmonising the list of supporting documents. EUDel could advertise in its website a link to MS websites, encouraging BR tourists to consult the specific requirements of the port of disembark and/or final destination, when in transit. Proposals for other publicity measures such as information sheets, contacts with travel agencies were well received but there were no volunteers to help implementing them.

3.3 Exchange of information

The exchange of information within the LSC group is working well. Almost all the MS maintain regular working contacts (also due to their close cooperation in consular issues, outside the Schengen topics, like the situation of European prisoners in Brazil). Statistics are exchanged on an ad hoc basis and the flow of information between Embassies and Consulates is not always ideal.

Poland is compiling a list of travel documents issued by BR and has available a specimen of every document except "safe-conduct" and "seaman's book". The updated table on all the consular offices of the EU MS in Brazil was also shared with the MS..

4. Challenges in 2013-2014

1. Harmonisation of the list of supporting documents.
2. Preparation of a common information sheet for Schengen visa applicants.
3. Encouraging bigger engagement of MS in Local Schengen Cooperation in Brasilia and outside the capital.

5. Other issues

None

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 DE L'UNION EUROPEENNE AU BURKINA FASO

24/ 05/ 2012

**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) *Ouagadougou*
RAPPORT¹¹ 2012-2013**

1. Introduction

6 Etats membres UE/Schengen étaient présents au Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou) jusqu'au Septembre 2012 avec une ambassade, un consulat ou une agence consulaire qui traitent les demandes de visas: France, Belgique, Allemagne, Danemark, Pays-Bas et Suisse (agence consulaire). Aux réunions LSC participent également parfois les représentants des Chargés d'Affaires du Luxembourg et de la Suède et du Bureau de Coopération de l'Autriche.

L'ambassade des Pays-Bas vient de fermer le 1^{er} juin 2013 et le traitement de demandes des visas pour les Pays-Bas à été repris par l'Ambassade de Belgique déjà depuis octobre 2012.

Les accords de représentation en matière consulaire sont les suivants:

- La France représente l'Autriche, l'Espagne, l'Estonie, la Grèce, l'Italie, Malte, le Portugal et la République Tchèque.
- Le Danemark représente la Suède, la Slovénie (pour les demandes Bona Fide), la Norvège et l'Islande. Des négociations sont en cour avec la Pologne.
- La Belgique représente le Luxembourg, la Hongrie, la Finlande, et (depuis octobre 2012) les Pays-Bas. Depuis le 1^{er} juin 2013 l'ambassade de Belgique représente également la Suisse pour la délivrance de certains visas Schengen de court séjour. (Les demandeurs de visa Schengen pour la Suisse ne seront plus contraints de se rendre à Abidjan!).

Au niveau du volume de traitement des Visas Schengen, le Consulat de France traite la grande majorité, avec environ 10.000 demandes par an, suivi par la Belgique avec plus de 2.000 demandes, l'Allemagne avec 1.300 demandes et les autres ambassades / consulats entre 250 et 500.

La Présidence LSC est normalement assurée par la Délégation de l'UE. (N.B. La France assume depuis Octobre 2011 formellement le rôle d'Etat pilote au niveau de la protection consulaire / gestion de crise, soutenue par la Délégation de l'UE).

¹¹ Avril 2012 – Mars 2013

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2012-2013

Suite à l'entrée en vigueur du Traité de Lisbonne et au nouveau Code Visa, une répartition pragmatique a été trouvée entre la LSC et la protection consulaire/ gestion de crise. A noter que, dans la plupart des missions, à Ouagadougou ce sont le plus souvent les mêmes personnes qui traitent également les questions administratives et de sécurité de leur ambassade.

L'Allemagne avait accepté de soutenir la DUE dans la Présidence LSC depuis fin 2010. Suite à la rotation du Consul Allemand, une nouvelle répartition de travail n'a pas encore été trouvée.

Pour la période 2013-14, les membres du groupe LSC se sont mis d'accord de trouver de nouveau une solution similaire. La Chef de Section Consulaire de l'Ambassade de Belgique a montré la volonté de soutenir la DUE dans la gestion de la Coopération locale Schengen (LSC).

Un rythme d'au moins 6 réunions LSC par an a été introduit en 2010 et maintenu jusqu'en 2011. Le rythme a légèrement ralenti en 2012, avec 3 réunions spécifiques LSC.

Par contre, l'échange des informations, y compris au niveau des statistiques, problèmes des fraudes ou irrégularités, etc, fonctionne très bien par e-mail ou à l'occasion des réunions "protection consulaire / sécurité" qui ont eu lieu tous les deux mois, avec les mêmes collègues, plus les partenaires non-Schengen.

La reprise d'un rythme plus régulier des réunions spécifiques LSC est prévue à partir de Septembre 2013, dans le format initial, donc avec une co-présidence DUE / Etat membre.

- **Etat des lieux**

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Les EM sont tout à fait conscients et préparés à assumer les tâches qui leur incombent dans le cadre de la LSC / du Code Visa.

Le sujet le plus important en début de l'année 2013 était l'introduction du système d'information sur les visas (VIS) en Afrique de l'Ouest le 14 Mars 2013. Une Note Verbale a été transmis par la DUE, au nom de l'Union européenne et des Etats Schengen pour informer les autorités du pays. Des communiqués de presse étaient également publiés dans les trois journaux les plus importants du Burkina.

Un premier bilan de l'introduction du VIS montre que les pratiques d'accès aux données biométriques centralisées au VIS et, notamment, leur importation dans les dossiers d'un demandeur auprès d'un autre consulat Schengen, varient encore entre les différents consulats et ambassades.

Pour la plupart de consulats ceci ne pose pas forcément un problème à ce stade, sauf que le potentiel du VIS n'est peut-être pas encore complètement utilisé.

Pour les demandeurs de visa pour la Suisse ceci a obligé par contre aussi les demandeurs qui ont déjà demandé un visa auprès d'un autre état Schengen depuis le 14 Mars 2013, de se déplacer encore à l'ambassade de Suisse à Abidjan pour la prise de données biométriques, alors que le VIS devrait au moins permettre en principe une décision à distance pour des demandeurs jugés / connues comme bona fide. Depuis le 1er juin 2013 cette situation a trouvé une solution à travers un accord de représentation entre la Suisse et la Belgique. L'ambassade de Belgique représente désormais la Suisse pour la délivrance de certains visas Schengen de court séjour. (Les demandeurs de visa Schengen pour la Suisse ne seront plus contraints de se rendre à Abidjan!).

La question de la formation pour le personnel en Délégation sur les sujets "Schengen" reste un défi, surtout s'il s'agit de prendre des initiatives dans le sens de l'harmonisation, sans connaître vraiment tous les détails de la matière.

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

Le débat sur les besoins et possibilités d'harmonisation a été repris en février 2013 sur l'initiative de la DUE, avec une volonté de principe d'avancer sur le sujet sans que le sujet soit considéré par les partenaires Schengen comme un sujet prioritaire au Burkina Faso, vu aussi la nature de répartition de demandes (grande majorité pour la France). Les informations sur l'avancement de l'harmonisation formelle dans d'autres pays pourraient renforcer la volonté d'avancer ici également sur ce point.

La DUE a préparé un premier projet de document. Les membres du groupe LSC se sont mis d'accord de reprendre ce dossier plus intensivement en Septembre 2013.

2.3 Echange d'informations

Les statistiques mensuelles et annuelles sont échangées entre les partenaires.

En cas de fraude, les partenaires communiquent également entre eux et échangent leurs informations et leurs expériences en la matière, avec une très bonne réactivité en cas de problème signalé ou de question posée par un des partenaires.

2.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Dans le cadre du programme "Solidarité et gestion des flux migratoires" (Fonds européen pour les Frontières Extérieures", une formation de sensibilisation à la lutte contre la fraude documentaire a eu lieu à Ouagadougou, au bénéfice des membres des missions diplomatique (service consulaire / visa) de l'UE ainsi que les personnels des compagnies aériennes battant pavillon européen. La formations (4 blocs de 2 jours) était assurée par un fonctionnaire du ministère de l'intérieur français, recruté au titre d'"Expert Technique international", et a eu lieu dans les locaux de la Délégation de l'Union européenne.

3. Défis pour 2013-2014

Reprendre le débat et le travail concret sur les besoins et possibilités d'harmonisation, d'abord au niveau des fiches d'information et ensuite par rapport à la liste des documents justificatifs.

Les informations reçues à travers les rapports LSC d'autres pays et du groupe de travail visa à Bruxelles, seront extrêmement utiles dans ce contexte.

4. Divers

Rien de particulier à signaler.



15 /mai 2013

COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) - CAMBODGE

RAPPORT¹² 2012-2013

1. Introduction

Au Cambodge, deux Etats Schengen sont représentés : La France et l'Allemagne. Ces deux Etats représentent 15 autres Etats membres répartis comme suit :

- France : Belgique, France, Grèce, Islande, Malte, Norvège, Portugal, Slovénie, Espagne et Suède ;
- Allemagne : Autriche, Allemagne, Finlande, Italie, Luxembourg et Pays-Bas.
- Pays Schengen non-représenté: Danemark, Estonie, Hongrie, Lettonie, Liechtenstein, Lituanie, Pologne, République Tchèque, Slovaquie et Suisse.

Particularité de la Suède : Ambassade non pourvue de service de visas

La présidence de la LSC est assurée par l'EUD.

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2011-2012

La coopération locale Schengen (LSC) s'articule désormais autour de l'EUD depuis 2011, qui en est le coordinateur unique. Les deux EM sont en contact régulier pour des problèmes spécifiques.

Deux réunions se sont tenues en 2012. La présence des deux EM est systématique.

Il a été rappelé l'élaboration par les deux partenaires Schengen (France et Allemagne) d'une note d'information commune sur la procédure « visa » et la diffusion depuis la mise en application du code communautaire des visas le 5 avril 2010.

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

Avril 2012- Mars 2013

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

3. Etat des lieux

Il a été décidé, du fait du caractère technique des points soulevés, d'organiser trimestriellement la réunion LSC séparément de la réunion de coopération locale consulaire. La délégation de l'Union européenne a proposé de mettre à dispositions ses locaux.

La Grande-Bretagne souhaiterait être présente à ces réunions en tant que pays observateur.

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Il a été mis en évidence les points suivants dont l'harmonisation localement n'est encore atteinte :

- Taux de change différent
- Dépôt des demandes sur rendez-vous (article 9 du code des visas)
- Recueil complet des données biométriques (article 10 & 13 du code des visas)
- 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 établie depuis avril 2010.

3.3 Echange d'informations

Principalement, les échanges d'information entre EM portent sur :

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

L'EUD transmet régulièrement aux EM, les comptes-rendus des réunions du Comité des visas qui se tiennent à Bruxelles sous l'égide de la Communauté européenne.

4. Défis pour 2013-2014

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:

- Biométrie systématisée (empreintes et photo),
- Prise de rendez-vous systématisé,
- Harmonisation du taux de change

Il est constaté que pour les EM non représentés au Cambodge, tel que la Suisse ou le Danemark, des demandes de visas qualifiées de « visa Shopping » peuvent être introduites auprès des deux représentations au Cambodge.

Il avait été rappelé lors de la dernière réunion LSC que la compétence d'un Etat 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 du taux de change est fortement demandée.

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



COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) AU CAMEROUN RAPPORT¹³ 2012-2013

• Introduction

Six Etats Schengen sont présents 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. Les accords de représentation sont inchangés depuis le dernier rapport (2011-2012). Seule l'Italie et l'Espagne ont recours à un prestataire de services externe, en l'occurrence la société VFS Global, pour le recueil de certaines demandes de visa de court séjour sur passeport ordinaire¹⁴. Dans la cas de l'Italie, l'expérience de la première année d'outsourcing permet de constater que si cette innovation a permis d'éliminer la foule aux guichets et les longues attentes de rendez-vous, on a pu constater que le volume de demandes de visas avait doublé d'autre part.

• Réunions LSC organisées en 2012-2013

Quatre réunions de coordination locale Schengen ont été organisées au cours de la période de référence. Les Etats Schengen participent en général régulièrement à ces réunions, qui sont présidées par la Délégation (Chef de la section Politique, information, économie et commerce), qui prépare également les comptes rendus des réunions. Toutefois, l'effectif réduit de certaines Ambassades empêche parfois l'un ou l'autre Etat d'être représenté. En outre, une réunion informelle de concertation avec certains Etats non Schengen (Royaume-Uni et Etats-Unis) a été organisée pour discuter des questions de fraude en matière de demandes de visas. Celle-ci a été jugée utile et l'expérience gagnerait à être renouvelée.

• Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Le principal défi est relatif au déploiement du VIS au Cameroun, effectif à compter du 14 mars 2013. Les premières semaines d'application ne permettent pas de déceler de difficultés particulières, mais la concertation entre les Etats Schengen devra évidemment se poursuivre.

¹³ Avril 2012 – Mars 2013

¹⁴ 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.

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

Les travaux d'élaboration d'une liste commune harmonisée sont très avancés: un premier projet de liste commune a été transmis au comité visas en septembre 2012. Lors de l'examen de ce projet lors de sa réunion du 5 novembre, le comité visas a formulé un certain nombre d'observations. Sur la base de ces dernières, la coopération locale Schengen au Cameroun a préparé un projet de liste révisé. Celui-ci a été examiné par le comité lors de sa réunion du 26 mars 2013. Quelques commentaires ont été transmis à la Coopération locale Schengen en vue de la finalisation de la liste commune harmonisée.

3.3 Echange d'informations

Les échanges d'information portent surtout sur l'évolution du nombre de demandes et de visas délivrés, les problèmes en matière de police d'assurance, et, surtout, les cas de fraude et notamment d'usage de documents faux ou falsifiés (passeports ordinaires ou de service, mais aussi relevés bancaires, actes d'état-civil, diplômes, lettres d'invitation, etc.). Sur ce dernier point la poursuite du développement des échanges d'information avec les pays non Schengen semble être une priorité.

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Rien à signaler.

4. Défis pour 2012-2013

Le principal défi mentionné dans le dernier rapport, à savoir l'adoption d'une liste commune harmonisée, est en passe d'être relevé. Pour l'année 2013-2014, le principal défi sera bien entendu lié au déploiement du VIS, à propos duquel une concertation régulière devra être maintenue.

5. Divers

Ce projet de rapport a été approuvé par l'ensemble des représentants des Etats Schengen présents au Cameroun.



Ottawa, 7 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) MEETINGS IN OTTAWA, CANADA 2012-2013 REPORT¹⁵

1. Introduction

Local Schengen Cooperation meetings are held in the Ottawa Delegation's boardroom every two months, usually back-to-back with the Consular cooperation meetings. Nearly all Schengen MS are present at the LSC meetings.

The Luxembourg Honorary Consul, who is resident and based in Ottawa, has been participating in the meetings as of April 2012 as at the request of the Embassy of Luxembourg in Washington; the Luxembourg Honorary Consul has received supplementary authorization from the Canadian Foreign Ministry to perform various diplomatic functions on behalf of the Embassy.

The Danish Embassy handles the Schengen Visas for Sweden, Norway and Iceland. Austria, in Ottawa, issues visas for Germany as of 16 August 2012.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Five Local Schengen Cooperation meetings were held in Ottawa between April 2012 and March 2013. All were well-attended.

Customarily, the EU Delegation sends notices of meeting and a draft agenda. Starting September 2012, the information was included in email and in AGORA; as of December 2012 all meeting-related information is circulated via AGORA only and thus encourages meeting participants to regularly use this Member States' informatics tool.

A specific training on AGORA was provided by the Delegation during the LSC meeting on November 2012.

The LSC meetings are chaired by the EU Delegation which is also responsible for minute-taking, consultation for approval of the minutes, and their distribution. Draft minutes are distributed after each meeting, with a silence procedure for comments, and are formally approved at the next LSC meeting.

As the meeting takes place back-to-back with the Consular cooperation meeting, and attendance at both include generally the same colleagues, the usual practice is that the Chairs of both meetings meet some days in advance of the meeting in order to consult about possible agenda items and ensure synergy.

¹⁵ April 2012 – March 2013

Occasionally, there are third party presentations to the group which introduce and animate discussions on topics of relevance for the group.

Member States inform about the LSC meetings to their central authorities.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Consular offices implement the Visa Code in accordance with instructions from capitals and Regulation 810/2009. This situation may lead to slight differences of approach with respect to a number of issues.

In addition to the issues below in relation to the harmonised list of documents, and the exchange of information, the following issues have been discussed regarding the application of the Visa Code:

Schengen Overstays. There are recurrent consultations of Canadian *bona fide* travellers who, for mainly touristic reasons, would like to stay in the Schengen area for more than the 90/180 stated period. The article 20 of the Schengen Convention established the *"Contracting Party's right to extend beyond three months an alien's stay in its territory in exceptional circumstances or in accordance with a bilateral agreement concluded before the entry into force of this Convention"*. According to Canadian authorities, those agreements do exist for a number of countries but, occasionally, border officials are unaware of those. Furthermore, some travelers wrongly assume that those overstays apply to all the Schengen area and thus could be fined when departing from some MS who do not have those. The whole situation is considered as very confusing and leads to questions and references every time there are formal consultations amongst Canada and EU.

It was agreed to gather the list of such bilateral agreements for possible posting in "travelling to Europe" websites of the Schengen Member States. It will be followed up during meetings throughout the year.

The **development of a common risk analysis of illegal emigration routes** was assessed by a working group and discussed in the meeting. It was concluded that Canada is a low risk country with regard to migratory or security risks and therefore a "risk assessment" document was not necessary; still two potential problematic areas were identified i) use of the Blue Travel¹⁶ document which does not require a visa for entry in Germany and could be an entry point for the Schengen area and to other countries that do require a visa, and ii) Canadian Permanent Resident card which is frequently forged and requires particular vigilance for its identification.

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

The group discussed the possible need to update the harmonised list of supporting documents. Following detail discussion and consultation with EC DG Home it was agreed that no update was necessary.

There is therefore no plan to present to the Committee any revised list for the immediate future.

¹⁶ Convention of July 28th, 1951, on the Status of Refugees

3.3 Exchange of information

The group has established during the reporting period a regular exchange of information in accordance with the Visa Code Article 48 3 (a). This gathering of information is not absent from difficulties: a) despite having fixed the 15th of the subsequent month as the limit date for providing the statistics, this is still proving to be a challenge for some Member States, b) AGORA has limitations regarding the support of dynamic documents i.e. each MS introduces its own data regularly, and therefore the process is still centralized by the EU Delegation and c) the need/desire to exchange visa refusal information, which could be done via AGORA, is proving either too cumbersome for some MS or not sufficiently precise or useful for other MS.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

N.A.

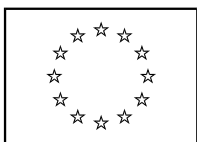
4. Challenges

The issue of the Schengen overstay is unfortunately an irritant which cannot be solved locally. It has been raised many times and at different levels by our CAN interlocutors. At the crux of the matter is the apparent lack of "reciprocity" – 90 day limit in Schengen area vs. 180 limit in Canada. The existence of bi-lateral agreements which would allow extended stay beyond the 90 days, does not seem sufficient enough to prevent anxiety, and sometimes fines, for CAN travellers to the Schengen zone. Specific information to this matter, both in the Canadian Ministry and of the Schengen Member States' web sites, can however alleviate the situation and facilitate the travelling of *bona fide* visitors. The group plans to address this in the coming months.

5. Other issues

The participation in the meetings was clarified in consultation with DG Home, as follows: a) CY, BG RO are welcome to attend the meetings, as they apply common visa policy, b) UK and IRL do not attend the meetings as do not apply the visa policy, c) Associated members CH, NO, IS and LI are invited and d) HR attends as observer.

This report (in draft form) was distributed as an agenda item to the LSC meeting of 11 April 2013. The report has been finalized following discussion during that meeting, and silence procedure for comments up to 25 April 2013.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF CAPE VERDE

13 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in PRAIA, CAPE VERDE 2012-2013 REPORT¹⁷

1. Introduction

Cape Verde is a lower middle-income ACP country with overall good governance. The country consists of 10 islands and both travel and communication between those islands remain a challenge. In rural areas, the local population often cannot understand written communication.

Cape Verde has a Special Partnership with the EU and is also implementing a **Mobility Partnership** (MP) with the EU and some of its Member States. Within the framework of the MP the EU-CV **Visa Facilitation Agreement** was signed on 26/10/2012 in Praia and the **Readmission Agreement** – on 18/04/2013 in Brussels. The documents are expected to enter into force simultaneously, later in 2013.

Cape Verde has a long tradition of **emigration** and an estimated 200 to 500 thousands **diaspora** living in the US (51%), Portugal (15%), Angola (9%), France (5%) and Senegal (5%). Apart from the traditional outward migration flows, in recent years, Cape Verde has become a country for both **legal and illegal migration** from the African continent.

The government has been active in responding to this new phenomenon. In January 2012 the **National Policy on Immigration** was approved. It needs to be completed and implemented through the legislation on migration and asylum which is currently being drafted (with support of the EU-financed MIEUX project. The final full law proposal is to be presented to the government by autumn 2013.

There are four **MS present in Cape Verde: ES, FR, LUX, PT**. The representation of other Member States in visa issues is as follows:

- ES: representing no other country;
- FR: representing DE, NL;
- LUX: representing no other country; (for long stay visas)
- PT: representing AT, BE, CZ, FIN, IT, LUX, SL, SV (for Schengen visas).

There are no external service providers active in Cape Verde but there is a local **EU Common Visa Centre (CCV)** financed by an EU project and implemented by the Portuguese Government, in partnership with Luxemburg and Belgium. **The CCV issues Schengen visas on behalf of PT, BE, LUX, AT, CZ, FI, IT, SL and SV**. The Centre also organizes seminars and trainings for CV migration authorities and in 2013 it has been equipped with a hi-tech anti-fraud document laboratory.

Since 12/2012 CCV performs duty trips with specialized equipment to Sal, S. Vicente and Boavista islands to **collect biometric data** from the visa applicants.

¹⁷ April 2012 – March 2013

Despite temporary difficulties in 2012 MS decided to continue financing the CCV. The 3rd project started on 01/09/2012 and will run till 02/2014.

The resident MS have the following **honorary consulates**:

- ES: S. Vicente, Sal;
- FR: Boavista, Sal;
- PT: S. Vicente, Sal.

Honorary consulates in CV of the non-resident MS: BE, CZ, DE, DK, EL, IT, UK, NL, RO and SV.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

In the period covered by this report, 6 LSC meetings took place at a fairly regular rhythm and were almost always attended by all MS and the EUD. Meetings were co-chaired by EUD and Spain (1st half 2012) and FR (2nd half 2012 and 1st half 2013). The reports have been drawn up by the EUD. Available reports are circulated with respective HQ. HoMs are informed on a regular basis about important matters. Member States present regularly inform their representations outside Praia. Representatives of NL (non-resident MS) US and Brazil have occasionally attended meetings concerning consular / security and human rights related legislation meetings. A joint demarche on raising insecurity in Praia was carried out in 2012 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS were well prepared and cooperation worked well after the start of the application of the Visa Code. No major problems were reported.

Some of the specific problems and suggestions relating to the implementation of the Visa Code as discussed in the LSC meetings:

- Drafting of a handbook of good practices to help in everyday visa proceedings, with examples (e.g. EU citizen's family members – the Directive 38 provisions are not clear enough), or to complement the existing Handbook with more specific cases;
- Visa applications with an obligatory consultation – the foreseen reply time should be shortened – e.g. in case of certain ECOWAS citizens like Nigerians the consultation procedure may last even 3 weeks. It should be possible to shorten it while the VIS rolls out;
- Request for a clear calculation of average indirect costs of handling a single visa application;
- Request for a clarification that the only competent authority to issue a visa is a professional consul (and that the honorary consuls do not have authorization to handle the applications)

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

Draft list has been agreed upon and forwarded to the Visa Committee.

3.3 Exchange of information

The following information is exchanged within the LSC:

- monthly statistics;
- cases of fraud;
- travel medical insurance (TMI) (i.e. insurance companies offering adequate TMI; the insurance options offered correspond to the requirements of the Visa Code);
- other issues (security, legal matters etc.)

Information sharing works very well in the group.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

NTR

4. Challenges

- The matter of **international adoptions of CV minors by the EU citizens** has still been considered discouragingly difficult over the reporting period but the situation seems to be improving with 2 recent successful cases.
- Although the current phase of the project will run till 02/2014, **long-term sustainability of the CCV** remains a challenge.
- As a response to the increasing and more and more sophisticated **document fraud (including visa fraud)**, in 2012 the CCV was equipped with a hi-tech anti-fraud document laboratory and organized fraud-related trainings for the local authorities.
- To **protect the EU citizens (resident and tourists) from attacks (robberies, street violence** especially in Praia, Mindelo and in big tourist centres of Sal and Boavista), the MS issue travel advice through their MFAs. The non-resident MS are also informed about the security situation in Cape Verde. After the joint EU demarche on raising insecurity in Praia in 2012 at the CV MFA, police established a special unit responsible for contacts with diplomatic representations.
- CCV's duty trips organized to collect biometric data from the visa applicants on the other islands have helped avoid the considerable burden and associated travel costs for visa applicants.

The major issues for the near future are:

- Implications of the EU-CV Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements, when they enter into force;

5. Other issues

NTR

This Report has been approved by all MS present in Praia.



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO CHINA AND MONGOLIA

08/05/2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) *China*
2012-2013 REPORT¹⁸

1. Introduction

Local Schengen Cooperation in China has a strong presence with representation of Schengen members encompassing a total of 62 embassies and consulates throughout China. All 27 EU Member States and 25 Schengen members are represented in Beijing¹⁹; 20 Schengen MS have consulates in Shanghai, 12 have consulates in Guangzhou, and several MS also have consulates in Chengdu, Wuhan and Chongqing.²⁰ The EUD is in charge of the LSC meetings in Beijing, in other cities they are being held by the local PRES.

Local Schengen Cooperation, which is based on a frequent information exchange and regular meetings organised by the EUD and MS PRES in Beijing, is seen as an important and valuable tool by Member States. LSC is ever more indispensable for many MS as the continuously increasing movement of persons between China and the EU constitutes a significant challenge particularly to Member States with extremely high workload for a limited number of staff. The EUD's leadership and coordination role therefore continue to be appreciated, which is also confirmed by the high interest in the current MS PRES' anti-fraud cooperation initiatives.

As in the years before, there has been another large increase in visa applications in 2012, with a total of 1,212,682 Schengen visas being issued in China. This is another 18,0% up from 2011, with the most considerable increase in individual tourism (+57,6%) and ADS (+24,8%) visas, according to EUD Schengen statistics collected locally from MS embassies on a monthly basis. This continuous growth can be attributed both to the intensification of EU-China economic relations and to a general boom in Chinese tourism due to a burgeoning middle class. At the same time, it also illustrates the growing interest of this Chinese middle class in Europe, and smooth application procedures for Schengen visas can contribute a lot to further improving Europe's image as an attractive tourist destination.

As the above-mentioned trends are likely to continue in the future, some MS estimate a further increase in visa applications of up to 20% over the next couple of years.

¹⁸ April 2012 – March 2013

¹⁹ Liechtenstein is represented by Switzerland in Beijing, Shanghai & Guangzhou for the purpose of issuing Schengen Visas.

²⁰ For ease of reference, MS in this report means EU Member States that are also Schengen countries + Schengen Non-EU countries.

Two external service providers (TLScontact and VFS Global) have been entrusted by several MS with the collection of visa applications and there is a continuous surge in demand for outsourcing these services. As of now, 11 MS²¹ in Beijing have outsourced the collection of visa applications, as well as five in Shanghai²², five in Guangzhou²³, one in Chengdu²⁴, one in Chengdu and Wuhan.²⁵ This trend is even more accentuated by the continuous surge in overall visa applications, but also by a general visa staff shortage and the pending introduction of biometric identifiers. However, recently collected feedback on these service providers is mostly negative, a fact that might also deserve future attention, because dissatisfactory service by external agents eventually debases the general image of the Schengen visa and the EU in China.

The CIRCA database for LSC in China was operational for most of the timeframe although the migration to circabc disabled it for the last few months of the reporting period and has caused a loss of many of the members who had previously signed up. It is usually regularly updated with all relevant documents.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

In Beijing, regular LSC meetings chaired by the EU DEL and MS PRES are usually held three times per PRES. Coordination with the PRES in preparing and evaluating the meetings is very close and meeting agendas and conclusions drawn up by the EU Delegation are usually sent for consultation to the PRES before circulating them to all MS. Meeting conclusions are usually sent back to capitals, but it is likely that at least larger MS also sent brief notes concerning issues of high importance beforehand and discuss meeting conclusions with their own hierarchy in embassies (DHoMs and HoMs meetings).

Beijing

In total, six regular LSC meetings were held between April 2012 and March 2013 in Beijing. The meetings are generally well attended by most MS. Croatia has been invited, but so far has not attended any of the meetings. Extraordinary meetings and working groups (such as on insurance and the review of harmonised lists are organised when the need arises.

Shanghai

Regular LSC Meetings are held in conjunction with the Administration Group (usually three times per PRES and meeting minutes are prepared by the PRES). Since the EU has no representation in Shanghai, the MS PRES (if present in Shanghai) chairs the meetings. Otherwise a PRES is agreed locally in advance. The PRES then draws up reports that are shared locally and with the respective embassies. There is a strong wish to have the EU present at the meetings, as there is a sense that not all information reaches the consulates. Therefore, the EU attends the meeting when possible, but with the dramatic budget cuts continuing in 2012, EU presence at the meetings cannot be ensured. However, EU presence is seen by all participants as extremely useful to further harmonise and align their policies to the operations in Beijing.

21 Italy, France, Belgium, Malta, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Spain, Norway and Sweden (and also the United Kingdom)

22 Italy, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece

23 Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France

24 Germany

25 All France

Guangzhou

LSC meetings are held in Guangzhou, but some of the issues are covered in the monthly Consul General meetings. The local PRES rotates monthly, when the PRES is not represented. The PRES prepares the meeting minutes.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The Visa Code has been implemented as closely as possible. One CA EUD staff member in Operations is working on LSC (including ADS), as well as consular affairs. An assistant is working part-time on maintaining the ADS database and one Political Counsellor is covering related political aspects. The EUD's preparedness to implement the Visa Code therefore continues to be dependent to a large extent on the human resources situation. It has been confirmed that a joint DG HOME/EAC post is created at the DEL as soon as possible to reflect the importance of the portfolio.

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

The issue of a possible update or amendment of the harmonised lists has been addressed in Consular Meetings, but MS could not agree on common amendments of the lists at the current stage. This followed a Working Group on the Harmonised Lists that had been created with the participation of EUD and several MS in Beijing exchange information on the implementation of the harmonised lists and the requirements for and usefulness of different items on the list of supporting documents. However, MS feel a general need to fully harmonise their practices in this regard, because different approaches put Schengen states in a vulnerable position.

3.3 Exchange of information

Monthly Statistics

MS consulates throughout China submit their visa statistics to the EUD on a monthly or quarterly basis. EUD then compiles these statistics into an annual overview. The statistics have been very useful in identifying trends locally and to predict future trends. Moreover, presentation of locally collected visa statistics, which are more detailed than the central ones, allows MS to compare themselves with other regarding number of visas issued, proportion of ADS, tourist and business visas, or refusal rates.

However, it must also be noted that there are discrepancies between numbers reported locally and monthly to EUD in Beijing and those reported by Member States to DG HOME on an annual basis.

Cases of fraud

Over the last years, a well-working system of cooperation and real-time information exchange between MS has been established. MS generally act swiftly to inform others of visa annulments and/or migration alerts. Furthermore, antifraud activities were defined as a priority by the current PRES and EU DEL and antifraud trainings have already been organised.

These training activities will help to further improve the exchange of expertise between MS and thereby contribute to the quality and reliability of antifraud checks on the ground.

There are a number of fraud case and cooperation extends to other like-minded nations 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.

This generally high level of antifraud activity also extends to discussions on ADS sanctions and other LSC issues. The EUD circulates sanction proposals and posts updated sanction tables to CIRCABC on a weekly basis.²⁶ All relevant documents are uploaded to CIRCABC by the EUD. Information sharing between Schengen members and the EUD is usually effective and efficient.

Travel medical insurance (TMI)

A working group on TMI was formed in September 2011 to look at developing a more harmonised approach and succeed in convincing insurances to offer a TMI for the duration of travel rather than the dates of travel, therefore allowing MS to issue visas including the period of grace. However, no final result was achieved due to the complexity of the issue.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Migration and Mobility

The third pillar of the EU-China strategic partnership on the High Level People to People Dialogue was established in 2012 and mobility and migration issues are one of its most critical components. The DEL conducted an inquiry among MS (13 MS replied) to gather information in preparation of the EU-China Dialogue on mobility and migration, due to take place in Brussels in June 2013. Major points of interest of the EUD questionnaire were possible consular restrictions imposed on MS by China, MS experiences with ADS groups and the cooperation with law enforcement agencies in China. The findings were presented in a report in March 2013 and this report has been distributed both to MS and to DG HOME in Brussels. Most importantly, this report concludes that the risk of irregular migration and visa fraud from China to the EU is still rated as high by many MS and that an increasing number of MS have been subject to restrictive visa practices by the Chinese authorities as retaliatory actions against the EU's reluctance to start negotiations on a visa waiver agreement for diplomatic passport holders. On the other hand, Chinese authorities are showing an increased level of interest in cooperation on combating illegal migration. Overall, there is a need for a more efficient use of the limited human resources in MS embassies, both in the visa sections themselves, but also at ILO level. Addressing these needs would help disrupting and possibly prevent illegal migration upstream.

ADS

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is implementing an EU-funded project in China, of which a small part explores the current ADS system, identifying shortcomings and suggesting improvements. Thus, a second training workshop for Chinese Travel Agencies involved in ADS, Chinese Government counterparts and Consulate Visa Sections was held in Shanghai with very active participation by Travel Agencies and consulates. This work will be invaluable to further harmonise and improve the ADS in China.

²⁶ Article 4 of the ADS MoU

4. Challenges

- Introduction of the VIS ("significant challenge" in 2011-12 report):

In June 2012, China informed the EU Delegation in China that restrictions identical to those currently applied to FR could be applied to other Schengen Member States (except those enjoying already this kind of visa waiver agreement for diplomats) if no movement from the EU side is observed before end 2012 on the issue of visa or biometric exemption for diplomatic passport holders. The EU Delegation and Member States representatives in China would like to stress the urgency to adequately address the issue in Brussels.

- Agreement on Migration and Mobility: On migration, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has put proposals forward in working with the Chinese authorities to identify and return illegal migrants or victims of human trafficking. Cooperation with the IOM and experts from the Chinese Ministry of Public Security has been well established and a first joint Antifraud Workshop for MS visa officers was organised by the EU Delegation in Beijing in March 2013. This kind of training for MS visa staff is an important step to improve the detection of fraudulent visa applications and counter illegal immigration from China to the EU.

Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2013-2014):

- Possible Update of ADS MoU
- EU-China Dialogue on mobility and migration in June 2013

5. Other issues

Visa application centres: As already mentioned, MS are more and more relying on external service providers to process visa applications in China. However, the Chinese government does not permit the opening of Visa Application Centres in cities without a MS consulate.



Santiago, 14 May 2013

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) CHILE
2012-2013 REPORT²⁷**

1. Introduction

In Chile, Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) is carried out with 18 countries: fourteen Member States (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden), two associated countries (Norway and Switzerland) and partly with Romania (Bulgaria does not yet have consular representation in Chile).

The full list of consulates/embassies dealing with visa applications for more than one country is as follows: Sweden (Denmark, Iceland and Norway); Switzerland (Hungary and Liechtenstein); Belgium (Luxembourg); Germany (Malta); and the Netherlands (Slovenia).

The European Union Delegation is responsible for the preparation, coordination and minuting of meetings.

Chilean citizens do not require a visa to enter and stay in the Schengen area for less than three months. Therefore, the applicants are nationals of other countries, mainly neighbouring countries (Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, etc.).

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Four meetings have been held since May 2012 (May, July, September and December).

Attendance by Member State representatives was good on the whole. Some Member States attended less regularly, while others took part in every meeting. Since Denmark and Norway are represented by Sweden, they do not consider it necessary to be represented in meetings on a regular basis. Romania's representatives are able to take part as observers, but they did not participate in meetings during the above-mentioned period.

The Head of the Policy, Trade, Press and Information Section of the European Union Delegation in Santiago chaired the meetings. The EU Delegation, in cooperation with the Member States, coordinated the meetings and drafted agendas, gathered information, produced reports, etc.

²⁷ April 2012 – March 2013

The Member States do not, apparently, produce their own reports but, as provided for by the Visa Code, share common reports produced by the LSC in Santiago with their capital cities. (Sometimes, the reports are translated at the embassies.)

The visa powers of consulates outside the capital were discussed at the meetings. Member States apparently transfer relevant information from the LSC to their consulates.

3. Current situation

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

The Schengen meetings provide a forum for sharing experiences, customs, information and problems. At each meeting, one or other provision of the Code is discussed, and there has been a significant improvement in the responses from the various consulates.

The EU Delegation provided information to the Member States about the "Visa Information System" which is scheduled for introduction in Latin America in September 2013.

Discussions were held on the following issues:

Various Member States encountered problems when requesting a valid residence permit three months after the person had left the Schengen area, for instance when the applicant was in the process of renewing the permit.

Sometimes, according to many Member States, travellers going to a Schengen country are denied entry when they arrive first at an airport in another Schengen country, and are therefore sent back to Chile. Apparently the consulates in the countries of final destination can do nothing in such cases. Therefore it is very important to have clear information on the requirements with which Chilean citizens have to comply to enter the Schengen area, for instance by providing evidence of financial resources or an invitation (compulsory in some but not all Member States). The absence of such evidence can cause problems in the first country of entry to the Schengen area.

The consulates discussed their rules on cases in which students wanted to travel after completing their studies (when the residence permit had expired). Most countries provide a D visa, and when it expires people can travel as tourists for 90 days (and also before the study period, but there are requirements to be met).

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

The list of supporting documents was approved by the Commission on 6 August 2012, making it binding. It must therefore be published on embassy and consulate websites.

3.3. Exchange of information

The European Union Delegation is collecting and analysing statistics concerning visas applied for and issued under the auspices of the Member States. At the meetings last year, we discussed possible fraud cases (very rare). The Member States had no problems with medical insurance for travellers.

3.4. Other initiatives taken under the LSC

The LSC drew up a common information sheet providing answers to questions frequently asked in Chile about Schengen visas: the rights such visas confer, and the conditions for applying for such visas (**Article 48(2)**). The list was agreed in December, and can already be found on the web pages of the EU Delegation and of several Member States.

4. Challenges for 2013

The topics to be discussed during the next reference period are above all the introduction of VIS and the communication strategy, and efforts to achieve greater cooperation and exchange of information in Schengen meetings with a view to improving competence and the implementation of the Code. The objective is to ensure better and more uniform implementation of the Visa Code.



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA

June 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) COLOMBIA 2012-2013 REPORT²⁸

1. Introduction

The following Member States are represented in Colombia:

Sweden (Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland)

France

Belgium (Luxembourg)

Spain (Lithuania, Slovakia and Greece)

Italy (Malta)

Netherlands

Federal Republic of Germany (Latvia and Slovenia)

Portugal

Poland (Estonia)

Switzerland (Austria, Hungary and Liechtenstein)

Observers:

Romania

Croatia

Cyprus

Bulgaria

The European Union Delegation has been coordinating the meetings since October 2012.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

From October 2012 the Delegation organised two SCHENGEN coordination meetings:

On 3 October 2012, attended by 10 Member States.

On 22 February 2013, with lower attendance (8 Member States).

In both cases the Delegation chaired the meeting and drew up the agenda and the minutes.

²⁸ April 2012 – March 2013

3. Current situation

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

Spain, Sweden and Italy are working with UVS (outsourcing) and with this system can give appointments as soon as the day following the request.

In the other countries there are delays of up to six weeks (DE), depending on the time of year. They believe that this may provide an incentive for 'visa shopping'.

Application of the biometric procedure from September 2013: the MS believe that this will complicate the process and cause even longer delays.

The MS asked whether an exemption could be granted to all diplomatic and/or service passports.

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

The Member States which attended are starting work on this.

With a view to publishing a joint leaflet explaining the new biometric procedure, the Delegation wishes to complete this task by 31 December 2013 so that the harmonised list can be included in the publication.

3.3. Exchange of information

The Member States generally share information bilaterally. The Delegation asked for the statistics to be sent monthly, but few Member States are doing so (Italy, Spain). Similarly, specific cases (false documents and/or fraud) are discussed bilaterally but also at the coordination meetings.

3.4. Other initiatives taken by the LSC

N/A

4. Challenges

The Member States must reach agreement on the harmonised list of supporting documents so that it can be presented to the Committee in Brussels by the end of the year.

A joint publication is being prepared on the new procedure for Colombia. The EU Delegation will launch an information campaign in the media with the support of DE, ES, BE and Sweden.

5. Other issues

N/A



26 March 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) COSTA RICA 2012-2013 REPORT²⁹

1. Introduction

The EU Member States present in Costa Rica are DE, BE (it issues visas for LU), ES (visas for AT, EE, EL, FI, FR, MT, PT and SE) and NL (SI). There is a problem of delays in information from NL because the regional Consulate for Costa Rica is in Santiago de Chile (the Consulate in Costa Rica only receives applications, which it sends on to Chile). External service suppliers are not used for the collection of applications. In 2012, the Member States coordinated consular meetings (they were not strictly speaking LSC meetings). In 2013, meetings are convened and coordinated by the EU Delegation.

In 2012, the EU Delegation attended the meeting on 4 December 2012 convened by FR (Consular Presidency). In 2013, the EU Delegation began to convene LSC meetings.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

The Member States met on many occasions in the 2012/2013 period to discuss LSC matters. However, the EU Delegation began really focusing on LSC in meetings as from December 2012. In effect, there have been three LSC meetings in 2012/2013: the meeting in December 2012 (convened by FR) and the meetings in January and March 2013.

The Head of the Nicaragua Delegation (responsible for LSC matters) attended the January 2013 meeting. The meeting in March 2013 was by videoconference between the EU Delegation in Nicaragua and the EU Delegation in Costa Rica. Attendance by the Member States at meetings is very good and usually most of the Member States resident in Costa Rica attend. In 2012, the Member States convened the meetings but since January 2013 the EU Delegation has convened them. In 2013, meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation but at the March 2013 videoconference ES was in charge of local coordination of the meeting.

Reports of meetings in 2012 were drafted by the Member States (always by the country that held the consular Presidency). As of 2013 the EU Delegation is responsible for preparing LSC reports. Rather than writing the reports, this actually involves summarising the information from the meeting and preparing new drafts of the documents discussed at the meetings.

²⁹ April 2012 – March 2013

3. Current situation

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

Due to the workload of the EU Delegation in Costa Rica, it did not convene or chair the LSC meetings. In 2012, the regional EU Delegation (it also covers Costa Rica) in Nicaragua decided that the Head of Delegation would take responsibility for LSC in Costa Rica too. The first meeting in Costa Rica attended by the Head of Delegation was in January 2013. Due to limited budget resources for missions, since then e-mails have been exchanged between the EU Delegation in Nicaragua and the Member States resident in Costa Rica and a videoconference was held between the Member States in Costa Rica and the EU Delegation in Nicaragua.

Cooperation between the Member States and the EU Delegation is very good and quickly produced the first results. In March 2013, the harmonised list of supporting documents was approved locally and sent to Brussels for discussion at the Visa Committee.

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

The Member States worked very well in 2012 and prepared the first draft of the text of the harmonised list of supporting documents without the assistance of the EU Delegation. In fact, it was a combination of the harmonised list of supporting documents and the common information on Schengen visas. However, this work by the Member States greatly facilitated the task of the EU Delegation after it took over responsibility for LSC.

In a very short period (two months) the harmonised list of supporting documents was approved locally and sent to the Visa Committee for approval.

Work continues on the harmonisation and approval of the common information on Schengen visas and on the harmonisation of visa fees (Article 16(5) of the Visa Code). The Member States collaborated very well and the EU Delegation considers that the two outstanding topics will be settled and approved in 2013.

3.3. Exchange of information

The EU Delegation only began to play an active part in meetings from December 2012. None the less, in meetings since then there is a clear spirit of cooperation between the Member States and they informally and formally share any information on visas.

3.4. Other initiatives taken under the LSC

No initiative has been taken under the Presidency of the EU Delegation.

4. Challenges

The only challenge of the EU Delegation in 2012/2013 was the start of active participation and coordination of LSC matters in Costa Rica. This target was achieved. The most important challenge for the new period is to finalise the process of approving the harmonised lists of supporting documents and the common information on Schengen visas. The challenge is complicated by the fact that this topic is handled by the EU Delegation in Nicaragua.

COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS MEMBRES (LSC) EN CÔTE D'IVOIRE RAPPORT 2012-2013:

1. Introduction:

Six Etats membres de l'espace Schengen (ci-après Etats membres) sont représentés en Côte d'Ivoire: l'Allemagne, la Belgique, l'Espagne, la France, l'Italie et la Suisse. La France et la Délégation de l'Union européenne en Côte d'Ivoire assurent conjointement la coordination des réunions LSC.

La demande de visas à destination des Etats membres représentés en Côte d'Ivoire a connu une hausse exponentielle depuis la fin de la crise post-électorale. La France est particulièrement concernée, avec 24 000 visas octroyés chaque année. Hormis cela, aucune difficulté majeure n'est à signaler. La mise en place du VIS (Visa Information System) s'est déroulée sans encombre et le système semble bien fonctionner.

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2012-2013:

Deux réunions ont eu lieu en 2012 (16 février et 19 juin). En 2013, une réunion s'est tenue le 7 mars. Tous les Etats membres représentés en Côte d'Ivoire ont participé à ces réunions, co-présidées par la France et la Délégation de l'Union européenne.

En outre, des réunions *ad hoc* sont régulièrement convoquées, sur des sujets tels que la sécurité, qu'il s'agisse de la sécurité en termes généraux ou de la sécurité aéroportuaire, ou encore sur les cas de fraude. Des rapports sont établis si le sujet de la réunion le requiert. Ce fut notamment le cas pour la réunion préalable à la mise en place du VIS. La coordination est assurée uniquement à Abidjan.

3. Etat des lieux:

3.1. Application du Code des Visas:

Les Etats membres représentés en Côte d'Ivoire appliquent uniformément les règles du Code des Visas. Leurs services échangent des informations relatives aux refus de visas, afin d'éviter le "visa shopping", ce qui figure parmi les buts poursuivis par la mise en place du VIS.

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

3.3.

Avant la crise post-électorale, les Etats membres avaient débuté des travaux visant à harmoniser la liste des documents justificatifs. Ces travaux ont désormais repris, sous la coordination de la Délégation de l'UE en Côte d'Ivoire. Les Etats membres à Abidjan estiment que, dans l'ensemble, l'harmonisation actuelle est suffisante. En effet, ils exigent globalement les mêmes documents. Seuls quelques détails diffèrent, tenant notamment à la précision des justificatifs exigés.

Pour les visas médicaux, par exemple, la Suisse exige une attestation de congé signée par l'employeur, ou une attestation de vacances scolaires. Cette attestation doit s'accompagner d'une réservation d'hôtel en Suisse confirmée et payée, d'une confirmation d'entrée en clinique ou lettre de l'hébergeant, avec une copie du passeport ou du titre de séjour suisse de celui-ci. Ensuite, le demandeur doit fournir un diagnostic du médecin dans son pays de résidence, avec l'attestation que le traitement n'est pas possible sur place et la preuve d'examens antérieurs. Enfin, il doit justifier d'un rendez-vous formel avec un médecin en Suisse et produire une estimation approximative de la durée du traitement et du coût. Pour le même type de visa, la France exige, pour les enfants mineurs, une autorisation parentale, une copie de la carte nationale d'identité des parents et si l'enfant voyage seul, un certificat de scolarité et une copie de son acte de naissance. Ensuite, tout demandeur de visa pour raisons médicales doit produire un accord de l'établissement hospitalier français pour son admission et une attestation des autorités médicales ivoiriennes précisant que la pathologie ne peut être traitée sur place. Le consulat général pourra demander une contre-expertise par un médecin qu'il aura désigné. Le demandeur doit également produire un devis médical, un justificatif du règlement préalable de la provision des frais médicaux correspondant au devis établi par l'établissement hospitalier. Enfin, il devra apporter une justification de l'hébergement hors hospitalisation.

3.4. Echange d'informations:

Certains Etats membres partagent leurs statistiques tous les trois mois.

En ce qui concerne l'assurance médicale de voyage, chacun prend en compte une liste différente. Par exemple, la Belgique se fonde sur la liste des assurances reconnues par l'Etat ivoirien. La Suisse a établi sa propre liste. La France, quant à elle, admet comme valides toutes les "assurances certifiées Schengen".

Des réunions *ad hoc* sont organisées à propos des questions de fraudes.

4. Défis pour 2013-2014:

Les Etats membres seront principalement confrontés à une hausse des demandes de visas. Depuis la fin de la crise post-électorale, les liaisons aériennes entre la Côte d'Ivoire et l'Europe se sont multipliées. Air France dessert la ligne Abidjan-Paris à une fréquence de dix vols hebdomadaires. Corsair a également ajouté la Côte d'Ivoire au nombre de ses destinations. Brussels Airlines effectue 7 vols par semaine. Turkish airlines, Royal Air Maroc et Tunisair ont également repris des liaisons, qui permettent aux voyageurs de se rendre en Europe. Cette offre plus importante et à des tarifs plus avantageux s'accompagnera d'une hausse des demandes de visas, à laquelle les Etats membres auront à faire face.

À cet effet, ils devront notamment se doter d'effectifs plus importants, actuellement insuffisants pour faire face à cet afflux de demandes.



26 April 2013

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC)
IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
2012-2013 REPORT³⁰**

1. Introduction

In the reporting period no changes occurred as regards the number of the MS present. With exception to Luxembourg, there are 26 diplomatic missions of the EU member states accredited to Croatia. Cyprus, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta have their diplomatic representations accredited outside of Croatia. 21 LSC member states are physically present in Croatia: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

On 20 December 2012 the Government of the Republic of Croatia passed a Decision to temporarily facilitate the entry of Aliens on entry, stay and transit through the Republic of Croatia on the basis of a valid Schengen residence permits and visas in the period from 1 January 2013 until the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union (EU). Therefore starting with 1 January 2013 aliens who are holders of Schengen residence permits, Schengen uniform visas (C) or long-stay visas (D) temporarily do not require a visa for entering and stay or transit through the territory of the Republic of Croatia. Above mentioned Schengen documents must be valid at the moment of leaving the Republic of Croatia.

Through the accession negotiations Croatia had to align the visa legislation with the EU Acquis. On 28 March 2013 the Government of Croatia completed the last task in this respect. To align the remaining legislation with the EU visa Black list the Government adopted amended the Regulation on the Visa Regime which entered into force on 1 April 2013. The Republic of Turkey was transferred to the list of Countries whose nationals require a visa for the Republic of Croatia, holders of diplomatic, official, and special passports of the Republic of Turkey are exempt from visa requirements, as well as holders of ordinary passports who are the civilian air and sea crew members of the Turkish aircrafts and ships.

Also the Agreement between the Croatian Government and the Government of the Russian Federation on mutual travelling of Croatian and Russian nationals introduced a classical visa regime as of 31 March 2013. Therefore the provisions on the possibility for Russian nationals, holders of ordinary passports to enter the Republic of Croatia without a visa on the basis of a letter of guarantee or a tourist voucher ceased to apply as of 1 April 2013. The LSC member states usually issue visas to the third country nationals from the neighbouring countries of Croatia or to the sailors on foreign vessels sailing into the Adriatic.

³⁰ April 2012 – March 2013

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

In the reporting period LSC meeting were organised on the quarterly basis, due to a low number of the EU visas issued in Croatia. They were all held in the premises of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Croatia (EUD) and were usually followed by the EU consular meeting. The Polish presidency continued to chair the consular part of the meetings during the Danish presidency, in accordance with their agreement. The Cypriot and the Irish presidency did not chair any meetings. Through the periods of their presidencies the LSC meetings were chaired solely by the EUD. No Ad hoc meetings were organised on specific subjects.

Four LSC meetings were held since April 2012. They were well attended, reaching up to 85 % of the attendance. 18 of the LSC member states with the official seat in Croatia participate on the average. Certain member states never attended the meetings. Among the LSC member states accredited to Croatia and seated abroad only Estonia attended the meeting. They are nevertheless invited and debriefed from the meetings. U.K. took part of the meetings upon the common agreement of the LSC participants.

The reporting practice on the LSC meetings did not change from the previous period. Representatives of the EU member states accredited to Croatia report differently to their capitals on the LSC meetings. A couple of them regularly share the EUD quarterly LSC reports with their Headquarters, the other majority share it with additional comments and/or occasionally, if needed. Some others have no practice in sharing them with their capitals. The EUD reports on the LSC meetings quarterly to the LSC member states and annually to the Director General for Home Affairs of the European Commission in the Brussels Headquarters.

Coordination with the LSC outside Croatia in locations is ensured. The LSC Chair informs on the Visa related updates (including LSC meeting reports) electronically all the LSC members accredited to Croatia. Yet no feed back was received from the LSC member states located outside of Croatia.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The MS and EUD are *prepared to ensure the tasks to be carried out in the LSC under the Visa Code*. The EUD noted that LSC Members are not fully informed and/or regularly updated on the changes of the Visa Code's implementing practice. With no direct access to the CIRCA intranet, the LSC members cannot follow uploads prepared by DG Home and depend exclusively on the information passed from their capitals. The knowledge on the implementing visa issuing practice should be regularly refreshed for the diplomatic staff working at the LSC missions. A specific problem related to the harmonised implementation of the Visa code would definitely improved with a better accessibility to the CIRCA uploads.

The LSC in Croatia is also interested to follow the trainings recently organised by Frontex in some EUDs for the EUMS consular representatives regarding detection of falsified documents. Especially due to the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina requested the Croatia and EU to allow the BiH citizens to continue using their IDs as a valid travel document after the Croatian accession to the EU. Risk analysis of the Croatian border management indicate that majority of falsified documents with false data that are mostly from BIH and most of illegal workers in Croatia are from BIH .

The EUD informed the participants that the Handbook for processing of visa applications will be modified. It will contain updates of factual information and changes in the legislation regarding the definition of the short term stay. EUD also informed the LSC attendants that DG HOME intends to launch a public consultation on the implementation of the Visa Code in order to gather information from the main "users" of the common visa policy, namely individual visa applicants, interest or advocacy groups and professional organisations. The consultation would be running for 12 weeks as of March 2013.

The LSC in Croatia discussed *specific problems relating to the implementation of the Visa Code as discussed in the LSC meetings*. Germany was the most frequent interlocutor, as it has monthly the biggest rate of visas issued to the third country nationals in Croatia.

- The participants further discussed the *valid visas with overlapping validity*. In German and Romanian practice they are in practice cancelled, on the request of the consular body, in order to issue a new visa. Croatia had no case of the visa annulment by the border authorities in 2012/2013.
- In case of *losing document with a valid Visa*, Germany issues a request for a police record on the theft, etc. and only then issues a new visa without the visa fee.
- In cases where a person had to travel in two different Member States in two separate trips within a short period of time and because of waiting times/appointment systems could not lodge two different applications the participants agreed that the above situation would be considered as one visit (to the Schengen area) with two destinations. In these cases Germany would issue a longer term visa or if possible a multiple visa for the validity of 1 – 5 years. This pragmatic solution is applied by the majority of LSC members in Croatia force to increased visa demand over the issuing capacity.
- The LSC participants did not agree with cases *where persons hold dual nationality (the one of an EU MS and another of a third country)* and who are required to exit their (third) country of origin on the basis of the national passport of that country and thus would need to hold a short stay visa to enter the Schengen area. This is because the short stay visas cannot be used for the EU nationals who have a right of free movement in the EU. Germany had a cases of Croatian / American citizen who applied for the long term visa to Germany. According to the German Bilateral agreement with the U.S.A. Americans do not need it and the person was able to enter Germany for a longer period on the basis of the U.S. passport.

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

The LSC in Croatia assessed that there is no need anymore to discuss harmonisation of DG Home's *recommended standard text for harmonized lists of supporting documents*. MS implementation of the COM decision on the list of documents was presented to DG Home in the previous annual report. Another reason is that Croatia will most probably join the EU on 1/7/2013 and the LSC in Croatia will cease to operate.

3.3 Exchange of information

The EUD forwards all the information received from the LSC central point in DG Home and authorised for local distribution to the LSC members in Croatia. No cases of fraud were reported during the reporting period.

Various approaches continue to be applied for the *Schengen travel medical insurance* (TMI). Belgium and Italy require to have the TMI valid throughout the period of the visa validity. Austria, Slovenia and the others request the insurance for the first trip, informing the applicant that the insurance should remain valid for the entire stay in the Schengen area. Germany, which issues the most of visas in Croatia, reported no problems in cooperation with the Croatian insurance companies (Croatia Osiguranje, Allianz, Euro-Herz etc.). The insurances offered in Croatia correspond to the requirements of the Visa Code.

The *issuing of visas for minors and the consent of parents / legal guardian* also differs in practice. Italy requires consent of the minor's both legal guardians. In Germany both parents / legal guardians have to give consent for issuing a Schengen Visa to a minor. If one of them does not want to give the consent the other parent has to bring the consent of the family court. Otherwise the visa cannot issue to the minor in question. These are in general cases, where for eg. a Croatian mother wants to live with her new husband in Germany and the father remaining in Croatia, does not want to give his consent. Poland seconded the German practice, as most of their issued visas are transit for minors with Russian and Ukrainian citizens, where it is sometimes impossible to receive the consent of another parent within a suitable timeframe.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Romania proposed to continue with the LSC – Consular meeting in Croatia even after the accession to the EU. Finland was selected as a partner in the IPA 2010 twinning for the National Visa system with Croatia.

4. Challenges

As of 1/7/2013 Croatia will most probably become the 28th member of the EU. The country has fully aligned its visa legislation with the EU Acquis only three months before the accession. That means that Croatian diplomatic and consular missions in the third countries (outside of EU) will have much to learn on the EU visa policy especially in the context of the Local Schengen Cooperation. It can also be expected after Croatia becomes a member of the European Union and especially when it joins the Schengen area, illegal immigration pressure to the EU might increase even more.

5. Other issues

No issues to report.



UNION EUROPEENNE

DELEGATION EN REPUBLIQUE DE DJIBOUTI

Djibouti, le 08 avril 2013

COOPERATION LOCALE SCHENGEN (LSC) DJIBOUTI RAPPORT 2012-2013

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 2012 – 2013

Aucune réunion dédiée à la coopération locale Schengen n'a été organisée en 2012 et trois réunions sont prévues au premier semestre 2013 (la première ayant eu lieu le 20 février).

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Jusqu'à la prise de fonction du nouveau Chef de l'Administration de la Délégation de l'Union européenne, le 2 janvier 2013, et étant donné que seule la France gérait les visas pour Schengen, ce sujet avait été omis des agendas.

Une réunion spécifique LSC a donc été mise en place et le travail d'harmonisation des procédures engagé.

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

Le travail n'ayant réellement débuté qu'à partir du 20 février 2013, aucun document à soumettre au Comité des Visas pour commentaires n'a encore été élaboré. Cependant, le besoin de définir une liste complète des procédures et documents pour un visa Schengen, en conformité avec le Code des Visas et ses annexes – principalement l'annexe II - reste nécessaire mais très succinctement car il n'y a réellement qu'un seul point à modifier et à adapter aux exigences du Code des Visas.

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.

Les informations sur les documents de voyage issus par l'Etat hôte restent le sujet en attente. Une note verbale avait été envoyée par la Délégation au Ministère des Affaires Etrangères djiboutien à ce sujet en novembre 2012 et une nouvelle demande début avril 2013.

3.4 Autre initiative prise par le LSC

N/A

4. Challenges en 2012 – 2013

N/A

5. Autres sujets

N/A



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGACION DE LA UNION EUROPEA EN LA REPUBLICA DOMINICANA

07 /04/2013, Santo Domingo

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in the Dominican Republic 2012-2013 REPORT³¹

1. Introduction

The Dominican Republic is a country of strong migration and therefore visa requests are severely analysed given the high migratory risk. There is also a rather unbalanced distribution of visa requests to travel to the different Member States. A majority of the visa requests is for Spain and France, which explains slight differences between Member States in processing as well as concerning the documentary requirements.

In the Dominican Republic there are six Member States represented at Embassy level (Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Spain). With the exception of the United Kingdom all the Member States are Schengen countries. Austria has a consulate but has delegated Schengen competences to Switzerland. There is also a Schengen non Member State: Switzerland.

The German Consulate processes visas on behalf of Estonia. Spanish Consulate also issues visas on behalf of Greece, Portugal, Malta, Czech Republic and Sweden. The Italian Consulate processes visas on behalf of Slovenia and the Dutch consulate on behalf of Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, Lithuania, Finland and Latvia. The French consulate issues visas on behalf of Denmark and Island.

In addition the following Member States have honorary consuls in Santo Domingo: Belgium, Slovakia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Cyprus, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Rumania and Sweden.

Since February 2012, Spain uses an external agency for the collection of the applications given the very large amount of requests. The work of this agency is considered very useful and of good quality by the Spanish Consulate.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Given the lack of staff at the EU Delegation, the coordination of the local Schengen group was handled on a rotation base by the Member States until end June 2012. Since September 2012, the EU Delegation assumed the coordination. The arrangement decided at Heads of Mission level was that each consulate should by turns organize the meeting and draft the minutes. Given the workload of the MS consulates, there were no meetings organized until September 2012. Given the staff constraints and workload of the consulates, the Heads of Missions have requested the EU Delegation regain the task. Since then and in the reference period 4 meetings had taken place.

³¹ April 2012 – March 2013

Regarding the meetings during the period of reference, they were attended by most MS plus Switzerland. No general consular meetings have taken place in the reference period. Local Schengen Coordination is currently only established in Santo Domingo.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The implementation of the visa code has progressed at good pace, in particular in those aspects which could require some level of harmonization like for example support documents or exchange on reliability of health insurance companies complying with the visa code requirements.

The list of supporting documents is almost the same, with a few extra requirements from MS with high number of applicants, which require normally more supporting documents in cases of suspected fraud. Also some MS in view of their national legislation do not or cannot request certain types of documents

An added difficulty has to do with the significant differences in numbers of requests among the different Member States, which has an impact on the processing time per visa request as well as the verification of the requested documents.

Despite the difficulties in loco and the high number of fraud attempts, the group has established some common lines of action regarding the verification of the documentation presented by the persons requesting a visa and a fluid exchange of information on cases suspected of visa shopping, documentary fraud, forge identities, etc.

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

Given the difference in the number of requests as well as the different migratory risk towards certain MS, there is still no agreement on the need to harmonize the list of supporting documents, even if this is already very similar. MS receiving fewer applications have been gradually introducing the supporting documents requested by MS with high application numbers. This is already a very good progress in order to dissuade visa shopping

There is no shared list of acceptable health insurance companies, but there is agreement in exchanging information on companies not actually responding adequately in cases of accident or hospitalization. Exchanges of information have proven that most often it is insurance from travelling agencies which tend to be more problematic. Some cases of companies providing false insurance forms have taken place.

Flows of information on rejected visa requests could be improved once the V.I.S. (Visa Information System) will be in use in this region, by tracking any applicant from a Schengen Consulate to another. In the meantime, informal contacts on cases of fraud make the object of regular exchange between MS.

3.3 Exchange of information

The exchange of information is quite open-ended during the meetings, notably concerning frauds in birth certificates, forgery of personality or documents. Beyond the consular meetings, some MS do exchange some information on cases detected by their consulates to avoid "visa shopping" but some cases have been identified where the request rejected by one consulate were thereafter accepted by another.

- *monthly statistics:*

So far, the exchange of statistics is only partial, though the scheme is slowly falling into place

- *cases of fraud:*

There are an increasing number of frauds linked to false documents and forged identities. For the moment, France is the only country applying biometrical identification (photos and fingerprints) in order to guaranty the precise identity of the applicant. Also cases of false contracts for artistic and musical groups as well as pretexted sport meetings have been identified as mechanisms of introducing people into the Schengen territory.

- *travel medical insurance (TMI) (i.e. insurance companies offering adequate TMI; do the insurances offered correspond to the requirements of the Visa Code?);*

There is no unified list of acceptable insurance companies. The consuls have detected problems with some health insurance companies which though on paper appear to meet the requirements of the visa code, in practice do not cover certain costs for hospitalization or accidents. The best working mechanism so far has been contacting the company in question and conveying the message that if they do not pay the medical costs, they will be blacklisted and excluded from the companies accepted by the consulate

The list provided by the ministry of Foreign Affairs was transmitted to Head Quarters

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Some MS have participated in workshops organized by non MS. Cooperation at consular level with friendly nations like Canada and US, which face similar challenges, is also taking place

4. Challenges in 2013-2014

Most of the challenges like regularity of the meetings, collection of statistics, exchange on fraud, documents requested and problems with medical insurance companies have been tackled through open coordination between consulates.

Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2012-2013):

Regular collection of statistics and if possible a harmonization of documents, more result-oriented information exchange between consulate visa agents in order to share experiences and methods for identifying possible cases of fraud



EUROPEAN UNION

EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION
IN ECUADOR

2013-05-14

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) ECUADOR, 2012-2013 REPORT³²

1. Introduction

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

The EU Member States represented by an Embassy in Ecuador are: France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. Each Embassy has a Consular Section/General Consulate. The Swiss Consulate takes part in the LSC.

The General Consulates of Spain in Quito and Guayaquil, which represent the Czech Republic, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands and Portugal in Ecuador through a contract put out to tender in Madrid by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have entrusted the management of their visas, including appointments, collection of documentation and prior electronic processing of applications, to the services company VFS Global.

The Italian Consulate has also outsourced the management of its visas, including appointments, collection of documentation and prior electronic processing of applications, to the services company VFS Global.

The EU Delegation in Ecuador does not yet officially represent the EU since representation is organised on a regional basis and it comes under the regional Delegation in Colombia for Finance and Procurement (Cooperation) and Administration:

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

In the period from April 2012 to March 2013, four regular LSC meetings were held (two every six months), which were attended by practically all the European Union consulates present plus Switzerland and a representative of the EU Delegation. Minutes were drawn up for some of the meetings.

Consular meetings were held on various topics (security, natural disasters, etc.).

The Consular Section/General Consulate of the country which officially represents the EU and the Policy Section of the EU Delegation usually chair the LSC meetings jointly. The meetings were held at the following embassies:

- First half of 2012: United Kingdom
- Second half of 2012: Germany
- First half of 2013: France

³² April 2012 – March 2013

In some cases, consular meetings were open to non-Schengen EU countries (e.g. the United Kingdom) and other countries (e.g. the USA and Canada), whose representatives attended LSC meetings on invitation to discuss matters of common interest.

No LSC meetings are held outside Quito.

3. Current situation

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

The EU Chair draws up the agenda in line with the priorities / most important events in recent weeks.

The exchanges of information and the coordination between the Consuls on matters relating to the Visa Code and its application are highly satisfactory.

3.2. Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents in the places where this task has not been completed:

There is still no harmonised list of supporting documents, but the differences are slight. Harmonisation is complicated as the fee is not the direct responsibility of the consulates. Since the differences in fees are slight, harmonisation does not seem to be necessary.

There is no common information form, but the information requested is similar.

3.3. Exchange of information

- Monthly statistics: circulation is not systematic.
- Cases of fraud: 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.
- Medical insurance for travellers: there are insurance companies offering such insurance but the Consulates report specific cases of failure to activate it.
- Travel documents issued by Ecuador consist of four types of passport:
 1. Ecuadorian passport (normal);
 2. Diplomatic passport;
 3. Official passport;
 4. Special passport.

Holders of diplomatic and official passports do not need visas for most of the Schengen Member States represented in Ecuador.

3.4. Other initiatives taken by the LSC

Not applicable.

4. Challenges

The biggest challenge is to continue maintaining LSC, which all the Consuls regard as exemplary: direct contacts and a frank and permanent dialogue on Schengen issues lead to rapid solutions to problems.

5. Other issues

All the Embassies involved in Local Schengen Cooperation approved this report.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

EU Local Representation

Cairo, 11 June 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Arab Republic of Egypt 2012-2013 REPORT³³

1. Introduction

Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC) between Schengen Member States in Egypt has continued systematically throughout the year under the coordination of the European Union Delegation to Egypt. Local Schengen Cooperation meetings are held bi-monthly and are convened and chaired by the EU Delegation while Consular Cooperation meetings are chaired by the country holding the EU Presidency. During the reporting period, Denmark, Cyprus and Ireland chaired the Consular Cooperation group.

With the exception of Luxembourg, all EU Schengen Member States are still represented in Cairo. All Schengen Member States, including Norway and Switzerland, are part of the group (Belgium represents Luxembourg). Most Schengen Member States continued to attend the group's meetings on a regular basis.

Denmark, Greece, France, Spain and Sweden have outsourced the collection of visa applications to external service providers.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

During the reporting period, five LSC meetings were held³⁴. All meetings were well attended (attendance levels were similar to 2010-2011 and 2011-2012).

All meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation to the Arab Republic of Egypt. No co-chairing took place.

For each meeting, the EU Delegation drafted the agenda, circulated the agenda among the Presidential trio for prior consultation, coordinated the *demarches* agreed during LSC meetings, drafted and circulated the minutes, and collected all the information needed for coordination efforts.

The EU Delegation to Egypt has encouraged Member States to share these reports with their capitals.

³³ April 2012 – March 2013

³⁴ 12 April 2012, 28 May 2012, 24 September 2012, 21 November 2012, 20 March 2013

Coordination with Member States represented in Alexandria (France, Greece, Italy and Spain) took place on a regular basis. These Consulates were included in the mailing list of the EU Delegation and therefore received the same information as the Consulates in Cairo. Furthermore, the Consulates in Alexandria were invited to attend a LSC meeting once a year to have an in-depth discussion on the specific challenges they face. The first meeting took place on 24 September 2012. It is planned to hold a LSC meeting in Alexandria during the next reporting period 2013-2014.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

During the 2012-2013 period, two staff members of the EU Delegation to Egypt chaired and provided the secretariat to the group, in addition to their core responsibilities. The EU Delegation liaised on a regular basis with the European Commission – DG HOME to ensure that it had a correct understanding and mastering of the Visa Code and its amendments, as well as to provide timely clarifications on the Code's implementation to Local Schengen Member States representatives. The EU Delegation strived to fulfil its local Presidency role in the field and to provide quality support and feedback to Local Schengen Member States representatives, upon request.

Local Schengen Member States strengthened their knowledge of the Visa Code and fully took advantage of the benefits of Local Schengen Cooperation, including the ad hoc exchange of information, peer exchanges on concrete application cases of Visa Code provisions, and regular structured exchanges of information on visa applicants.

Following the entry into force of the VIS on 11 October 2011, all Member States applying the Schengen Acquis in full are collecting biometric data.

Key challenges discussed during the reporting period were:

Visa applications for Syrian citizens living temporarily in Egypt because of the crisis in Syria. Many MS confirmed that they are facing an increase of applications from Syrians in Egypt. The refusal rate for these applications is very high since it is difficult to assess whether the visa applicant will return to Egypt after his/her visit to the Schengen area. Visa applications from Syrian nationals living in Egypt on a temporary basis are accepted by most Schengen State Consulates, even when they have Consulates in other countries specifically responsible for Syria (Beirut and/or Amman).

Exchange of experiences with outsourcing.

Implementation of the harmonised list of supporting documents.

List of insurance companies in Egypt offering adequate TMI coverage.

Fraud.

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

The harmonised list of supporting 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. An informative Note Verbale was sent to the Egyptian authorities upon the harmonised list's entry into force.

All LSC consulates implemented the new harmonised list and updated the information provided to applicants on their websites. They also made important management and operational adjustments. The EU Delegation updated this information on its website. The LSC group also translated the list into Arabic.

Regular discussions took place during LSC meetings to monitor the implementation of the harmonised list. No difficulties were flagged.

3.3 Exchange of information

Monthly statistics (visa applications/issuances) were shared. Officers of the Immigration Liaison Office team based in Egypt participated in LSC meeting discussions on a regular basis.

Samples of forged documents were shared among LSC members, who regularly exchanged views on the matter. LSC members were also invited to participate in trainings on forged documents for Schengen Consulates staff members which were organised in Cairo in June, September and October 2012. These trainings were part of the project "Trainings on forged documents for Schengen Consulates' staff members". The project was led by France and financed by the EU under the External Border Fund.

Travel Medical Insurance (TMI): The LSC group reviewed regularly the requests received from insurance companies to be included in the Cairo Schengen Common list of insurance companies offering an adequate TMI coverage to visa applicants in Egypt. These requests were carefully assessed against the provisions of the Visa Code. Updated versions of the Cairo Schengen Common list of insurance companies offering adequate TMI coverage were subsequently circulated to all Cairo LSC members.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Travel Medical Insurance (TMI) – Pre-existing case:

An Egyptian national travelling to France bought a TMI from an insurance company included in the Cairo Schengen Common list. While in France, he suffered a stroke. He stayed in an intensive-care unit at the Lariboisière Hospital in Paris for 3 months. In spite of the medical certificates provided by the French health service, the insurance company refused to reimburse the costs of patient's stay on the basis that he had a pre-existing health condition. The doctor who treated the patient confirmed that the stroke was not predictable.

The insurance company never visited the patient and proposed to pay for one night in the hospital as an amicable settlement. Despite several meetings with the insurance company and the reinsurance company, no satisfactory agreement was reached. Since the insurance company failed to fulfil its contractual obligations, the Cairo group decided to exclude the company from the EU common list. The EU Delegation wrote a letter to the insurance company which was approved by the LSC group. Following the exclusion of the company from the EU list, an amicable solution was found and the patient was reimbursed USD 50,000, which is the ceiling mentioned in the Visa Code. This case shows that the LSC group's follow up with insurance companies on the issue of pre-existing diseases can encourage them to fully respect the Visa Code's provisions in this area.

Immigration Liaison Officer at Cairo Airport: On 3 April 2012, all diplomatic missions accredited to the Arab Republic of Egypt received a Note Verbale from the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the presence and activities of International Liaison Officers (ILOs) at Cairo Airport. The Note was distributed and preliminarily discussed at the EU Heads of Missions (HoMs) meeting on 10 April 2012. EU HoMs requested the organisation of an ad hoc meeting of the Local Schengen Coordination group - extended to the UK and Ireland - to discuss appropriate follow-up to the Note Verbale.

Austria, France, Germany, Hungary and UK had an ILO working at Cairo Airport. Some MS did not have an ILO but greatly benefitted from their work, since the ILO would contact them in cases of need.

The Egyptians' decision made it impossible for ILOs to continue working at the airport. The alternative proposed by the Egyptian authorities - for EU countries to detach ILOs within their national airlines - was not viable as it limited ILOs' work to an advisory role only for EU national airlines, thereby significantly narrowing their mandate.

ILOs at Cairo airport had witnessed a substantial increase in people carrying forged/invalid documents. It should be noted that air carriers receive a fine for each passenger who does not carry valid travel documents (passport and/or visa) when entering the Schengen area. Egyptair (a state-owned company) saved a substantial amount of money in fines thanks to the work done by the ILOs at Cairo airport.

A Note Verbale - whose wording was discussed and endorsed by the HoMs beforehand - was sent by the EU Delegation to the Egyptian MFA in June 2012. No formal reply was received from the Egyptian authorities but working arrangements have been found between some MS concerned and the relevant Egyptian authorities.

To date, France and UK have an ILO operating at Cairo Airport. German ILOs are still refused access to the airport, but they are consulting airlines via telephone and e-mail from the Embassy.

4. Challenges

1. Response to the challenges listed in the previous report

Drafting the Common Information sheet: DG HOME is currently developing a template to guide the work of all LSC groups when drafting the Common Information sheet. The LSC Cairo will draft the Common Information sheet as soon as the template is received.

Addressing the challenges faced by the Cairo LSC members in managing the VIS: this issue will be covered in the Top-Ten list of issues that need to be added, amended or deleted in the upcoming revision of the Visa Code. The Top-Ten list is currently being prepared by the EU Delegation with a view to being discussed and adopted by the LSC Cairo during its meeting in May 2013.

2. *Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2013-2014).*

- Drafting the Common Information Sheet
- Providing regular updates to LSC Cairo on the revision of the Visa Code.
- Providing regular feedback to the European Commission on LSC Cairo's views/field experience as required.

5. **Other issues**

Variation of visa fees in local currency: The Cairo LSC feels it would be timely for the Visa Committee to define a harmonised currency exchange methodology to be applied in all LSC locations to avoid visa fees variations in local currency. This issue cannot be resolved at the local level unless Member States adopt a common methodology.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE STATE OF ERITREA

The Head of Delegation

29/05/2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC): ASMARA 2012-2013 REPORT

1. Introduction

This is the third annual report of LSG in Asmara.

Since the second report and after the closure of the Netherlands Embassy, only Italy and Norway have been delivering Schengen visas in Eritrea.

In the reporting period Norway represented Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Germany, the Netherlands and Austria and Italy represented Italy, Malta and, France.

Other MS had not signed a representation Agreement with Norway or Italy and were therefore not represented in Asmara regarding Schengen visas.

Following the decision to close the Embassy of Norway as of 1 July, 2013, the Embassy has already closed the Consular section as of 30 April, 2013. Since February 2013 Italy is also representing Portugal and since May 2013- Germany and Sweden. Other countries previously represented by Norway will be covered either from Sudan, Kenya or Egypt.

2. LSC meetings held in 2011-2012

Two meetings were held in 2012-2013 attended by representatives of the Schengen countries. The EU Delegation chairs and hosts the meetings.

The Delegation drafts the minutes of the meeting and circulate it with LSC members for inputs and approval. The EU Delegation then shares the document with HQ (DG HOME, DG JUST and EEAS).

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

After the meetings in 2010, 2011, 2012, 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.

In 2012 the remaining MS have recognized the travel documents (citizens' passports) of Eritrea, while the service passports have been recognized only by a limited number of 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.

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. Norway and Italy have been using the agreed list of supporting documents. As of May 2013 Italy remains the only country in Eritrea that is issuing Schengen visas.

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), 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 have 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 tracing system of sponsors of people who have defected. Heads of Mission meetings also address coordination issues, notably whenever there are concerns about potential fraud/abuse/integrity issues.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

N/A

4. Challenges in 2013-2014

The main challenge following the closure of the Netherlands Embassy and now also of the Norwegian Embassy is that only a limited number of MS have 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



EUROPEAN UNION

European Delegation to Ethiopia

Addis Ababa 15 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IN ETHIOPIA (ADDIS ABABA)

2012-2013 REPORT

1. Introduction

There are currently 20 EU Members States in Addis Ababa.

The list is: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Portugal, UK and Ireland

There are currently 18 Schengen Member State consulates issuing Schengen Visas in Addis Ababa

The list is: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

The EU Delegation assumes since with the rotating presidency, the role of convening and chairing LSC meetings on a trimester to semester basis.

The Schengen embassies represented in Addis Ababa continue to encounter a substantial number of forged and/or fraudulent documents submitted with the visa applications.

As a result of this, the visa process becomes time consuming as the submitted documents have to be verified and carefully assessed.

Schengen representatives exchange data, to prevent case of fraud.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

From 2012 to 2013, there are been a total of two regular LSC meetings.

The EU Delegation co-chaired these meetings with the support of the rotating Presidency Reports from these meetings were drawn up by the EU presidency and circulated among Member States by email.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS cooperated with EUDel.

MS started applying the Visa Code upon instructions from their respective HQs. Further instructions on Visa Code would be necessary to ensure proper coordination and follow-up by the EU Delegation.

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

- Increase work on harmonising supporting documents is on-going, and a final list is expected for June or July 2013.
The tasks was divided, between small working group and a final presentation will be done the 29 May.
- With the introduction of VIS in June 2013, MS are really pushing for harmonisation
- Information on current practises has been shared with EUDel.

3.3 Exchange of information

- Information is shared on visa statistic with some regularity but there are occasional gaps.
- MS decide to communicate monthly statistics to EUDel in a common format. This will compile them for common analysis on trimester basis.
- In addition, MS inform each other on persons to be black listed.
- The exchange of information within the LSC group is working well. Almost all the MS maintain very regular working contacts (also due to their close cooperation in consular issues, outside the Schengen topics)

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

4. Challenges in 2013-2014

- Finalisation of harmonisation of the list of supporting documents.
- VIS implementation with the particularity of the presence of the African Union HQ in Ethiopia
- Encouraging bigger engagement of MS in Local Schengen Cooperation.

5. Other issues

No issue



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union

May /2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC)
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
2012-2013 REPORT³⁵

1. Introduction

Sixteen member states (AT, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FR, GR, HU, IT, NL, PL, RO, SK, SI, SE, UK) and two Schengen members (CH, NO Note Norway closed its embassy in 2012) have their consular offices in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. No representations arrangements are known to have been concluded between member states for the purpose of examining applications and issuing visa on behalf of a member state not present in the country. Currently one member state uses an external service provider for the collection of applications. Since the entry into force of the Visa Code, the EUD is in charge of the coordination of local Schengen cooperation meetings.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was granted candidate country status for EU membership in 2005. A visa facilitation agreement and readmission agreement with the EU has been in force since 1 January 2008. Visa liberalisation 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. Following the entry into force of the visa liberalisation, the number of visa applications for entry into the Schengen dropped significantly.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Three LSC meetings (two in 2012 and one in 2013) have been held since the entry into force of the Visa Code. The meetings are held back-to-back with meetings on consular protection of EU citizens. The meetings are generally well attended by member states present in the country. Non-Schengen member state (UK) and Schengen members (CH, NO) also participate in the meetings. LSC meetings are held in the EUD's premises and chaired by the EUD's Head of the Political and JHA issues, Information and Communication section. Minutes of the meetings are drawn up by the EUD and circulated among the attendees. Some member states share these minutes with their capitals, while some draw up their own reports for their headquarters. Due to the size of the country there is no need for coordination with the LSC in locations outside Skopje.

Every LSC meeting discusses inter alia the issue of asylum-seekers from the country into Schengen states and the measures imposed by the authorities to counter these flows. During the February 2012 meeting it was agreed that the Consular Cooperation meeting will be chaired by the UK assisted by the EU Delegation. The Schengen Cooperation continues to be chaired by the EU Delegation.

³⁵ April 2012 – March 2013

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Regular LSC meetings provided opportunity to discuss and exchange information on implementation of the visa free regime, migratory risks, number of asylum applications of country's citizen registered, ways of transportation, use of false or forged documents, etc. Following an initiative of a number of MS, the uniform visa application form has been translated into the host country languages. Monthly statistics on visas issues have been exchanged electronically. Member States also exchange information on matters such as false or forged documents as cases arise.

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

In the context of the visa free regime, it was assessed that most of the harmonisation requirements under LSC are not needed. According to information exchanged and considering local circumstances, differences in the fee charged in local currency and application of optional visa fee waivers do not lead to visa shopping. As some member states charge the visa fee exclusively in Euros and the Euro exchange rate into local currency is stable, visa shopping based on differences in the fee charged in local currency can be excluded.

3.3 Exchange of information

Harmonising the list of supporting documents has not been assessed as a priority need in the context of visa free regime with only an insignificant number of non-biometric passport holders. So far, no steps have been taken towards preparing a harmonised list of supporting documents. The validity of non-biometric passports expired in February 2012 and as a result all travellers do so with biometric passports.

A common information sheet on uniform visa, visas with limited territorial validity and airport transit visas have not been established due to the context of the visa free regime in force since December 2009.

4. Challenges

Following the entry into force of visa free regime, a high number of the country's citizens applied for asylum in EU and Schengen countries. According to FRONTEX, 6719 citizens applied for asylum in Schengen countries in 2012 an increase from 4583 in 2011. This represents 2.4% (1,8%) of all asylum applications in the EU, and 23% of applications from visa free countries. 4556 (1138 in 2011) applications were filed in Germany followed by Switzerland 1112 (926), Sweden 615 (847), Belgium 261 (818) and Luxembourg 175 (446). Further monitoring and exchange of information on the implementation of the visa liberalisation remain the main challenges for LSC in 2012-2013.

The country also faces increasing migratory flows from out of region countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Middle East and North Africa) transiting to Western Europe. Number of detected illegal migrants remains quite low; however the number of asylum applications fell between in the year March 2012/2013 to 475 after increasing between 2009 to 2011 (82 in 2009 to 646 in 2011). Continued attention should therefore be given to monitor the country's receptions capacities, asylum and return procedures, implementation of return procedures and border control capacities.

Response to challenges, if any, listed in the 2011-2012 report: The authorities have increased their activities to prevent asylum seekers from the country and report on a monthly basis to the EU in Brussels. Asylum seekers arriving in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2013-2014): Continued monitoring of actions to reduce the problem of false asylum seekers from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Continued attention should be given to monitor the country's receptions capacities, asylum and return procedures, implementation of return procedures and border control capacities.

An additional 20 accommodation places for asylum seekers are due to be constructed by the end of 2013 with the assistance of UNHCR.

5. Other issues

None.



UNION EUROPÉENNE
DELEGATION AU GABON,
POUR LA GUINÉE ÉQUATORIALE,
SÃO TOMÉ E PRÍNCIPE ET LA CEEAC

Libreville, le 5 juin 2013

**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET
LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC)
LIBREVILLE - GABON
RAPPORT³⁶ 2012-2013**

1. Introduction

Il y a quatre EM présents au Gabon : DE, ES, FR, IT. FR délivre quelque 12000 visas par an et le chiffre est en hausse constante. IT en délivre 1200 et ES 700.

Il y a aussi trois consulats honoraires (BE, NL, CH) mais ils ne délivrent pas de visa. DE ne délivre pas de visas. Les visas pour les seuls ressortissants gabonais sont délivrés pour DE par FR. FR délivre par ailleurs des visas pour AT, BE, CZ, EL, EE, HL, HU, LU, LT et NL. Des démarches sont en cours pour LV. En ce qui concerne BE, FR ne délivre que des visas de court séjour. Pour les autres, les demandeurs doivent s'adresser au consulat belge à Brazzaville. Le consulat honoraire de Suisse ne fait qu'enregistrer les demandes de visas et les envoie au consulat basé à Kinshasa. ES représente PT et SE.

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2012-2013

La dernière réunion LSC (EM et DUE) a eu lieu le 12 mai 2012. La prochaine est prévue pour le 7 juin 2013. S'y ajoutent des réunions entre les trois pays qui délivrent des visas.

La coordination est assurée seulement à Libreville, seul lieu où se trouvent les consulats.

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Il y a beaucoup d'échanges par courrier électroniques entre les trois consulats délivrant des visas. Une réunion entre FR, ES et IT a eu lieu en février 2013 portant sur l'harmonisation de la liste des documents demandés, sur la mise en place du VIS en mars 2013, et sur l'information des demandeurs de visas pour rappeler les pièces à détenir lors de leur entrée dans l'espace Schengen. S'agissant de la liste des pièces à produire, ES et IT se sont montrés en accord avec la liste de FR.

³⁶ Avril 2012 – mars 2013

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

Voir plus haut : les documents justificatifs ont été harmonisés, sur la base de la liste de FR.

3.3 Echange d'informations

Les statistiques sont échangées régulièrement.

L'assurance médicale de voyage ("TMI") ne pose pas de problème particulier. En cas d'utilisation d'une carte de crédit incluant une assurance, il faut néanmoins souvent préciser que la production de la carte ne suffit pas et qu'une attestation de l'émetteur est aussi demandée. En cas de voyage officiel, la prise en charge sur l'ordre de mission suffit, si celui-ci précise que les frais de médicaux et de rapatriement sont à la charge de l'Etat Gabonais.

En cas de fraude, il y a communication systématique entre les trois consulats délivrant des visas. Il s'agit le plus souvent de faux justificatifs (contrats, bulletins de salaire, etc.)

Il faut souvent informer les demandeurs que, à la frontière, la production du visa ne suffit pas et que le fonctionnaire de police peut aussi demander des justificatifs (tels que sur les conditions de séjour ou l'objet du voyage).

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Rien à signaler.

4. Défis pour 2012-2013

L'externalisation sera un dossier important. Le consulat de FR attend pour le moment l'accord de Paris. Il s'agit d'un projet commun avec IT sans participation de ES. Cette externalisation permettrait de faire face à la croissance des demandes de visas, avec une capacité supplémentaire de quelque 5000 visas/an.

5. Divers

La délivrance des visas pour la Suisse pose des problèmes : si le lieu de séjour principal du voyage du demandeur n'est pas en France (ou un pays représenté par elle), le consulat de France ne peut pas délivrer de visa. Le demandeur doit alors s'adresser au consulat suisse de Kinshasa, ce qui est difficile sur le plan logistique et est source d'irritation pour les demandeurs gabonais (souvent des délégations officielles). Cela pourrait concerner quelque 800 visas par an.

Les autorités gabonaises ont demandé l'exemption de visa pour les titulaires de passeports diplomatiques ou de service. FR a accordé en 2007 cette exemption pour les titulaires de ces passeports voyageant en France. Mais ce n'est pas le cas si le voyageur se rend dans un autre pays, si par exemple il arrive en Allemagne par un vol Libreville-Francfort. Des discussions sont en cours avec IT et DE mais n'ont pas encore abouti



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO GEORGIA

Tbilisi, 2 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Georgia 2012-2013 REPORT³⁷

1. Introduction

There are 13 Schengen MS present in Tbilisi (12 EU³⁸ and Switzerland). Additionally, Bulgaria and Romania participate in the LSC. 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

Also:

Cyprus – is covered by its Consulate in Ukraine or Armenia

Ireland – is covered by its Consulate in Bulgaria

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.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

8 LSC meetings were held in the reporting period, of which one (on 20 February 2013) was devoted to the preparation for the 3rd Joint Visa Facilitation Committee meeting (Videoconference with DG HOME) and to the presentation of the outcome of the EU funded project: Human Rights Dimension of Visa Facilitation and Readmission (with participation of the implementing NGO). 4 meetings were predominantly devoted to the finalization of the harmonized list of supporting documents.

³⁷ April 2012 – March 2013

³⁸ Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden

Usually approximately half of the States invited (15 + UK) attend each LSC meeting. The meetings are chaired by the EUDEL. The reports are drawn by the EUDEL and send to MS in Tbilisi and to DG HOME.

All the Consulates are located in Tbilisi, hence: no LSC meetings held outside the capital.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Finalization of the harmonized list of supporting documents was agreed upon as the most important task resulting from the Visa Code in the reporting period.

The European Commission issued warning letters to 6 MS in Tbilisi regarding too long waiting times caused by the appointment system, in breach of the Visa Code and the Visa Facilitation Agreement. In reaction to that, one MS announced that it will go ahead with outsourcing as of May 2013. Other MS also proposed measures to address this issue in their reply letters to the EC.

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

The work on the harmonized list of supporting documents was on-going in the reporting period. LSC took on board feedback received from the Visa Committee; the (hopefully final) list was submitted to Brussels, currently awaiting decision.

3.3 Exchange of information

Monthly statistics on visas are collected and made available to MS by one MS.

Creating a list of companies issuing Schengen compliant travel insurance was considered as going against the principle of fair competition and dropped. However, it was established that the Georgian State insurance for pensioners is not Schengen travel insurance (TMI) compliant.

The practice of exchanging information between MS Consulates by email has been established.

The LSC looked into a possibility to share appointment calendars and lists of visas refused, but due to technical reasons (lack of possibility to do it electronically – searchable), the ideas were dropped.

The LSC shared with DG HOME information on lack of professional driver and journalistic associations, which is linked to the generally underdeveloped employment market in Georgia.

The EUDEL regularly shares with the MS relevant information, like minutes from the Visa Committee meetings.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

EUDEL invited FRONTEX to conduct in Tbilisi a training on falsified travel documents. The training took place on 19, 20 and 21 March and was attended by 53 participants (11 from the Ministry of Interior, 42 from MS Consulates). Initial feedback was positive. Official feedback will be shared by FRONTEX in due time.

2 reports on the implementation of the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements were discussed in the LSC: a report issued in May 2012 by an NGO "Liberal Academy", and a report prepared within an EU funded project, implemented by "Innovations and Reform Center".

The EUDEL shared information regarding the preparations of the Visa Liberalization Action Plan for Georgia, following experts' mission in September 2012. The VLAP was officially handed over to Georgia in February 2012.

The MS shared information about recognizing the Status Neutral Travel Documents (currently 6: EE, PL, CZ, SV, LV, LT).

EUDEL circulated the Report on the functioning of the Local Schengen Cooperation during first two years of implementation of the Visa Code and encouraged the MS to familiarize themselves with the document.

A consultation on the upcoming amendment of the Visa Code was launched in March 2013, to be discussed in LSC in April.

4. Challenges

High visa refusal rate continues to be criticized in Georgia. The authorities fear that this may be an impediment to the aim of visa free travel (Visa Liberalization Action Plan is being implemented). During the 3rd joint Visa Facilitation Committee DG HOME provided explanations and shared the experience from other Countries with which the EU has VFA, that the refusal rate usually goes down after 2 years of the agreement being in force.

Following the awaited adoption of the decision on the list of supporting documents, the LSC will have to ensure its proper application.

In the next reporting period it will also be possible to learn from experience of one of the MS which goes ahead with outsourcing the collection of supporting documents for visa applications as of 29 April 2013, especially its influence on shortening the waiting times.

Further facilitation for family members according to Visa Facilitation Agreement Declaration could be considered. The LSC is due to follow-up on a proposal to harmonise practices in relation to waiving visa fee for persons accompanying disabled.

Since the issue of false / counterfeit / forged supporting documents is a big problem in Georgia and is often cited as a reason for high refusal rate, the EUDEL would like to propose a discussion on how this problem can be tackled.

Further work is needed to reduce waiting times related to the visa application appointment system.

The LSC will also think of ways to tackle visa shopping.

VIS roll-out is another issue to be pursued in the next reporting period.

5. Other issues

n/a

The report was drafted by the EUDEL and discussed with the Member States during the LSC meeting on 24 April; it was subsequently approved by silent procedure.



Accra, 28/06 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) ACCRA, GHANA 2012-2013 REPORT³⁹

1. Introduction

The Denmark embassy currently chairs the LSC group meetings. The following MS and LSC Embassies are present in Accra:

Czech Republic (CZ) – represents SK,
Denmark (DK) – represents FI, IS and SE,
France (FR) – no longer issues Schengen Visas,
Germany (DE) – represents EE,
Italy (IT) – represents MT,
Netherlands (NL) – represents LX, FR, PL, LT and AT
Spain (ES) – represents EL, PT and SI,

as well as

Switzerland (CH) – represents BE,
Norway (NO) – .

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

As mentioned above, the chairs of the local LSC meetings was held by Denmark.. I was introduced the first time after my arrival in a meeting held in October 2012. The frequency of the meeting were decided on an Ad Hoc base, at least during the second half 2012. The attendance to the meetings was moderate to good.

No minutes of the meetings were taken this year, sometimes an email distributing information requested during the discussion was sent to the LSC group members. Last meeting was held in February 2013 for VIS launch. Since then no meeting was requested.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The November 2012 discussion turned around the applicants blacklisted still trying to apply for visa for smaller countries of the Schengen zone.

In February 2013 the VIS system was launched, coordinated by the EU Delegation. A prior consultation of LSC members was done before the documents regarding the VIS were published in the press. Some minor amendments were made before publication. A press conference was held here at the delegation to present the new system.

3.2. Exchange of information on the visa fee charged – possible need for harmonisation

The Actual VIS system launched is harmonising the request and the Biometrics records

3.3 Exchange of information

LSC members are willing to share documents upon request, statistic, reports... In the meeting of November 2012 a list of Consular contacts was exchanged.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

None.

4. Challenges in 2012-2013

Matter was not discussed

5. Other issues

None.



**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS
ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC)
REPUBLIQUE DE GUINEE
RAPPORT⁴⁰ 2012-2013**

1. Introduction

3 Etats membres ont une représentation diplomatique en Guinée : l'Allemagne, l'Espagne et la France.

La Belgique a un agent visa basé dans les locaux du Consulat de France.

La France représente l'Autriche, l'Italie, la Suède, la Slovénie et l'Estonie; l'Allemagne représente le Portugal et la Grèce et la Belgique représente le Luxembourg.

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2012-2013

Réunions LSC trimestrielles avec les trois Consuls des Etats membres présents en Guinée, l'agent visa de Belgique et l'UE.

En fonction des besoins exprimés par les participants, des réunions supplémentaires peuvent être organisées (par exemple lors du lancement du nouveau système VIS).

D'une manière générale, la coopération Schengen entre les Etats membres présents est excellente. Des réunions régulières sont tenues pour échanger les données/statistiques et partager les problèmes les plus fondamentaux afin d'harmoniser les pratiques.

Ponctuellement, les réunions peuvent être élargies aux consuls ou missionnaires des Etats Schengen résidant dans la sous-région en déplacement en Guinée.

⁴⁰ Avril 2012 – Mars 2013

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

L'Ambassade d'Allemagne installe actuellement une banque de données enregistrant toutes les personnes qui ont été confondues de fraude et/ou ont été sujettes de graves soupçons de fraude. Ce "fichier d'alerte" entrera en vigueur du côté allemand à partir du 1 juin 2013 et sera accessible à tous les EM Schengen.

Les empreintes biométriques sont enregistrées à l'Ambassade d'Allemagne depuis le 14 mars 2013 sans avoir rencontré de graves problèmes techniques.

Les visas biométriques ont été mis en place à **l'Ambassade de France** depuis plus de 3 ans. A ce jour, l'option de dupliquer les empreintes digitales des précédents dossiers n'est pas encore opérationnelle. En conséquence, le recueil des données biométriques (empreintes digitales et photographie numérique) est la première opération obligatoire à effectuer avant l'enregistrement d'une demande de visa.

Le système français (RMV : réseau mondial visas) a déjà prévu une option pour enregistrer les mises en attention locale des demandeurs de visa aussi bien en positif (personnalités favorablement connues) qu'en négatif (pour fraude documentaire, filière immigration irrégulière, reconduite à la frontière par exemple).

A **l'Ambassade d'Espagne**, la mise en place du système de prise de données biométriques s'avère extrêmement utile pour lutter contre la fraude documentaire et les fausses identités de quelques demandeurs. Néanmoins, elle peut entraîner parfois un peu de retard dans les procédures.

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

Les LSC à Conakry ont introduit en 2009/2010 des fiches communes de renseignements énumérant tous les documents à fournir (voir annexes).

Comme pour les autres partenaires Schengen en Guinée, une notice commune des justificatifs à fournir est proposée aux demandeurs de visa (voir quelques notices en pièces attachées).

Entre partenaires Schengen, nous avons également harmonisé le délai des présentations au retour des ressortissants étrangers dont nous souhaitons vérifier le retour effectif en Guinée.

3.3 Echange d'informations

Les statistiques mensuelles sont échangées régulièrement entre les EM présents; ce n'est pas encore le cas pour les assurances médicales voyage (TMI).

A **l'Ambassade d'Allemagne**, les cas de fraude sont repris dans une liste "Malus" qui sera prochainement remplacée par le "fichier d'alerte".

L'Ambassade de France transmet aux partenaires Schengen les statistiques mensuelles.

Des échanges ponctuels d'information sont effectués entre partenaires Schengen notamment sur les filières d'immigration, les cas de refus, les reconduites à la frontière, les faux documents et autres... En plus des conditions requises par le code des visas, **l'Ambassade de France** exige un agrément des autorités locales pour les compagnies d'assurance qui proposent leurs prestations aux demandeurs de visa.

L'Ambassade d'Espagne transmet les statistiques aux partenaires au cours de chaque réunion LSC. Ces dernières correspondent à la période écoulée depuis la réunion précédente (entre trois ou quatre mois, normalement).

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Néant

4. Défis pour 2012-2013

Néant

5. Divers

Néant.



EUROPEAN UNION

OFFICE TO HONG KONG AND MACAO

Hong Kong, 28 November 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) HONG KONG AND MACAO 2012-2013 REPORT⁴¹

1. Introduction

There are 15 MS present in Hong Kong and 1 in Macao, while all these 17 Consulates General have a mandate covering both Hong Kong and Macao.

None of the MS uses external service providers for the collection of Visa applications. CH uses an external service provider for appointments. UK is planning the use of an external service provider from April 2014.

In Hong Kong the EUD is in charge of the coordination of the Local Schengen cooperation meetings since 1 April 2010.

The following Schengen Consulates-General are represented in Hong Kong and Macao

1. **Austria** (also representing Malta in Schengen visa matters)
2. **Belgium** (also representing Luxemburg in consular issues)
3. **Czech Republic**
4. **Finland** (also representing Sweden and Norway in Schengen visa issues)
5. **France**
6. **Germany** (also representing Slovenia in consular issues)
7. **Greece**
8. **Hungary**
9. **Italy**
10. **Netherlands**
11. **Poland**
12. **Portugal** (only Member State present in Macao)
13. **Spain**
14. **Sweden**
15. **Switzerland** (represents Liechtenstein in consular and Schengen issues)

⁴¹ April 2012 – March 2013

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

During the reported period (April 2012 – March 2013) the scheduled EU Schengen meetings in Hong Kong were held on 24 April 2012, 22 May 2012, 26 June 2012, 29 November 2012, 7 Feb 2013.

All meetings are well attended by the great majority of the 16 MS. The Schengen part of the meetings is chaired by the EUD, while the Greek Consulate chairs the Consular part. There have been no ad-hoc meetings during the report period.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Regular meetings between MS and the EUD regularly took place, to help prepare all parties to introduce the Visa Code. According to MS the following three areas need to be flagged:

- (i) visa fees are not harmonized.
- (ii) handling of visas for foreign domestic helpers
- (iii) visa requirements for 'documents for identity'

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

MS have already carried out earlier the harmonisation of the list of the supporting documents, so it is considered by MS, that the harmonisation of the practises is already acquired. However, there are concerns that it is difficult to verify documents submitted from the mainland.

3.3 Exchange of information

The exchange of information within the LSC group works well with colleagues communicating by email and where necessary by phone.

Close cooperation between MS covers all major cases of fraud and other topics, including exchange of information related to travel medical insurance.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Meetings/site visits in 2012 – Security Bureau, Correctional services Department, Police marine services, Immigration, Hong Kong international airport
Schengen Regulations and forged documents – separate training planned

4. Challenges in 2013-2014: Introduction of VIS in December 2014.

This text is approved by members of the Local Schengen working group.



3 July 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION INDIA 2012-2013 REPORT⁴²

1. Introduction

According to 2012 Schengen statistics, India ranks as the six biggest Schengen visa operation in the world, with a robust presence encompassing 41 Embassies (or High Commissions) and Consulates General throughout the country, in New Delhi and six peripheral locations.⁴³

All European Union Member States (henceforth **EU MS**) except Latvia, and all Schengen associated countries, except Liechtenstein, are accredited to India and have an Embassy or High Commission in New Delhi. Of these 24 Schengen partners (in the rest of the report the abbreviation Member States [**MS**] will be used to indicate only the Schengen partners⁴⁴) accredited to India, three do not issue Schengen visas and are represented for such purpose by other MS: Estonia being represented by Hungary; Luxembourg by Belgium; Iceland by Denmark. The two remaining unrepresented MS have representation agreements: Hungary issues Schengen visas for Latvia⁴⁵, while Switzerland issues Schengen visas on behalf of Liechtenstein. Several MS have multiple accreditations from New Delhi to the neighbouring countries⁴⁶ for whose nationals either they issue Schengen visas from India⁴⁷, or have representation agreements *in loco*⁴⁸.

Besides the capital city, the biggest Consular presence is in Mumbai, where 9 MS Consulates General are present (Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, as well as the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden which however do not issue visas), followed by Kolkata (3 MS: Germany, France, Italy) and Bangalore (2 MS: Germany, France). Only one MS is present in Chennai (Germany), Pondicherry (France) and Goa (Portugal).

⁴² April 2012 – March 2013.

⁴³ These numbers do not obviously include the Bulgarian and Romanian Embassies, nor the Irish, Cyprus and UK High Commissions in New Delhi, nor (1) the UK Deputy High Commissions in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, (2), the British Trade offices in Hyderabad, Pune, Ahmedabad and Chandigarh (which do not deal with visas) (3) the British Tourist Assistance Office in Goa (which does not deal with visas).

⁴⁴ By contrast, when specific reference is made to all the European Union Member States, that will be indicated with the acronym EU MS.

⁴⁵ National visas are issued by the Latvian Embassy in Tashkent.

⁴⁶ Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Though a neighbouring country, the situation related to Burma/Myanmar will not be taken into account.

⁴⁷ The situation does not take account of Latvia, which is unrepresented in India and in the neighbouring countries. France is the only MS not accredited from India to any of these neighbours, while Belgium, Austria, Poland and Slovakia are accredited to all them. Germany is accredited only to Bhutan (like Switzerland and Norway). Finland and Lithuania to Bangladesh. Italy and the Netherlands are accredited to Bhutan and Nepal. Denmark is accredited to Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka, while Greece, Luxembourg, Hungary and Malta are accredited to Bangladesh, Maldives and Nepal. Sweden and Spain are accredited to Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, while the Czech Republic is accredited to Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, while the remaining 7 are accredited to Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

⁴⁸ It is to be noted that Schengen representation agreements do not include the processing of national visas, which are of interest for the EU in relation to mobility linked with the *Erasmus Mundus* programme.

Italy represents Malta and Iceland in Kolkata; Germany represents Island in Mumbai and Chennai while Portugal represents Greece and Slovenia in Goa.

India has the second widest Schengen external service provider (**ESP**) network in the world, after Russia and before China. Sixteen MS (of the 21 present that issue Schengen visas) have outsourced to an ESP, throughout India, different visa-related administrative and non-judgemental tasks in the reporting period⁴⁹. In sub-continental countries like India, the extensive use of the ESPs has the advantage to allow MS to reach up different locations, often very distant from the pertinent consular post. In addition to proximity to applicants, ESPs also offer the advantages of comprehensive list of different services, often faster procedures as well as use of on-line appointment system. MS also consider that the outsourcing of some ancillary tasks to an ESP is an effective way to contribute to reduce indirect costs for visa applications (overall time and money spent by the applicants, especially when they have to undergo an interview, etc.) often offsetting the direct ones (namely the visa fee).

Fifteen MS avail themselves of the services provided by the same ESP⁵⁰, one MS of a different one⁵¹. Both ESPs have set up "national" dedicated visa application centres (VACs), offering information services (though call centres), web based modules (for appointment scheduling, online payment collection; visa application status check), as well as, in one case (Denmark) biometrics data capture and transfer but only related to long-stay visas. Most of these MS VACs belonging from the same ESP both in the capital and in the peripheral cities are co-located in the same building, in the "Joint Visa Application Centre", *de facto* creating *ante litteram* "Common Application Centres".

Currently, there is no homogeneity in MS's ESP network coverage neither on ESP selection procedure nor on the legal instrument used and its terms and conditions. With regards to ESP networks, they can vary from one location (in the capital city only) to up to twelve ones (New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Chennai, Pondicherry, Goa, Jalandhar, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kochi). Only one MS also reaches Pune⁵² (besides nine other locations). In terms of selection and legal instruments, some MS launched a world-wide tender, others an India-wide one, others "local" tenders. Some signed specific country-wise contracts, others location-wide ones. Some MS also concluded, in the reporting period, specific agreements with ESP(s) in neighbouring countries to be able to collect visa applications *in loco* while processing them in India. In parallel they withdrew their previous bilateral representation agreements⁵³.

⁴⁹ Such tasks range from providing general information on Schengen (as well as national) visa requirements and on necessary supporting documents to supplying free of charge visa application forms, to collecting and transmitting data and applications to the relevant consular post. ESPs also garner the visa fee, arrange appointments for interview (where appropriate) at the consular post; collect and return the applicants' passports, including, where applicable, delivering the standard letter notifying and motivating refusal, annulment or revocation of a visa. In most cases the ESPs also perform a first check on the presence of all the mandatory supporting documents (on the basis of a checklist provided by the singular consular post, pending the adoption by the Commission, of the harmonised list of supporting documents under examination by the Visa Committee since April 2012) and require -on the MS's behalf- possible missing supporting documentation so as to reduce potential refusals by the relevant visa office.

⁵⁰ VFS Global. Based in UK, this company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Kuoni Group, a public-listed company headquartered in Zurich.

⁵¹ Cox & Kings Ltd., the longest established travel company in the world, based in London.

⁵² Pune is one of the largest urban agglomerations in India and a thriving economic and industrial hub in the whole country. One MS includes Pune in its framework externalisation contract (the widest valuable by any MS) but the service is not yet operational in the current reporting period.

⁵³ It is the case, for instance, of Greece in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Five MS continue to receive visa applicants directly. For the time being they do not seem to consider outsourcing in the near future to accommodate the rising demand for travel to the Schengen area.

However, potential future MS reduced presence (given to tight financial conditions in most EU MS which prompt diplomatic and consular network rationalisation⁵⁴) and the future introduction of biometric identifiers is likely to entail a possible further increase in outsourcing. The use of ESPs offers evident economies of scale related to a wider territorial coverage, aimed at avoiding a disproportionate effort on the part of visa applicants to have access to visa services, the main concern of all MS in India. Moreover the outsourcing of ancillary tasks to ESPs enables MS visa posts to focus entirely on their primary duty, i.e. visa applications processing (from individual application examination to interviews -where contemplated- to proper assessment of migratory risk and ensuing decision-making, to visa stickers printing and affixing).

As in 2011, also in 2012 Germany, Switzerland, Italy and France were the largest Schengen visa operations in terms of visas applied for, handling -alone- almost 65% of all Schengen visa applications in India.

Taking into account the growing wealth of the Indian population, the demand for Schengen visas can be expected to increase in the foreseeable future, particularly as far as business and tourism visas requests are concerned. As regards the former category of travellers, most MS already apply specific procedural facilitations. For the latter, the possibility of a bilateral EU-India agreement on an Approved Destination Status scheme similar to the one in force with China, could be explored. This, comprising a detailed system of sanctions (from warnings to withdrawal also for an indefinite time) against visa abuses, would also contribute to combat further the mushrooming of dubious travel agents and prevent potential irregular migration.

Some MS estimate a potential increase in visa applications up to 10-15% in the next reporting period. However, a comparison of Schengen visas workload (i.e. visas applied for) between the year 2011 and 2012 highlights a stationary situation (over 506,000 in the year 2012⁵⁵ against just over 500,000 in 2011), i.e. a 1,24% average increase, with -relatively- smaller operation registering a net increase while big(ger) MS experience a decreasing demand (except one). This could be partially ascribed to the fact that over the last few years MS have been increasing the number of multiple entry visas issued (from over 214,000 in 2011 to over 232,000 in just a year). In so doing, in a moment where tight financial conditions do not allow increase of visa staff (apart from a MS) this *de facto* visa facilitation for legitimate travellers allows MS to further focus visa staff's attention on more in-depth document checking in order to increasingly curtail potential fraud cases.

⁵⁴ Since 17 December 2011 the Polish Consulate General in Mumbai had stopped issuing visas. The competences were transferred to the Polish Embassy in New Delhi. The same is planned for the Netherlands to take place in the next reporting period (June 2013).

⁵⁵ It is to be highlighted that in the case of some countries, substantial discrepancies in visa statistics apply. This further highlights the need to Discrepancies in statistics.

The substantial visa workload as well as the complex local circumstances in India⁵⁶ have indeed encouraged MS to further cooperate within the Local Schengen Cooperation (hereafter LSC). This is particularly challenging in India in absolute and relative terms both for external and internal (organisational) factors. Several MS consular posts are in fact confronted with financial constraints following the economic crisis, which pose internal organisational challenges in relation to hiring (sufficient) staff resources. Inherently time-consuming procedures, a lack of sufficient staff and an increasing number of applications, contribute to lengthy visa processing procedures. For this reason, there is a high demand by MS that the European Union Delegation (henceforth EUD), in charge of LSC in New Delhi, keeps a steady coordinating and steering role. MS openly state that "without the EUD to spur the harmonisation exercise there would be no harmonised application of the Visa Code in India".

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

All Schengen Associated States as well as the three EU MS that do not yet apply the common visa policy⁵⁷ are systematically invited to the LSC Plenary meetings, which are also open to the participation of those EU MS which do not apply the common visa policy.⁵⁸ Croatia has also been invited, during the reporting period, to participate in the LSC group as an observer since January 2013.

In locations outside the capital, LSC meetings are held by rotating chairs, according to practical agreements reached locally. Local harmonisation is thus granted more on an *ad hoc* basis. Taking into account MS Consulate Generals lack of dedicated staff to such tasks and the fact that local chairs usually serve for a very short rotation (from 3 to maximum 6 months) MS have lamented the lack of continuity and have praised -during the reporting period- a further *super partes* involvement by the EUD in the harmonisation exercise also in peripheral consular locations. In order to meet such MS expectations, towards the end of the reporting period, the EUD reached out to the peripheral operations for the first time, organising a LSC meeting in Mumbai, which allowed the EUD to inform the biggest Schengen visas hub in the country about the LSC architecture in New Delhi (plenary and sub-groups) and on the several initiatives on-going. Subsequently, in order to further promote a concrete comprehensive coverage of information exchange throughout the country, since February 2013, the EUD has started involving MS consular posts besides the ones located in the capital with a very practical measure: extending to them the New Delhi Plenary thriving electronic exchange.

⁵⁶ India is a significant source of high value/low risk (bona fide) visa applicants for whom facilitative procedures are already in place. Of all Schengen visas issued, MS grant almost 50% multiple-entry visas with a period of validity ranging from six months to five years to widely travelled passport holders and well known business people. However, a high level of fraudulent visa applications and illegal migration attempts are also registered, especially in some particular regions of the sub-continent. Moreover until now, the activities of "travel agents (as well as "students placing agent") are largely unregulated in practice and are reported to be involved in the majority of migration abuse, fraud and smuggling.

⁵⁷ Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania.

⁵⁸ UK and Ireland.

Between April 2012 and March 2013 LSC meetings were held in Plenary formation⁵⁹ 16 times: 13 times⁶⁰, on a regular basis i.e. according to a roadmap for progressive implementation, and three times on an *ad hoc* one⁶¹. The *ad hoc* LCS were devoted to consultations on particular concerns or specific pressing issues: (1) the finalisation of a Scene Setting Paper on Migration and Mobility⁶²; (2) a briefing and afterwards (3) a debriefing on the first EU-India High Level Dialogue on Migration and Mobility⁶³ (HLDMM).

Some LSC Plenary meetings have hosted valuable interactions with International Organisations representatives (UNODC, UNWOMEN, ILO) as well as with local lawyers addressing the issue of "fraud in preparation of documents for visa applications".

Furthermore, prior to specific events (such as the HLDMM, or a couple of seminars on migration and mobility-related issues, etc.), the LSC had indeed provided a functional platform for MS to coagulate their shared standpoint on common concerns.

In this context, parallel to the LSC (for the mobility leg of the HLDMM), since September 2012, another EU coordination meeting has been organised regularly by the EUD: the "*ad hoc* Local Migration Group", which has mainly addressed migration and national visas issues. The creation of such group, tasked to grant the continuous follow-up of the HLDMM, migration chapter, has been particularly beneficial for the LSC, as it has contributed to keep the latter focused mainly on local Schengen harmonisation.

⁵⁹ The LSC India enjoys also several specific sub-groups, as explained later in this report.

⁶⁰ On: 25 April, 23 May, 5 and 20 June, 27 August, 12 and 26 September, 19 October and 7 November in 2012. On 7 (Mumbai), 14 and 26 February and 15 March in 2013.

⁶¹ On: 25 June, 2 and 5 July.

⁶² Mobility and visa policy are closely inter-linked as the visa policy is a crucial element of any forward-looking policy on mobility, as recognised in the Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the functioning of Local Schengen Cooperation during the first two years of implementation of the Visa Code See: Brussels, 7.11.2012 COM(2012) 648 final.

⁶³ Held in the post "Global Approach to Migration and Mobility" configuration, on 2 July 2012.

In the reporting period, the LSC has further advanced, if compared to the two previous reporting periods, not only quantitatively⁶⁴, but also qualitatively. MS attendance of the meetings, proactively encouraged by the EUD, has continuously improved. Since the very beginning of the reporting period, the LSC has thus gradually developed into a systematic and rationalized cooperation under the coordination of the EUD⁶⁵, which has progressively played a more present and streamlined role, becoming a knowledgeable point of reference for all MS as well as a regular source of information for initiatives adopted at HQ level on both migration and mobility related issues. This has further attracted more MS participation. As a result, the LSC in New Delhi has observed enthusiastic participation and representation from all MS present. These have increasingly appreciated the EUD pragmatic, *super partes*, involvement, which has granted concrete follow-up to the LSC complex and technical exercise, which also bears significant political connotations in India.

Besides the secretarial, ancillary tasks⁶⁶, the EUD has convened the Plenary, setting its agenda; hosted and chaired the meetings; collected and disseminated data and relevant information; drafted and circulated locally summary reports (in the form of minutes of LSC Plenary) containing operational conclusions for further follow-up. The draft minutes, sent to the MS with a deadline for comments and amendments, have usually been approved formally by the successive Plenary meeting. In their approved version, they serve as a useful record of various harmonisation resolutions adopted. So far, MS have not usually shared the minutes with their capitals. Only few of them have drawn up their own reports.

⁶⁴ The number of meetings has literally doubled from the previous reporting period, when 8 meetings were held (of those 3 were in the first 3 months of 2012, under the new direction of the EUD, and 5 in the previous 9 months during two consecutive Presidencies), and tripled from the first reporting period (when MS only met 5 times in a year). This was mainly due to respond to the need for further harmonisation of local practices, considering the over 2-year backlog in the implementation of the visa code.

⁶⁵ It is to be highlighted that it is not until January 2012 that a formal LSC group started to meet regularly as per art. 48 of the Visa Code and the EUD took its reins. Prior to that, it had been locally agreed that the rotating EU Presidency of the Council would "continue" to chair the LSC meetings. In the previous reporting period, for instance, three subsequent chairs had followed: from April to June 2011 Hungary, then Poland from June to December 2011 and since January 2012 the EUD. Such rotation did not confer any continuity to the harmonisation exercise, especially in terms of follow up. Moreover until 31.12.2011 the meetings were held in an unclear, mixed "visa/consular" formation. Some of them were dedicated to broad-spectrum consular issues, while the "visa" ones were mainly devoted to wide-ranging visa issues (including national ones) and not at all focused mainly on local Schengen harmonisation as per Visa Code requirements. This entailed some confusion on the exact mandate of the LSC. It was only since January 2012 that the EUD (reinforced with an EU MS diplomat on deputation to the EEAS, with previous robust visas, migration and consular experience) was given the responsibility of the LSC. Further to that, and upon a request by the then Local Consular Coordination (LCC) chair, the "visa/consular formation" was split in two: the LSC and the LCC. At the beginning, for *prima facie* economies of scale the two formations started to be held back to back. However, such apparent functional setting proved counterproductive as often a meeting would have been held hostage by the other. Since the second semester 2012, at the request of the then LCC Chair, the two formations stopped being held back-to-back. The LSC acquired its stand-alone structure with a Plenary formation and different sub-groups which would refer back to the Plenary on specific issues. With such architecture, constant monitoring and robust follow up could be continuously granted by the EUD throughout the whole reporting period.

⁶⁶ These are activities that play a crucial role for the daily management of the group and that range from sending invitations to the MS, and keeping an update of the contact and attendance lists to organising the logistics of the meetings.

In general terms, MS consider that the LSC has acquired in the reporting year an excellent overview of the problems the visa sections are confronted with on a daily basis, including on national visas (migration issues). Though LSC has mainly dealt with Schengen harmonisation, until the creation of the *ad hoc* Local Migration Group, it has also provided a useful platform for MS to exchange information on migration trends, patterns and challenges, according to the provision of the Visa Code.

In the reporting period the LSC in New Delhi has been considered, by the EU MS representatives, as one of the most effective EU-coordination exercises carried out by the EUD. It has also provided an example to, and shared its "best practice" with, several other EUDs⁶⁷ as well as other third country missions in India⁶⁸.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Until the beginning of the reporting period, agreement on the need to have a locally harmonised application of the Visa Code had not been reached in India⁶⁹.

The LSC thus first focused on the need to grant locally uniformity in concrete application of the Visa Code. The EUD encouraged MS to further assess the situation. In order to facilitate this task, at the beginning of 2012 the EUD had launched a "Schengen visa survey" which provided, in the following spring a first 360 degree description of all MS visas operations functioning on the ground. The survey highlighted several shortcomings deriving from the lack of harmonisation, particularly with regard to the required number and type of supporting documents. Moreover, different rules applied to the "acceptance" of supporting documents, copies/faxes, and translation. This could have albeit only partially explained the visa shopping phenomenon registered in the country⁷⁰.

⁶⁷ These found useful to build upon on LSC-India inputs thus exploiting all possible economies of scale and avoiding potential duplications.

⁶⁸ Particularly the US and the Russian ones.

⁶⁹ The situation was unchanged in the two previous reporting periods. Since spring 2011 the LSC had in fact ruled out the need for a Local Schengen harmonisation in India.

⁷⁰ Particularly in Mumbai where, in general terms, it is however mostly to be ascribed to MS limited processing capacities (and ensuing necessity to fix visa caps).

In consideration of this, some MS expressed their openness to review their position and agreed to first concentrate on harmonisation concerning supporting documentary requirements. In order to facilitate such endeavour, since spring 2012 the EUD sponsored the creation of temporary working sub-groups (hereinafter **SGs**) dedicated to specific issues, after the LSC agreed in principle on the SGs standard operating procedures. The LSC being a "collective task" among the MS and the EUD, the Plenary⁷¹ agreed that each SG would be composed by interested, like-minded, volunteering MS and chaired by one of them. The harmonisation exercise would thus be enhanced by the steering role of the relevant "*chef de file*". Once reached their primary goal, the specific SG would have been dissolved. The EUD thus proposed an ambitious tentative list of SGs⁷². The first two sub-groups became fully functional in March - April 2012. One was tasked to re-assess the need for harmonisation at local level and agree upon a draft harmonised list of supporting documents, the other mainly dealt with migration-related information exchange.

In their deliberations during the reporting period, MS underscored some major impediments to the uniform implementation of the Visa Code. First and foremost with regard to the visa fee, as MS use different systems to set the exchange rate. A solution would thus need to be found among central authorities. Another impediment is the practical granting of a grace period linked with the related insurance coverage. It has also proven difficult in the reporting period to agree on common criteria for the implementation of optional visa fee waivers for certain categories of applicants.

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

As mentioned above, a specific sub-group was tasked by the Plenary to draft a harmonised list of supporting document to be submitted by the visa applicants. Such draft was revised several times in order to take into account the concerns expressed by MS. By May 2012, the sub-group proposal was adopted by the Plenary and subsequently endorsed by the meeting of the Heads of Missions. It was immediately forwarded to the Visa Committee. In July the Visa Committee made some remarks, inviting the LSC in Delhi (and the other locations in India) to explore the possibility of including the supporting documents to be submitted by seafarers and other staff working on vessels in such harmonised list draft. In September the SG resumed its work and via the Plenary submitted to the Visa Committee a revised version of the list which had taken on board most of the Visa Committee comments. The SG was thus dissolved.

⁷¹ From now on the term Plenary will refer to the monthly LSC meeting open to all MS representatives as opposed to the sub-groups, where only some MS would take part.

⁷² The list, drawn from the requirements set by the Visa Code, would include the following topics: 1) harmonised list of supporting documents 2) migratory and/or security risks assessment (migration sub-group); 3) visa application form translation in hindi; 4) seafarers, staff working in ships; 5) commercial intermediaries, including travel agencies; 6) common information sheet; 7) travel medical insurance + insurance companies; 8) first track/VIP/bona fide visas facilitations; 9) use of false, counterfeit or forged documents, 10) harmonisation visa fee exemptions and of service fee; 11) statistics (and CIRCABC website); 12) selection of external service providers ESP. Not all these sub-group became operational during the reporting period. Moreover to this first list, four additional SGs addressed the following issues during the reporting period: 13) fraudulent "student agents"; 14) diplomatic and service passport visa waivers; 15) Visa Code revision; 16) *cahier de doléances* related to difficulties encountered by MS missions and EU nationals while applying for visas to the relevant Indian missions.

Further to a specific request of the Visa Committee, the Plenary tasked another SG to follow up the "seafarers" request. A local harmonised approach was found and in February 2013 the additional part of the draft list was sent to the Visa Committee. At the end of March 2013 the LSC was also asked by the Visa Committee some additional feedback. At the end of the reporting period the list was still under scrutiny by the Visa Committee. If at the beginning of the reporting period MS considered that harmonisation was far to be acquired, at the end of it, a lot had actually been achieved as MS were prepared and forthcoming on the necessity of further harmonisation of practices and the necessity to align completely to such harmonised approach. For its part, the EUD continued to grant all the necessary support to ensure that the required tasks were carried out as per Visa Code requirements.

3.3 Exchange of information

➤ *Exchange of information within the LSC*

The exchange of information within the LSC group is effective and efficient. MS cooperate and reply promptly when asked cross checks on questionable applications. They maintain regular working contacts also with the EUD (also due to the close cooperation, outside the Schengen topics, in migration issues and in the framework of the Local Consular Coordination group).

While keeping the focus on the main LSC priority (the harmonised list of supporting document) further to the successful experience of the first two sub-groups, the EUD promoted the setting up of other SGs, a useful platform to exchange information among like-minded MS, which would then report their findings to the Plenary. This system proved an important added value particularly for the small(er) MS which could have aligned to the reinforced cooperation put forward by other like-minded MS. Some worked in parallel with others, some one after the other, according to the priorities set by the Plenary as well as the availability of the participating MS. Some SGs organised meetings to boost cooperation, others worked mainly by electronic exchanges. After six months from the start of the SG exercise, the LSC assessed their functioning and set the next priorities for action. Further to that, the following SG were tasked by the Plenary to gather and exchange specific information on the following (in brackets the state of the SG proceeding at the end of the reporting period):

- (1) local practice related to visas to seafarers, staff working in ships (completed)⁷³;
- (2) common criteria for visa fee exemptions and service fee exemptions and service fee applied (on going)⁷⁴;
- (3) visa code revision (on going).

⁷³ This SG initially included also the category of "nurses", but as for some MS these would be included among national visas, this purpose was later excluded.

⁷⁴ In order to build on the significant progress to be achieved once the harmonisation of supporting documents is granted, it is important for the MS to converge on the visa fee and service fee charged, as well as on visa and service fee exemption. The first issue is considered to be at a stalemate. MS apply different exchange rates (in most cases imposed by their capitals) and also update their exchange rates with a different frequency, so it is impossible to have one uniform Schengen visa fee in local currency (the problem would need to be solved at Central authorities level). If since 2011 the MS had concluded that in India there is no operational way to harmonise the fees at local level and though the visa fee is not the most pressing issue in India, it is to be kept on the agenda of further discussions, mainly as a matter of political coherence and consistency for the EU towards the Indian authorities and especially at a time when India is discriminating against some MS. To this end a specific sub-group is to be tasked in the next reporting period to further re-assess the situation and present some possible common solutions.

In addition some sub-groups were tasked with more far-reaching "political" aims:

- (4) commercial intermediaries, including travel agencies and (mushrooming) travel facilitators (first assessment completed);
- (5) local practices on /first track/ VIP/ bona fide visas facilitations, especially for business purposes and tourism (on going);
- (6) false, counterfeit and forged documents presented by visa applicants (still to be inducted);
- (7) fraudulent "student agents" (first assessment completed).

➤ *Monthly statistics*

Until May-June 2012 it still proved difficult to get on a regular basis statistics from all MS. Ever since, particularly encouraged by the EUD, for its inherent visa policy "political dimension", the exchange of monthly visa statistics has increased drastically. However, substantial limitations to such statistical exchange still remain as some MS cannot share their data regularly depending on their capitals to get the consolidated statistics. In addition, from a sheer methodological point of view the comparison becomes even more difficult as some MS cannot provide separate statistics for non-EU citizens not residing in India (only some can in fact provide data per nationality of applicants without link to the "residence" criteria) . Furthermore, if some homogeneous statistics could progressively be exchanged, not all MS possess statistics broken down into broad categories of purposes (e.g. business, tourism, official/mission, etc.), which could prove extremely useful to identify trends locally and predict future trends. MS consider it useful to collect data on D visas too, which are considered useful for comparison purposes. This will be a task for the next reporting period.

➤ *Cases of fraud*

➤

The issuing of visas is highly challenging in India mainly because of wide spread practice of official documents, data and passports forgery coupled with the high risk of illegal migration (mainly from Punjab, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala). MS therefore highly acknowledge the value of sharing information on cases of false, counterfeit and forged documents identified in their visa process, particularly as far as national visas are concerned. They cooperate and reply promptly when asked cross checks on questionable applications.

Encouraged by a first streamlining of the distribution list, this type of information exchange has increased exponentially in the reporting period among MS. They all share daily their findings on alleged or proven fraud cases. This has further led the Plenary to propose a specific information exchange dedicated to this issue which will be endorsed in next reporting period. In this context, the EUD has further promoted information and exchange and cooperation (in the form of training) between MS visa officers and the Delhi-based team of EU MS Immigration Airline Liaison Officers. Moreover two MS have organised in the reporting period two meetings of the "Delhi Anti-Fraud Working Group" where experiences and recent trends on fraud cases (particularly on forged Indian passports and cases from Delhi airport) were exchanged with like-minded countries. The topics ("case studies") ranged from fake movie companies to Tamil families holidays in Europe; from Punjabi Bodybuilders or Sri Lankan women traffickers to Gujarati visa dealers or Kerala attempt of child trafficking; from Nepal/Kathmandu airport cases to tourists from Tamil Nadu and other cases from Southern India.

Backgrounds on individual visa applicants were also shared on a case by case basis. Exchange of information within the LSC is starting to help identify gaps/problems so as to raise them in Brussels or solve them locally.

Such enhanced information exchange has also highlighted the peculiar difficulties MS visa staff are confronted daily with, given the high incidence false, falsified and forged documents in India and has also underscored the need for periodic ad hoc training further training on detecting falsified documents that could be delivered by Frontex. The EUD has devoted increasing attention and support to the valorisation of the EU MS Immigration Airline Liaison Officers, underscoring their training potential in these matters. A number of tailor-made training modules for (not-only) Embassies/Consulates staff were implemented in the reporting period, thus providing a "service" also to third countries. This is an "EU" added value to be fully exploited also in the next reporting period.

➤ *travel medical insurance (TMI) (i.e. insurance companies offering adequate TMI)*

Encouraged by the EUD, a specific SG was set up to exchange information on TMI and in general on insurance companies, mainly in order to assess whether local insurance companies offer adequate TMI corresponding to the requirements of the Visa Code. The SG produced a first comparative table of "Indian" TMI terms and conditions. The first finding highlighted that almost all of the insurance companies offer limited (if not inadequate) policies that do not seem to comply with the Schengen requirement, particularly with regard to senior citizens. The Plenary tasked the SG to go into further details. In March 2013, the SG organised a meeting with the Indian Insurance Sector to discuss these issues in an open and collaborative way.

➤ *Other issues*

The LSC also allowed MS to exchange information on a wide range of topics of their immediate interest: from sharing the list of Indian (and Bhutanese) travel documents on which a visa can be affixed to local (diverging) practices on handwritten correction of personal data in Indian passports which led to an harmonised approach adopted at the end of the reporting period. Other topics included: the inexistence, so far, of an agreed black list of travel agencies; visa applications caps practices (some MS indicate as a necessary limitation during peak seasons); harmonised approach towards the Indian Ministry of External Affairs official requests for visas to be issued; "local suggestions" on bona fide/VIP facilitation practices, in order to counter Indian authorities' remarks on alleged difficulties with regards to business visas (on this the EUD started gathering information as a "*cahier des doléances*" by EU economic operators –as the Council of the EU Chambers of Commerce- but also tourists, students etc.). In addition, MS shared their best practices (and templates) on ESP's inspections sharing and other topics.

In the context of information exchange, the EUD also circulated several useful documents like the list of MS acronyms, an updated list of the MS participants' contacts as well as numerous documents ahead during and after the Plenary meetings (statistical tables, relevant EU legislation applicable, etc).

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

During the reporting period, the LSC result-oriented approach achieved additional tangible outcomes. It endorsed a translation of the visa application form in hindi (devanagari script) in September 2012. It finalised the draft of a common information sheet, to be adopted during the next reporting period, which will improve the consistency of information provided to visa applicants. Once adopted it will be posted on MS as well as the EUD website. Its translation into each state's national language will then be the responsibility of the relevant Diplomatic mission.

It drew a comparative table on visa facilitation/waiver arrangements in force or under negotiation for Indian diplomatic and service passport holders, which contains information going far beyond (Annex 5 on information on national derogations). The table was shared with the relevant migration and mobility officials in Brussels and brought to the attention of the High Level Working Groups on Asylum and Migration.

The Plenary also agreed on a common approach on the request by the India Council for Migration to provide data for evidence-based research on international migration and also to gather information on Indian mobility to the EU (with specific statistical surveys). In addition, the LSC also served as a platform to exchange practices on visas and residence permits for Indian diplomatic passport holders in all EU MS.

In connection with the launch of the visa code revision exercise, beside the SG tasked to prepare the "India contribution" to the Visa Code revision, the EUD encouraged the MS to provide their knowledgeable assistance to the consultancy in charge of the impact assessment study and collaborate actively on the questionnaire sent to the MS consular posts.

Finally, the LSC started to collect MS' complains about hindrances encountered by MS missions and EU nationals while applying for visas to the relevant Indian missions (so called "*cahier de doléances*").

As mentioned above a specific SG was created to deal with migration-related issues. Though not dealing with Schengen matters *per se*, all interested European countries agreed to work jointly to assess both the migration and mobility situation in India thus providing food for thought in view of the HLDMM meetings.

4. Challenges in 2013-14

Parallel to other issues to be raised upon specific instructions/decisions by the Visa Committee, the main challenges in the upcoming period will be the ones described below. The possibility to reach a tangible harmonisation will mainly depend on the availability of human resources available in the EUD to be dedicated to the LSC tasks, in order to meet the MS expectations.

In general terms, all the ongoing activities will need to be finalised with locally agreed lines to take.

1) Finalisation of the common information sheet and of the various pending issues being examined by the various SGs, including the harmonisation of visa fee and of service fee exemption. If the visa fee harmonisation currently does not seem an achievable goal locally, the upcoming introduction of biometric data collection could possibly entail a future alignment of the service fee. Other topics could concern the promotion of banks drafts as a mean of payment of the visa fee, etc.

- 2) Efficient communication and coordination with locations outside the capital still needs to be fully ensured by the LSC. *Ad hoc* initiatives are to be explored, like joint meetings once a semester. Similarly to other challenging locations (Russia and China in particular) there is a strong need to have the EUD, competent for the local implementation of the EU common visa policy, present at the meetings, as not all information reaches the periphery. Juggling with the dramatic budget cuts in the near future, however, the possible participation of the EUD to attend LSC meetings and visit several visa sections in the periphery is not to be granted.
- 3) Further exchange of information about the selection of external service providers and the establishment of the terms and conditions of their respective legal instruments shall be carried out.
- 4) Further promotion of legitimate travellers (business, tourist) which should lead to an increase of multiple entry visas. As tourism (especially group tourism) is bound to increase in the future, conditions have to be assessed if a bilateral agreement similar to the ADS between the EU and China is viable also for India. This will allow, in parallel the development of a useful system of sanctions, pending the possibility of drawing a black list of travel agents.
- 5) Intensified cooperation of LSC MS to tackle document fraud will also be further promoted within the above mentioned "Delhi Anti-Fraud Working Group" as well as the possible organisation of a specific training by Frontex. In the future it will be useful to work on a "database" of "traffickers".
- 6) A more regular and structured exchange of monthly visa statistics is still to be achieved. Many MS, in particular smaller missions, highlight their difficulty in providing this information not easily accessible via their IT visa systems. In addition substantial discrepancies between statistics provided monthly and annual ones need to be addressed.
- 7) A CIRCABC database for LSC in India is operational but it is poorly updated with relevant documents. Not all Embassies and Consulates have signed up so far. Increasing data sharing and general use of CIRCABC still needs to be granted, but human resources to do so need to be found. For the time being only one EUD staff of the Political Section (EEAS political post) works part-time on LSC, as well as on migration issues and consular affairs, covering not only the political aspects but also the day-to day implementation. With no assistance or secretarial support provided, this additional task will prove difficult to be carried out. A specific sub-group on this might need to be tasked to assess the situation. Some MS advocate the development of a more viable referencing databases system related to cases of fraud. This would help interested parties to upload information also on visa annulments. It is still necessary to explore the feasibility of identifying possible regular contact points for all visa offices with relevant Indian Police officers to further exchange information and practices on fraudulent cases.
- 8) Exchange of visa officers should be increased among Schengen MS Embassies on a bilateral basis to enhance further cooperation.
- 9) Further best practices exchanges within the Visa Committee would prove useful to ensure that proper communication exchange, coordination and follow-up can be granted *in loco* by the respective representations and the EUD.

10) It would prove extremely beneficial to receive LSC training locally as well as meet/exchange common challenges with other LSC contact points in the region, to exchange practical experiences of further future challenges.

11) In view of the HLDMM, the role of the LSC to grant the necessary momentum to the "mobility" leg of the Dialogue is to be defined. To that end, a comprehensive LSC risk assessment for India would be very useful.

12) The periodic exchange of information will remain an important point on the LSC agenda to be further enhanced with, only if need be, *ad hoc* specific meetings, to be decided by the Plenary on a case-by-case basis.

13) An assessment on the possible need to translate, for information, the VAF in the other official language(s) could also be carried out, especially in the peripheral Consulates.

14) The potential resuming of a general increase trend in the number of visa applications could pose a substantial challenge for the majority of the MS in the future.

15) The biggest challenge will also be the collection of biometric data, both in terms of technical implementation as well as communication (complaints by local authorities are very likely to happen) when the new system enter into force.

In order to carry out the various tasks under the Visa Code in the next reporting period human resources situation within the EUD remains an open issue.

5. Other issues

During the reporting period, MS were constantly informed on the EU-funded project carried out in India, under the thematic programme of development cooperation in the areas of Migration & Asylum, where more focus on mobility issues should be granted. In this context, a specific exchange of information occurred on a study carried out by the European University Institute on visa liberalisation for Indians, i.e. an assessment of the impact, including security aspects, of visa facilitation at EU level with India, broken down in specific categories (business people; tourists; seafarers. In addition attention was also to be focused on highly skilled Indian workers; researchers; students (which would usually hold a long stay visas but in some cases arrive in the EU with a short-stay one), as well as diplomatic and special/official passport holders (visa waiver).

In September 2012 most MS participated in the National Consultation Workshop on Facilitating Safe and Legal Migration and Preventing Irregular Migration, organised by the India Council for Migration, which for the first time, in a comprehensive way addressed the issue of irregular migratory flows. This shall be maintained high on the bilateral EU-India agenda of the HLDMM.

Scheduled since February 2012, a Student Mobility Workshop is to take place in the next reporting period.

This report has been prepared by the EUD in New Delhi and approved by the LSC New Delhi Plenary on 3 July 2013.



24/04/2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) INDONESIA 2012-2013 REPORT⁷⁵

1. Introduction

In Indonesia 20 EU Member States are represented and 18 Schengen Member States. Several Member States use external service providers for collecting applications. Under a global reciprocal arrangement, one Member State issues visas on behalf of another Member State which is also represented locally.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Six LSC meetings were held during the year to coincide with meetings of Consular Counsellors. They were chaired by the EU Delegation and well attended by Member States. Reports were drawn up by the Delegation and shared with DG HOME and Member State Embassies, who shared them with their capitals. The Delegation did not co-ordinate directly on matters related to LSC outside Jakarta, which were ensured by the Member States concerned themselves.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Member States and the EU Delegation worked well together on fulfilling the Visa Code requirements. The Deputy Head of the Delegation took responsibility for LSC, supported on ad hoc enquiries by DG HOME. He was also supported in preparing statistics, agendas and reports by trainees within the Delegation.

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

A harmonised list of supporting documents to be submitted by applicants in Indonesia was agreed by the Visa Committee in August 2011. This list is applied by Member States in Indonesia.

⁷⁵ April 2012 – March 2013

3.3 Exchange of information

The EU Delegation and Member States exchanged information on statistics for issuing and refusing Schengen visas in their LSC meetings. They used these meetings to discuss trends, anomalies and any implications. While there were differences between the rates of refusal for different Member States, it was felt that this was a result of seasonal and local factors, and not evidence of different standards being applied. There has been a steady growth in the number of Schengen visas issued by Member States in Indonesia.

The meetings were also used to exchange information on cases of possible fraud or visa shopping and on commonly shared issues, e.g. manual amendments to Indonesian passports.

The Delegation maintains a list of bona fide insurance companies, agreed with Member States, which offer adequate travel medical insurance in accordance with the Visa Code.

The Delegation also maintains a list of travel agents which Member States frequently deal with and which are felt to comply with the requirements of the Visa Code.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

None.

4. Challenges in 2012-2013

Training of EU Delegation staff involved in this area remains desirable.

With the Delegation reducing its staffing and tasks increasing, staff capacity to carry out LSC will come under increasing pressure in 2013-14.

5. Other issues

Owing to different ways of calculating exchange rates, there is no harmonisation between Member States when charging visa fees in local currency.

A number of Member States already have, or are negotiating, bilateral arrangements with Indonesia on visa exemptions for holders of diplomatic and official passports. The Indonesian authorities continue to press for their nationals to be granted visa-free access to the Schengen area.

This report was approved by Member States at the Local Schengen Coordination meeting held in the EU Delegation in Jakarta on 23 April 2013.



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) IRAQ
2012-2013 REPORT⁷⁶

1. Introduction

There are 12 EU MS embassies in Baghdad: CZ, DE, EL, ES, FR, IT, NL, PL, RO, SE, SK and UK. HU and BG are expected to open missions in the near future. DK closed its embassy in 2012.

Due to the difficult security environment, only a small number of MS provide full visa services at their missions in Baghdad. Most MS only issue visas for business and official visits at their Baghdad embassies, and refer applicants for tourist/visit visas to a mission in a neighbouring country (usually Jordan.)

The MS that do provide full visa services in Baghdad have reported a very strong demand, and the Iraqi authorities have strongly encouraged EU MS to provide normal visa services in Baghdad as soon as possible.

No Schengen MS use external service providers, but a small number are currently exploring the possibility. (UK started to use World Bridge to receive applications in 2012.)

10 EU MS have a presence in Erbil, in the form of a consulate, an embassy liaison office or a commercial office. (AT, CZ, DE, EL, FR, IT, NL, RO, SE, UK). 3 other MS have Honorary Consulates (DK, ES, SK). A small number provide visa services.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Local Schengen Cooperation meetings are held on a bi-monthly basis. Due to the limited staff resources at the EU Delegation, it has been agreed that meetings are chaired and hosted by the Polish Embassy, in cooperation with the Delegation. Meeting are well-attended, with most MS present when possible. Non-Schengen EU MS attend meetings. Reports have generally been drawn up by the Polish Embassy, and sent on to capitals by embassies on an ad-hoc basis. EU DEL coordinates work on the harmonisation of visa procedures.

⁷⁶ April 2012 – March 2013

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS are applying the Visa Code, and are keen to participate in LSC work. VIS biometric procedures were introduced at all MS in 2012 (see point 4, below).

MS have reported serious difficulties in assessing the authenticity of local documents.

MS regularly receive applications for non-official travel that are accompanied by supporting notes verbales from the MFA. MFA procedures on issuing such notes are unclear.

A number of MS have noted that Article 13 (7) (c) of the Visa Code, regarding fingerprinting exemptions, is somewhat unclear and should be amended. (It is not clear as to whether members of the government and their accompanying spouses are only exempted from finger printing when travelling for official reasons, or if they are also exempted for private visits. It is clear that members of their delegations are only exempted for official visits.)

The Slovak and Belgian ministries of foreign affairs are finalising a bilateral agreement whereby the Slovak Embassy will represent Belgium in issuing visas in Baghdad.

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

A draft list of supporting documents has been circulated by the Delegation, and should be finalised and agreed at the next LSC meeting (late May 2013). A common list of travel insurance companies should be agreed at the same meeting.

LSC has agreed on a list of members of the government that are exempt from fingerprinting under the terms Article 13 of the Visa Code.

3.3 Exchange of information

Statistics are shared by e-mail on an informal basis. Information is shared at LSC meetings on a range of issues, including cases of fraud, problems regarding 'visa agents', difficulties in dealing with applications for official visas, and the verification of local documents.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

DEL carried out a survey of business visa application procedures at EU Embassies, which was shared with all MS. The findings contributed to discussions with the Iraqi authorities on the difficulties faced by EU citizens in obtaining business visas for Iraq.

4. Challenges

Fingerprinting of applicants was introduced in Iraq in October 2012. While this presented a logistical challenge for some missions, who needed to put in place new security arrangements, the new procedures were implemented without any significant problems or delays. There have been complaints from local parliamentarians and officials, who feel that they should be exempted from fingerprinting. MS and EU DEL have explained that the Visa Code only allows for exemptions for members of the government in specific circumstances.

Priorities for 2013-2014 include: the exploration of possible representation arrangements for non-resident MS; the enhancement of coordination with consulates in Erbil; and the initiation of a dialogue with the Iraqi MFA on its procedures for issuing notes verbales in support of visa applications.

Cleared by all MS in Baghdad LSC Group.



April 2012 / March 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC)
THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN
2012-2013 REPORT⁷⁷

1. Introduction

14 Schengen Member States have consulates and issue visa in Amman (AT, BE, CZ, FR, DE, EL, HU, IT, NL, NO, PL, ES, SE, CH). Several non-represented countries (EE, DK, FI, IS, LV, LU, MT, PT, SL, SK) are represented by another MS. Nearest consulates for countries which are not represented in Amman are Cairo (MT, IS, LV, LT, PT, SI), Ankara (EE, FI) and Beirut (SK, DK).

Following the closure of embassies in Damascus, most Schengen embassies in Amman have been authorised to receive applications from Syrian nationals. A majority of Syrians applies in Beirut, the consulates in Amman receive significantly lower numbers. SE is an exception: Syrians can only apply in Amman. Spectre ranges from countries with no restrictions on where Syrians should apply (FR, RO, EL) to countries that authorised Beirut and Amman to receive applications (PL, NL, AT, IT, ES, CH, BE, HU, CZ).

Several MS are not represented in Iraq and issue visa for the Iraqi nationals only at their embassies in Amman.

Three countries have outsourced collection of applications to an external service provider – VFS (ES since 01/01/2012, IT since 01/08/2012, EL since 15/02/2013). VFS applies an administrative fee on top of the visa fee. Appointment system is in place for applicants preferring to apply for the visa at the embassy concerned.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Eight LSC meetings took place in the period of April 2012 – March 2013. Meetings were generally well attended. Since April 2012, LSCs have been chaired by EUD. Reports – called minutes of LSC meetings - were drawn up by EUD and shared with LSC before the final version was circulated (both among HOMs and LSC). LSC MS share the reports with their capitals.

In February 2013, EUD invited LSC, consuls and police liaison officers to an ad hoc meeting at the occasion of an expert mission under the ongoing Dialogue on Migration, Mobility and Security, launched in December 2012.

⁷⁷ April 2012 – March 2013

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

LSC worked to prepare a list of royal family members to be exempted from the fingerprinting in accordance with Visa Code Article 13 (7). EUD invited to a meeting of LSC 22/10 a delegation from the Royal Protocol (RP). At the meeting, the LSC informed the Royal Protocol about LSC, Visa Code and VIS. The RP transmitted two lists asking the Schengen MS to consider exempting the listed persons from fingerprinting. Approval of the final list of the exempted persons is pending. In the meantime, LSC provided to the Royal Protocol information regarding visa process of Schengen Member States, in order to facilitate appointments.

Several Schengen MS signed bilateral agreements with Jordan exempting from visas holders of diplomatic passports (agreements are in force with IT, FR, RO).

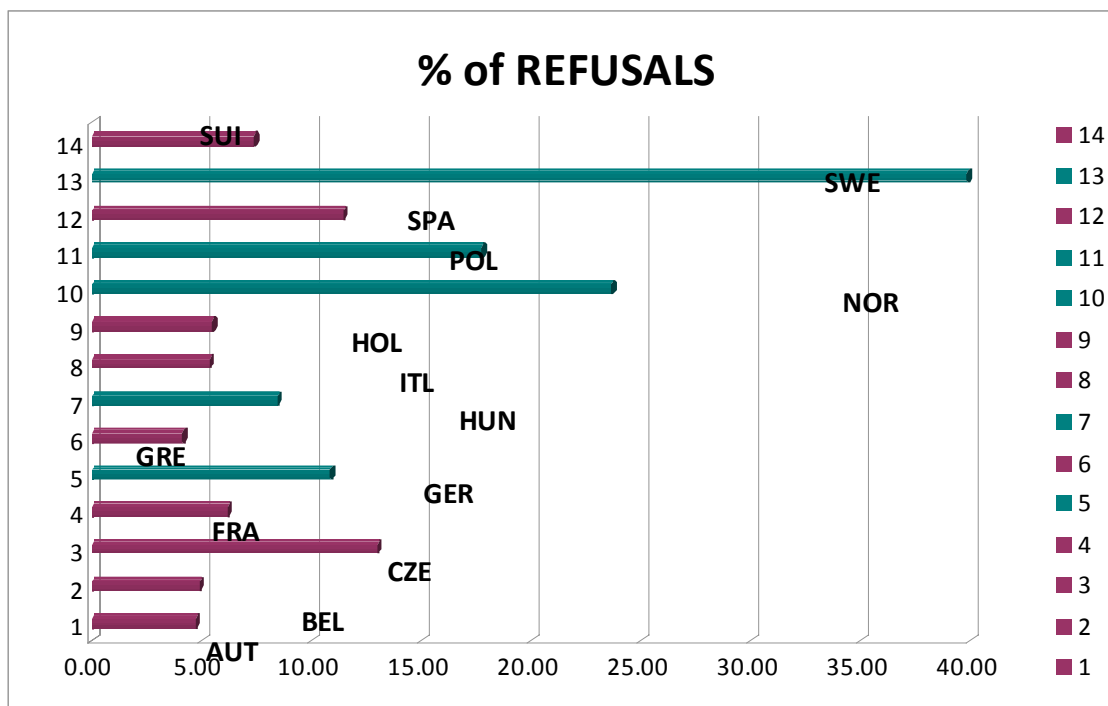
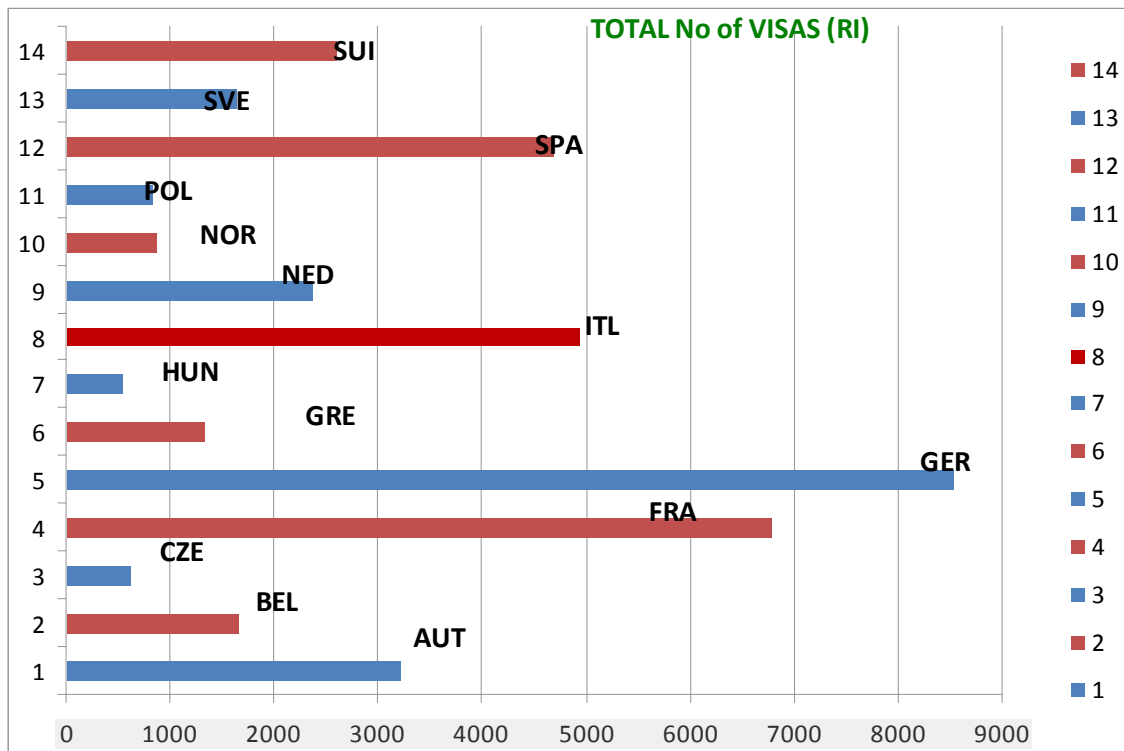
3.2 Assessment of the need to harmonise the lists of supporting documents

LSC MS started to apply VIS on 10/05/2012. While the launch has been overall smooth, LSC reported a number of challenges such as quality of fingerprinting, especially of elderly women. Some countries experienced problems with their national softwares, resulting in delays.

The Commission Implementing Decision on the list of supporting documents entered into force on 26/03/2013. All Schengen Member States are bound to apply the list.

3.3 Exchange of information

Available 2012 Schengen statistics show that embassies issued 34966 Schengen visas and 3232 other types of visa. The total of issued Schengen visas represents an increase of 14.2 percent or 2456 Schengen visas compared to the statistics for 2011. Germany received the highest level of applications (8511), followed by France (6783) and Italy (4932). 3885 applications (11.6 percent) for all types of visas were refused. Sweden (39.88 percent), Norway (23.67 percent) and Poland (17.75 percent) accounted for the highest levels of refusals. Iraqi nationals composed 13.25 percent of the total number of applicants.



3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Nothing to report

4. Challenges

The EU-Jordan Dialogue on Migration, Mobility and Security was launched on 12/12/2012. In the framework of this dialogue, a first EU mission visited Jordan in February 2013 to discuss at technical level, with Jordanian authorities and experts, matters related to passport and identity documents, management of borders and migration, as well as asylum and international protection.

5. Other issues

No issues to report

The report has been approved by the Local Schengen Cooperation in Amman.



02/05/2013

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) KAZAKHSTAN
2012-2013 REPORT⁷⁸**

1. Introduction

The Republic of Kazakhstan hosts MS⁷⁹ representations in two cities. 20 MS have a diplomatic representation in the capital Astana and there are 5 consulates in Almaty, the former capital. The EUD is located in Astana and is in charge of coordinating LSC meetings. Most MS in Kazakhstan do not have any representation arrangements or use of external providers for collection and processing of visa applications.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Meetings are held regularly every two month, except in July/August and December. Meetings therefore took place on the following dates: 27 June 2012, 28 September 2012, 20 November 2012, 24 January 2013, and 27 March 2013. LSC meetings are organised and chaired by the EUD in Astana. EUD is also in charge of reporting and coordination of follow-up. It is assumed that MS share the EUD reports with their capitals. A telephone linkup is organised with a designated consulate in Almaty and representatives of DG HOME in Brussels to allow participation of all consulates.

Meetings were well attended by MS and nearly all MS attended either in Astana and simultaneously those with consulates in Almaty. Attendance at LSC meetings has slightly increased this year compared to 2011-2012. One ad hoc meeting was organised on the Visa Code Implementation. No meetings were organised with third parties or non-Schengen MS, although Bulgaria and Romania are always invited to and participate in LSC meetings. Sub groups met in parallel to discuss particular issues such as Travel Medical Insurance (TMI).

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS were well coordinated amongst themselves to carry out tasks related to LSC under the Visa Code. After each meeting on LSC, a draft report was elaborated and brought to the attention of each MS. Precise formulations were found to a number of issues thanks to constructive cooperation by MS.

⁷⁸ April 2012 – March 2013

⁷⁹ Schengen Member States (with Bulgaria and Romania as observers)

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

EUD disseminated to MS embassies the translation of the relevant Annex II of the final harmonised list in Russian and Kazakh for their perusal. Thus EUD helped MS Embassies publish on their websites unified versions of the harmonised list in Russian and Kazakh languages. The list was sent to the Kazakhstani MFA for subsequent perusal.

3.3 Exchange of information

There is insufficient information from MS about the implementation of Travel Medical Insurance, in particular about companies' willingness to pay expenses for third country nationals holding a short stay visa. In 2012, 15 insurance companies have replied to the relevant questions of the WG thus far (BTA Bank, Centras, Eko Polis, Eurasia Insurance Company JSC, IC Alliance Policy JSC, IC Astana Finance, Interteach, JSC Chartis Kazakhstan Insurance Company, JSC IC Amanat Insurance, JSC IC Kommesk Omir, Kazakhinstrakh CJSS, Kazkom polisy, Kazkommerz-life IC, Nomad Insurance and Oil Insurance Company JSC). EUD requested the working-group to look at the questionnaires answers given by the insurance companies and decide if the answers meet the Visa Code criteria. The working group requested the EUD to send letters to 10 insurance companies to obtain various clarifications.

In the meantime, some EU MS and the EUD received a number of letters from NSK insurance company complaining that its insurance policies are not being accepted any longer by some EU MS embassies. NSK also sent copies of the letters to the Kazakhstan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to COM. These letters have been answered with clarifications about the procedure and the requirements NSK has to fulfil.

CH informed that since 19 December 2011, Liechtenstein is a member of Schengen and CH represents Liechtenstein in Kazakhstan. Since 3 October 2011 CH represents FR for issuing visas in Astana and FR represents CH for issuing visas in Almaty. HU (Almaty) informed that it opened a common visa issuing centre in Almaty which, since 1 July 2011, represents AT, LV, SK and SL; since June 2012 it represents Belgium and Netherlands; since August 2012 it represents Luxembourg and since January 2013 represents Denmark. EE informed that since 16 January 2012, Lithuania has represented Estonia in Almaty. ES mentioned the successful opening of the VFS visa centre in Astana in mid-January and added that it works well. EL also opened a visa centre in Almaty. Both are operated by the private company VFS Global.

The issue of possible abuse of Schengen Visas and/or return assistance was raised at a number of LSC meetings during the year, for example cases of visitors not visiting the MS with whom they apply for a visa, but other Schengen countries and then requiring return assistance.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

The list of MS representations and representation agreements is regularly being updated at local level.

As agreed amongst MS, since July 2012 a table of visa statistics is sent by EUD to MS in Astana and Almaty and Brussels every month on the basis of information provided by Embassies to the Delegation. Further improvement is needed with regard to the regularity and frequency of submission of visa data by some MS.

EUD disseminated amongst EU MS information related to consular matters published in local press. EUD sent a letter to the Consular Services Department of Kazakhstan Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting to update information on Schengen visa requirements published by the Ministry on its website.

4. Challenges in 2012-2013

Development of a harmonised list of supporting documents for visas was approached at LSC meetings throughout the year. A list of insurance companies was compiled, following a questionnaire being sent to insurance companies by EUD in order to update the list of those who can be recognised as fulfilling all conditions required to obtain a Schengen visa. Completion and regular updating of the TMI company list will be pursued over the coming year.

Challenges in 2012-2013 include the adoption of a common list of TMI companies fulfilling Schengen requirements.

5. Other issues

The issue concerning cases of overstayers were raised at the meeting of LSC representatives with the Director of Consular Service Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RK, that took place on 27 March 2013 in the EU Delegation premises. The Director informed that recently the Consular Department sent to its embassies' consular departments abroad a letter ordering to issue visas for max term for citizens from all 48 countries regardless the period specified in the application form to ensure reserve time. This executive decision is meant to take care of the request by the EU to find a solution.

In one of the LSC meetings a representative of Kazakhstani academic organisation informed members of the LSC about counter terrorism measures contemplated and undertaken by Kazakhstani authorities.



15 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) KOSOVO 2012-2013 REPORT⁸⁰

1. Introduction

Local Schengen Cooperation between Schengen Member States in Kosovo has continued systematically throughout the year under the coordination of the European Union Office in Kosovo. Local Schengen Cooperation meetings are held bi-monthly and are convened and chaired by the EU Office.

As regards the Member States presence, some changes took place in 2012. As of April 2012, Norway represents Denmark in all migration matters and Italy represents Estonia on all visa issues in Kosovo. Sweden and Norway started facilitating visa acquisition through the introduction of online visa application systems.

To date, the following Member States issue visas in Pristina: Austria, France (represented by Switzerland), Belgium, Denmark (represented by Norway), Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia (represented by Slovenia), Luxembourg (represented by Belgium), Netherlands (represented by Belgium), Norway, Slovenia and Switzerland. The Czech Republic and Sweden collect and issued visas in Skopje/FyROM. The Slovak Republic collects and processes visa applications through its Liaison Office in Pristina. The visas are then issued in the Slovak Embassy in Belgrade and delivered to the applicants through the Liaison office in Pristina.

A number of Member States continue to bilaterally apply visa facilitation provisions from the visa facilitation agreements that were signed with other countries of the region. Therefore different visa fees are applied by Member States. The visa fee for holders of Kosovo passports is €60 for Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. Other Schengen countries apply the reduced visa fee of €35.

Italy outsources the collection of applications through the Italian Visa Application Office (IVAO) and, as of April 2012, this also applies to Estonia. IVAO charges an additional fee of €12 to process applications, in addition to the €60 visa fee. Therefore, persons applying for Schengen visas through IVAO are charged €72.

The launch of the visa liberalisation dialogue with Kosovo in January 2012 was a significant political development. It was followed by the hand-over to the Kosovo authorities of the visa roadmap in June 2012 and the release of the first Report on progress by Kosovo in fulfilling the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap⁸¹ in February 2013.

⁸⁰ April 2012-March 2013

⁸¹ COM (2013) 66 final of 8.2.2013

In the context of the visa dialogue, the Schengen Cooperation at local level has continued to contribute with information, mainly concerning migration issues including on visa application trends and refusal rates. Information concerning asylum statistics and developments on readmission and reintegration are also occasionally exchanged.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Four regular LSC meetings were held in the period April 2012 and March 2013 (no ad-hoc meetings were held during the reporting period). These were generally well attended (average of 15-20 participants). Most of the participants represented offices that collect applications and issue visas in Pristina, with the exception of two Member States that travelled regularly from Skopje to attend LSC meetings in Pristina. Schengen States, that collect and issue visas in another location than Pristina, did not increase their participation in LSC meetings compared with the previous reporting period.

LSC meetings were chaired by the Head of the Political, Economic and EU integration section with the assistance of the LSC contact person at the European Union Office in Kosovo.

The meetings during the reporting period focussed on two topics: 1) Discussions on the harmonised list of supporting documents and 2) the ongoing Visa Liberalisation Dialogue between the EU and Kosovo. On two occasions, Kosovo representatives provided information on their activities and progress achieved in meeting the requirements set out in the visa roadmap. In February 2013, the LSC Chair provided a detailed briefing to Member States on the Commission's Visa Report of 12 February.

Summary reports of the LSC meetings were drafted and circulated locally by the European Union Office. The EU Office has encouraged Member States to share these reports with their capitals.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The bi-monthly Local Schengen Cooperation meetings have continued to provide a forum for discussion on issues that pertain to the application of visa code. Information has been exchanged on visa statistics, but also on the need to harmonise visa practices and supporting documents for visa applicants. Concerns regarding insurance companies, including on travel medical insurance (TMI), have also been exchanged with a view of setting up a joint list of insurance companies that operate in Kosovo. The response of Member States to an agreed joint list of insurance companies has however been somewhat mixed, but the LSC group will continue to discuss the subject matter in 2013.

In April 2013, the EUO informed Member States of the Commission's planned assessment of the Visa Code and related initiatives (public consultations etc.) and invited them to provide comments from a users' point of view. At the time of writing, no comments have been received from Member States.

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

Negotiations among Member States over the harmonised draft lists of supporting documents took almost two years. The agreed upon lists were finally adopted by the Visa Committee on 26 March 2013⁸². A number of Member States had started using the lists even before the official adoption in Brussels while the remainder joined in subsequently.

The main obstacle in the process of harmonising the supporting documents has been the diverse needs of the Member States present in Kosovo. This is partly due to the varying number of visa applications that are received by the Member States. For example, Germany and Switzerland handle about 80% of the overall number of visa applications in Kosovo. There have also been concerns that offices with smaller visa sections might not have the capacity to analyse a larger quantity of documents required by some of the other Member States.

Furthermore, the travel purposes of visa applicants vary greatly among Member States. Some receive hardly any visa applications for tourism, while others (often MS with large numbers of Kosovans who reside in the country) receive a comparatively large number of applicants for family (private) visits.

3.3 Exchange of information

In 2011, the EU Office in Kosovo established a functional mailbox for Schengen cooperation, which has facilitated the exchange of information with Member States. The exchange of monthly visa statistics between LSC colleagues is still collected by the EU Office and supported by means of a common template. As reported last year, statistics are not sent regularly by all Member States due reasons such as unavailability of statistics broken down per category. It is still difficult to receive statistics from Schengen States that are not represented in Pristina or that do not process visa applications in Pristina. The complex visa situation in Kosovo (with the different types of visas issued by the various offices) puts an additional constraint on exchanging statistics in a homogenous manner. In the context of the publication of the Visa Report of 12 February, the Kosovo authorities contested the reported visa refusal rates. As a consequence, the EU Office designed a simplified template for the collection of visa statistics that bundles all visa types and indicates the refusal rate.

The LSC meetings have continued to be used as a forum to exchange information on trends in visa applications and visa refusals, length of procedures for processing visa applications, national appeal procedures in case of visa denial etc. In the next reporting period, the discussion on refusal rates is expected to continue with an increased focus on analysing the reasons for such differences. The adoption of the harmonised lists of supporting documents might, in a second moment, level the refusal rates.

Member States' experiences concerning insurance companies that operate in Kosovo, including on travel medical insurance (TMI), have also been discussed during the reporting period. Following concerns regarding insufficiencies in the coverage of insurances offered by certain companies, the EU Office proposed to draw up a joint list, based on contributions from the Member States.

⁸² COM implementing Decision (C(2013) 1725) on the harmonised lists of supporting docs in Jordan, Kosovo and the USA

3.4 Any other initiatives taken in LSC

In April 2013, the EUO offered to Member States to organise a training facilitated by FRONTEX for consular representatives on the detection of falsified documents. The office is still assessing whether there is sufficient interest in which case it will get in contact with the organisers to set a date in the second semester of 2013. The EUO has also facilitated contacts between the Civil Registration Agency and the Member States to address some issues arising from the introduction of a new central civil status registration system in February 2013. At the time of writing, work in this regard is ongoing.

4. Challenges in 2013-2014

The work to harmonise the lists of supporting documents has continued throughout 2012, taking up much of the time and focus of the Local Schengen Cooperation. Exchanges have also continued on travel medical insurance, while regular updates on the visa liberalisation dialogue were provided to Member States.

An immediate priority for the coming period is to eliminate all negative consequences arising from the establishment of new central civil status registration system on consular activities and the visa approval rates. Another priority is to locally consolidate visa and readmission statistics for the purpose of the reports of the Commission to Member States and the European Parliament. In the direct context of the LSC, the use of the harmonised lists of supporting documents will have to be assessed throughout the next reporting period. Furthermore, it is envisaged to establish of a joint list of travel medical insurances (TMI). An assessment on the insurances offered locally could potentially also be shared with visa applicants (as has been done in other locations).

5. Other issues

Kosovo is in the process of introducing a visa regime under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A first pilot phase is planned to begin in July 2013 with a gradual roll out of the system to a number of Kosovan Embassies and consular offices. Based on the Government Decision of December 2012, citizens of 87 countries will have to apply for visas through consular services to enter Kosovo. Only under exceptional circumstances, visas will be issued at border crossing points. The technical implementation of the project is financed by the Norwegian Government. The EUO will keep a close eye on the establishment and functioning of the new system and plans to organise a briefing for LSC Member States in the second semester of 2013.



UNION EUROPÉENNE

DÉLÉGATION A MADAGASCAR

15/05/2013

**COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN (LSC) A MADAGASCAR
RAPPORT⁸³ 2012-2013**

1. Introduction

Trois Etats membres de l'UE sont présents à Antananarivo : la France, l'Allemagne, et plus récemment, depuis fin 2012, le Royaume-Uni. Deux autres Etats européens, associés à 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 :

- Ambassade de France 22.000 demandes de visas traitées sur l'année 2012 globalement, dont 16.500 visas Schengen délivrés.
- Ambassade de Suisse ca. 700 par an.

Concernant la Suisse, tout le processus pour le traitement des visas se fait à l'Ambassade, sans aide externe. Vu le nombre réduit de demandes, les rendez-vous ne sont pas nécessaires pour le dépôt de dossiers. L'Ambassade de Suisse a repris l'établissement des visas Schengen pour les pays suivants : 06.06.11, Norvège, 30.01.12, Suède, 01.05.12, Pays-Bas

A noter qu'il existe un accord avec la Pologne. Cet accord n'a pas pu entrer en vigueur faute de reconnaissance par cet Etat du passeport malgache comme titre de transport.

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; 1^{er} avril 2013 : Islande.

La France externalise les prises de rendez-vous depuis 2009, déléguée au prestataire "Ariane", rémunéré par la sur-taxation du numéro 089100. Tout le reste du processus se déroule au Consulat général. Le rendez-vous est obligatoire.

Les deux Etats ne recueillent pas les données biométriques via le programme VIS (Visa Information System). La Suisse et la France l'introduiront 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.

⁸³ Avril 2012 – Mars 2013

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2012-2013

En 2012, deux réunions de coopération Schengen ont été organisées : le 8 mars et le 9 mai. La participation des consuls honoraires fut moyenne. Compte-tenu du fait que seuls deux Etats sont concernés par cette coopération, il n'y pas lieu d'accroître la fréquence des réunions.

Une coordination informelle s'opère aussi par échanges directs entre les deux services concernés pour autant que besoin. D'autre part, cette situation a justifié d'organiser des réunions couvrant les deux principaux aspects de la coopération consulaire que sont la délivrance de visas et la protection des citoyens européens. Vu le nombre restreint de consuls de carrière basés à Madagascar et le champ d'action élargi de réunions, certaines telle celle du 8 mars 2012, ont été élargies à la participation des consuls honoraires, ce qui a permis une participation plus nombreuse et a satisfait les participants.

Les rapports de réunions sont établis en coopération entre la Délégation de l'UE et le Consulat Général de France. Les réunions sont co-présidées par la Délégation et cet Etat membre.

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 ce n'est pas nécessaire. Les deux services chargés de l'émission de visas sont basés à Antananarivo.

En 2013, deux réunions de coopération Schengen sont prévues : l'une s'est tenue le mercredi 10 avril avec la France et la Suisse, l'autre est prévue en mai avec l'ensemble des consuls honoraires des Etats membres de l'UE présents à Antananarivo ainsi que la France et la Suisse.

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 CE (et autres services pour les autres sujets couverts par la coopération locale).

La consultation "Améliorer les procédures d'obtention de visas Schengen de court séjours" a, par exemple, été transmise pour information et discutée avec l'Ambassade de Suisse et le Consulat Général de France.

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

Comme indiqué plus haut, seuls deux Etats sont désormais actifs dans ce domaine. Des efforts d'harmonisation sont réalisés, notamment sur les frais de dossiers. Ces frais sont de 174.000 Ariarys pour un dossier déposé devant le Consulat Général de France et de 176.000 Ariarys pour un dossier déposé devant le Consulat de Suisse, au jour de la réunion du 10 avril 2013. Néanmoins, la Suisse est prête à adapter ses émoluments aux frais de dossier définis par la France. La France communiquera chaque modification des frais de dossier à la Suisse qui fera le nécessaire afin de demander les même frais. La liste des pièces justificatives demandées est échangée pour harmonisation régulièrement.

A noter toutefois des différences qui perdurent : 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 civil, si elle le juge nécessaire. Les justificatifs concernant l'hôte (attestation d'hébergement) 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) et les attestations d'hébergement ne sont pas suffisantes, les vérifications par les mairies n'étant pas toujours probantes. La France considère également l'harmonisation comme réalisée dans la mesure du possible, sachant que les documents présentés doivent pour les deux partenaires, justifier du motif du voyage, des ressources financières, de l'hébergement, de l'assurance.

3.3 Echange d'informations

Les statistiques mensuelles sont communiquées chaque mois par et entre la Suisse et la France. La France et la Suisse se consultent régulièrement sur les dossiers individuels (par exemple, sur les demandes de visas de personnes de nationalité comorienne). La collaboration est très bonne et très rapide.

Trois compagnies d'assurances proposent des produits appropriés sur le marché local : ARO, NY HAVANA et ALLIANZ.

Le Consulat de France a constaté des cas de fraude sur les visas Schengen concernant en particulier les relevés bancaires et les attestations de travail.

La liste des documents de voyage émis par le pays d'accueil : Seuls le passeport ordinaire, le passeport diplomatique et le passeport de service sont reconnus par l'ensemble des partenaires Schengen, à l'exception de trois Etats : la Pologne, l'Estonie et la Lettonie. **Cela pose des difficultés techniques. Pour faciliter la coordination, il serait utile que cette question soit abordée au Conseil de l'UE en vue d'une harmonisation.**

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Madagascar étant un pays en crise et sous article 96 (Accord de Partenariat de Cotonou), il n'est pas aisé de développer beaucoup de nouvelles initiatives. Une des initiatives récentes, toutefois, a été de faire des références croisées sur les sites internet d'information du public des deux consulats.

4. Défis pour 2013-2014

Les deux Etats concernés continueront à assurer la mise en œuvre des règles relatives aux visas Schengen. Des améliorations éventuelles de la coopération seront examinées pour autant que de besoin.

Une harmonisation des documents reconnus par l'ensemble des partenaires Schengen est le défi principal pour la période 2013-2014.

Ce rapport établis par la Délégation de l'UE est approuvé par les Etats parties à la Coordination Locale Schengen (LSC) à Madagascar.



Nouakchott, le 17 avril 2013

COOPERATION LOCALE
AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC)
EN REPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE DE MAURITANIE

RAPPORT⁸⁴ 2012-2013

1. Introduction

En Mauritanie trois Etats membres (EM) sont présents: Allemagne, Espagne et France.

Ces trois EM ont des accords de représentation avec les EM non présents suivants :

Allemagne Aucun ;

Espagne Autriche, Italie, Portugal ;

France Belgique, Estonie, Grèce, Hongrie, Lettonie, Lituanie, Luxembourg, Pays-Bas,
République Tchèque, Suède.

Le recours à du personnel externe pour la réception des demandes de visa est établi comme suit :

Allemagne Non

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 2012-2013

À Nouakchott une réunion formelle a eu lieu sur la période, avec la présence de tous les EM. 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.

Les EM ne communiquent pas de rapports à leurs capitales.

⁸⁴ Avril 2012 – Mars 2013

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.

3.3 Echange d'informations

Des statistiques mensuelles ont été échangées régulièrement, jusqu'au deuxième semestre de 2011. L'échange régulier de statistiques entre les EM et la DUE est relancé.

Plus besoin d'échange régulier d'information sur les fraudes compte tenu que le VIS permet une visibilité immédiate des cas – il serait envisageable de pouvoir disposer en VIS davantage de données pour des cas de ce genre, moyennant de nouveaux écrans montrant des documents. Des contacts *ad hoc* continuent à avoir lieu localement pour les cas moins clairs.

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.

Les passeports, documents de voyage émis par la Mauritanie tous reconnus. Le pays a introduit le passeport biométrique à partir du mois de février 2011. Les anciens passeports ne sont plus admis.

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Aucune.

4. Défis pour 2013-2014

Le VIS étant un succès, depuis le 11 octobre 2011, les EM ont évalué l'efficacité et rapidité du VIS, en dressant le constat du besoin de résoudre certaines contraintes nationales.

Le délai de traitement des dossiers a été considérée acceptable; en général en moins de dix jours pour les passeports ordinaires les visas sont délivrés. La réponse n'est pas uniforme pour les passeports de service ou diplomatiques, avec des délais accrus

5. Divers

Les EM à Nouakchott n'ont pas une durée de validité uniforme des visas. En particulier pour les "hommes d'affaires" la durée est assez variable, en fonction de chaque cas, une fois évalué le risque.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

19 June 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) *Moldova* 2012-2013 REPORT⁸⁵

1. Introduction

No relevant changes since the second annual report.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

During the reporting period, three regular LSC meetings were held in Chisinau (30 May 2012, 26 September, 12 December 2012). All meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation and well attended by MS present in Chisinau. Representatives of the EU funded project www.legal-in.eu attended one meeting to continue discussions on awareness raising campaigns in relation to criminal activities of visa facilitators. Participants took turns in drawing up the summary reports. MS do not share the summary reports with the capitals. Some MS send short emails to their capitals after the LSC meetings. One extraordinary LSC meeting was held on 22 February 2013 to discuss Visa Dialogue issues with the Visa Dialogue Assessment Mission on Migration. No MS except Romania has consulates outside the capital.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS and EUD are prepared to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code despite limited human resources.

The local coordination is working well and discussions take place in a friendly and cooperative manner.

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

Harmonised lists of supporting documents were submitted on 25 June 2010, and revised lists on 28 January 2011. The LSC in Chisinau was among the first ones to submit such lists. Following comments from the Visa Committee, another set of revised lists were submitted on 26 September 2012. On 12 December 2012, LSC decided to implement the recommendation issued at the 5 November 2012 Visa Committee meeting to apply the lists provisionally until the adoption of a formal Commission decision after the entry into force in spring of the amendments to the Visa Facilitation Agreement.

⁸⁵ April 2012 – March 2013

3.3 Exchange of information

MS regularly exchange monthly statistics and visa warnings.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Due to a lack of financial resources, it was decided to discontinue efforts to organise a visa awareness campaign.

4. Challenges

n/a

This report has been adopted unanimously at the LSC meeting on 19 June 2013.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO MONTENEGRO

Podgorica, 8 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) MONTENEGRO 2012-2013 REPORT

1. Introduction

In the addition to the EU Delegation to Montenegro, there are 17 MS with diplomatic representation (13 embassies, 4 honorary consuls). Local Schengen Group meetings continued to be held quarterly in 2012 and 2013. Local embassies coordinated the Local Schengen Working Group meetings. EU Delegation communicates information received from DG Home Affairs to all MS by email.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Meetings were held regularly every 3 months. The practice we had in Montenegro 2012-2013 was that LSC meetings were combined with EU member state consular cooperation meetings, as separate topics on the one joint meeting agenda. These meetings were chaired by the Presidency mission, if present in country, and when not, by a Chairing mission - EU MS mission present in the country, agreed among EU MS and EUD locally to be Chair for a certain period. Specific part of the meetings related to Schengen cooperation was facilitated by the same Chair of the meeting or by EUD representative. Meetings were not held ad hoc, but were planned and announced in advance, with the participation of non-Schengen EU Member States present in the country. Minutes from these combined visa and consular meetings were drawn by Chairing MS and EUD representative together, and agreed with all participants of the meeting before dissemination to all EU MS missions.

The meeting which was held 30 May 2012 had in attendance of Mr. Abid Crnovrsanin, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ms Vojislav Dragovic, Head of Operational Communication Centre, Police Directorate.

The second meeting which was held on 20 September 2012 had in attendance Mr. Branislav Karadzić, Acting Director for Directorate for Consular purposes and Diaspora of MFEI of Montenegro.

The third meeting which was held on 13 December 2012 had in attendance Mr. Dragan Klikovac, Head of Sector for Traffic Safety at the Police headquarters.

The fourth meeting took place 11 April 2013 and the guests of the meeting were Mr Djon Sinistaj, Director for Consular Affaires and Mr Goran Ruljic, Associate from the same Directorate.

3. State of play

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 2012 and first three months of 2013 and circulated to all MS and DG HOME.
- Reports from the Visa Committee have been circulated by the EU Delegation and discussed by the MS during the meetings.
- MS application of the visa code is satisfactory.

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

The list of travel documents was verified again with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and EI Integration in November 2012 and confirmed to DG HOME.

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 include annual statistics, cases of fraud, lessons learned in 2012, communication problems with local authorities, travel documents issued by the host state.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

MS agreed to jointly approach Montenegrin authorities in order to resolve issues related to communication problems and visas.

4. Challenges

MS will continue to jointly prepare a list of useful contacts from different areas (useful contacts, institutions, service providers) and share them with all MS consular contacts accredited to Montenegro. MS will also continue to jointly resolve outstanding issues with Montenegrin authorities.

5. Other issues

The Delegation assisted DG HOME in reaching as many as possible stakeholders (by email) as well as posting a link on its website on the Public Consultation on the Implementation of the Visa Code. The Delegation also provided further clarification to stakeholders on this issue.

MS remain interested in the proposal of common visa application centre and are ready for further discussion.



15th May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) MOZAMBIQUE 2012-2013 REPORT⁸⁶

1. Introduction

The Local Schengen Cooperation Group in Maputo is composed by 13 Schengen Member States (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland and Norway).

Regarding representation agreements:

SE and IS have a representation agreement with DK;

EL and CZ have a representation agreement with PT;

AU, BE, LU and SI have a representation agreement with NL;

HU has a representation agreement with DE;

MT has a representation agreement with IT.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Between April 2012 and March 2013 there was one LSC meeting in Maputo (11th October 2012), which was well attended with the presence of 8 Member States. The meeting was chaired by the EU Delegation, who was also responsible for drawn up the final report. This report was agreed locally and then sent by Member States to their own capitals. There were no ad-hoc meetings in the reported period. Regarding LSC coordination outside Maputo, there is an exchange of information by email with the Consulate-General of Portugal in Beira.

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). There is an active coordination and cooperation among MS in order to ensure a harmonised application of the Visa Code. This means a useful exchange of information, which in some cases could be improved, regarding monthly statistics on different types of Visas and refusals. During the LSC meetings, there is an active debate on other relevant issues for migratory and/or security risks. Therefore, in general terms, MS and EU Delegation have been ensuring correctly the tasks and obligations established by the Visa Code.

⁸⁶ April 2012 – March 2013

Under the LSC meeting (in the reporting period), there is a problem related to the implementation of article 16 (7) of the Visa Code that have been discussed without reaching a common approach. The visa fee charged by MS is not the same and it is considered to be difficult to implement an equal rate due to different accounting systems in our LSC. We have Member States using different rates and also Member States charging the visa fees in Euros.

The harmonised list of requirements, as requested by the Visa Code, was also part of the LSC agenda in the reporting period (see point below).

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

The harmonised list of requirements was agreed locally and submitted to the Visa Committee, which made some comments and suggestions for change. The LSC group is now reviewing the harmonised list in order to submit a new version to the Visa Committee, hopefully during the current month. MS consider that harmonisation of required documents is useful and the assessment was made without obstacles and with a proactive and professional approach from all MS.

3.3 Exchange of information

During the reporting period, Member States had improved the exchange of information within the LSC in Mozambique, which includes sharing monthly statistics and cases of fraud. It was also considered relevant to share information about the list of insurance companies that offer adequate TMI, according to the Visa Code.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

There was no other initiative taken in LSC during the reporting period.

4. Challenges

The main challenge for the next reporting period will be the implementation of the VIS System (since June 2013) and the impact of collecting biometric data in the Mozambican authorities and civil society.

5. Other issues

No other issues to address.



10 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) NEPAL
April 2012- March 2013 REPORT

1. Introduction

Nepal hosts only five LSC Member States: Denmark (DK), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE) and Switzerland (CH). None of the missions are using external service providers for the collection of visa applications.

Norway has an Embassy in Kathmandu, but the visas are issued by the Danish Embassy.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

The DE Embassy hosted two Member State meetings 2-3 years ago after which there was a longer pause in the organisation of coordination meetings.

At the end of 2012 meetings were resumed when the EUDEL chaired the first LSC meeting in November 2012. During this meeting there was a general discussion on future issues to be addressed.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

LSC Member States in Kathmandu are willing to ensure that the tasks under the Visa Code are carried out in LSC. Specific issues are discussed to find a common position:

- 3) Common translation of the Schengen visa form in Nepali to avoid discrepancies in the form;
- 4) Harmonisation of a common list of documents and request on applicant information;
- 5) Fraud and risk analysis.

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

Work is on-going:

- 3) A list of common supporting documents is under preparation,
- 4) A common information sheet is under preparation.

3.3 Exchange of information

Information is exchanged on the following topics:

- 5) statistics (including refusals) are generally exchanged on a monthly basis
- 6) cases of fraud, when they occur

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Not applicable.

4. Challenges

Student visas, work visas and family reunions will be topics to discuss during the next reporting period.

5. Other issues

Major events that could have an impact on the visa issuing in a volatile security environment are the possible constitutional elections in November 2013.



19 March 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) NICARAGUA 2012-2013 REPORT⁸⁷

1. Introduction

During the period covered by this report, the following Member States were present in Nicaragua - DE, ES, FR, FI, IT, LU and NL. AT closed its Embassy in April and DK closed its Embassy in June. BE (not resident) changed its representation for issuing visas – it is now ES rather than NL. ES also took over representation of AT. To date it is not clear who represents DK in Nicaragua.

The EU Delegation is responsible for coordinating LSC meetings.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Five meetings were held (in May, July, September, November 2012 and February 2013). All the Member States attended. No *ad hoc* meetings were held. The LSC meetings were chaired by the Delegation. They were, however, held in the French Embassy (first half of 2012), the Spanish Embassy (second half of 2012) and the German Embassy (first half of 2013) for local consular presidency reasons.

In the first half of 2012 very detailed reports were produced (drafted by the Delegation) of each LSC meeting with a view to discussing the common list of Schengen information and the harmonised list of supporting documents. Once the latter had been adopted by the Visa Committee and published in August 2012, the reports of the meetings were no longer drawn up because the agendas were much shorter.

3. Current situation

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

The Visa Code is applied in Nicaragua and the Member States coordinate their efforts to ensure that it is fully implemented. The Delegation informs the Member States of the outcome of the meetings of the Visa Committee in Brussels and of changes to the Annexes to the Code.

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

The list of supporting documents was adopted by the Visa Committee on 30 May 2012 and published on 6 August 2012 as Commission Decision C(2012) 5310 final. The Member States were notified and began to apply the list from that date.

⁸⁷ April 2012 – March 2013

The Member States also adopted the common list of Schengen information in April 2012 and began to apply it. Regular reviews are conducted to ensure that the document is kept up-to-date.

3.3. Exchange of information

Nicaraguan nationals do not need Schengen visas for stays of up to 90 days. As a result, the number of visas issued is very small and exchanges of the corresponding monthly statistics are negligible. Apart from meetings, information on visas is exchanged immediately (by e-mail) between the Member States and the EU Delegation.

3.4. Other initiatives taken under the LSC

Representatives of the national police were invited to the May meeting in order to facilitate the exchange of information on the security situation and on consular cases. The Heads of the Diplomatic Police, Public Security and the Tourist Police attended the meeting.

4. Challenges

The challenge described in the 2011-12 report on the list of supporting documents and the common list of Schengen information has been met.

For the 2013-14 period there remains the challenge of the last report, namely to consolidate LSC work with a view to the Netherlands' and Finland's departure from Nicaragua at the end of 2013.

The Delegation in Nicaragua took up the challenge of facilitating LSC work in Costa Rica and Panama with the aim of drawing up the list of supporting documents and the common list of Schengen information in those countries. The first meetings convened by the Delegation in Costa Rica and Panama were held in January this year and work is ongoing.

5. Other issues

N/A.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA AND
TO THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

Head of Delegation

Abuja, 15 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) ABUJA 2012 – 2013 REPORT⁸⁸

1. Introduction

The Delegation of the European Union to the Federal Republic of Nigeria chairs the Local Schengen Cooperation meetings. The following MS Embassies (Schengen partners) are present in Abuja:

1. Austria
2. Belgium (also represents LT, LU)
3. The Czech Republic
4. Finland
5. France
6. Germany
7. Greece
8. Italy
9. The Netherlands
10. Norway (also represents Iceland)
11. Poland
12. Portugal
13. The Slovak Republic (also represents Hungary)
14. Spain
15. Sweden (also represents DK)
16. Switzerland

Representatives of Bulgaria and Romania are always invited to attend the meetings and are on the list of documents/information shared by the LSC.

Four Schengen MS have their own Consulates General in Lagos: FR, DE, IT, ES.

The only change during the reporting period is that the Slovak Republic started to represent Hungary in Visa procedures.

⁸⁸ April 2012 – March 2013

There are several Embassies using external service providers for the collection of applications (Visa Facilitating Service – VFS):

- Belgium
- France
- Germany
- The Netherlands

2. Local Schengen Cooperation meetings held in 2012 - 2013

During the reporting period (April 2012 – March 2013) the six of scheduled EU Schengen Group meetings were held on:

23 May 2012; 25 July 2012; 26 September 2012; 28 November 2012; 23 January 2013; 26 March 2013.

There was one ad-hoc meeting: In October 2012 – Internal Seminar on False Documents (prepared and carried out by the Austrian specialist).

All the meetings were well attended. There were no substantial changes compared to the previous reporting period. Maybe only one is worth to be mentioned: While the representatives of the MS commonly agree to have an ordinary routine meeting once for two months, they would like to devote every meeting to discuss some specific issues (outsourcing, reliability of insurance companies, internal organization of visa procedure, etc.). A special attention is drawn by occasional seminars, mostly relating to false documents, new techniques, and methods used by un-honest applicants and how to identify these threats.

The Chair (EU) tries to do its utmost to respond these requirements positively, preparing in parallel agenda and draft minutes of the meetings that are distributed to all Members, present or not. Members can comment make corrections and the minutes are updated. Some Members forward these minutes to their respective HQs while others do not.

3. State of play

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

The most important issue for all Schengen MS in Abuja during the reporting period was the Nigerian demand to shorten and to simplify the Schengen visa procedure. They simply complained about the long period (15 days) it requires to obtain Schengen visas for both official and private visits and asked to shorten this period.

The EU Delegation provided the Nigerian MFA by Notes Verbale with the information about two important issues:

- Introduction of the Visa Information System in the Central and West Africa on 14th March 2013;
- Launching public consultations on the Visa Code. Additional verbal information has been delivered by the Head of EU Delegation during the Media Luncheon on 30th April 2013.

The issue of Schengen visas was raised by the Nigerian side (Head of the Consular Department of the NG MFA) during the 6th Meeting on Local Dialogue on Migration, Mobility and Development held in Abuja on 20th March 2013. According to our experience the visa issue has been traditionally raised in the end of all previous Meetings.

The representative of the EU Delegation, on behalf of the Schengen MS, pointed out that the last steps, i.e. introducing the Visa Information System in the Central and Western Africa as well as launching of a public consultation on Schengen Visa Code will considerably improve the whole procedure. It also will give all Nigerians a chance to present their own opinions, proposals, suggestion in a public discussion.

Other major problems faced by the Schengen MS in Abuja during the reporting period have not changed significantly compared to the previous one, and were related to:

- Quality of documents, especially supporting ones; many are simply forged or fraudulently obtained;
- High migration pressure including long queues at visa offices, some of applicants deliver the applications forms to more than one Embassy at the same time which overloads the visa staff;
- Demanding expectations of the NG authorities issuing an unlimited number of supporting/recommendation letters, this issue is the focal one we raise with periodical meeting with the representatives of the NG MFA;
- Wide variety of processing times for visa applications; some MS issue visas just after receiving all confirmations (consultations), the other ones keep strictly to the 15-day period. These practices push NG applicants to look for a better chance and to apply to more than one simultaneously.

3.2. Harmonising the list of supporting documents

The harmonised list of supporting documents for Nigeria (Abuja and Lagos), revised several times and finally endorsed by the LSC Working Group on 29 March 2012 has been sent to the Visa Committee for an approval. The Commission Implementing Decision has been taken on 6th August 2012 and from that time it is a binding document for all MS in this regard.

We do not see any particular problems with the implementation of the Decision mentioned above, all MS follow the rules and obligations they have committed for. Most of emerging problems like losing trust to certain tour operator, insurance company or long overhaul of the Visa Facilitating System (VFS – outsourcing company providing service in collation of applications), which lengthened the queue, were always discussed during LSC Working Group Meetings. The participants shared their own best experiences.

3.3. Exchange of information

Normally, during LSC Working Group meetings the MS share information about most important areas of their activity:

- Visas – there is no share of monthly statistics, the MS inform about trends they notice. Instead of that, the Chair (EU DEL) prepares annual visa statistics reflecting broader scale changes both in Abuja and Lagos (the number of all kinds of visas, refusal rate, etc.). The Chair prepared such statistics for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. The annual changes are normally an issue for a discussion during one of the LSC meetings in the first semester of the year;
- Fraud or fake documents – cases are described by emails by a MS which discovered it, disseminated to all partners, and discussed afterwards during the first coming meetings;
- Suspicious or doubtful applications – cases are also checked via email.

The reliability of the travel medical insurance (TMI) becomes a real problem and it raises a growing concern among the Schengen MS. As an initial step to extend a cooperation in this field the LSC Group decided to exchange information about most reliable and trust-worthy insurance companies. In practical life the MS exchange (by email) the lists of companies they accept and those doubtful. We agreed that at the present situation no further steps are needed.

The exchange of information between Schengen Consuls/Visa Officers is really efficient. All questions or remarks shared by email are quickly answered or commented by others. The Chair (EU) is always in copy.

3.4. Other initiatives taken by the LSC

As mentioned in point 2 the Special Internal Seminar on False Documents was organized in October 2012. The highly qualified and experienced expert from Austria presented all possible kinds of fraud and fake documents, used by visa applicants mostly as supporting ones. He also showed ways and methods to verify authenticity of presented documents.

This was a second "anti-fraud" seminar based on annual principle (first was organized in October 2011, next one is foreseen in 2013). It became a kind of tradition to organize such training sessions with participation of experts from different MS. It gives our Visa-Officers a wider glance on what they should be aware of, on new threats, on new methods of documents' falsification, and how to avoid them. Of course – these training seminars are always very well attended.

4. Challenges in 2013 – 2014

The general challenges, mentioned in the previous report, have not changed significantly. A continuous unstable political situation in West Africa (rebellion in Mali, growing threat from Maghreb al-Qaida) has a negative impact on social security and increases migration pressure. This phenomenon will occur also in this and coming years, although the level of migration, especially illegal migration, may vary.

The Local Schengen Cooperation should be intensified, especially in "early warning" system of information regarding exchange falsified documents and not-reliable insurance companies appearing in the market. Some arrangements in these regards have been already done, further steps may be taken upon to common acknowledgement and acceptance of the Schengen MS.

5. Other issues

Increase and intensification of the Local Schengen Cooperation in all stages of the visa procedure is seen and considered by the MS as a common interest. The Presidency (EU) does not try to impose any final solution, it tries to propose, suggest or to indicate problems or issues that may be interested to discuss or to solve commonly. Such approach is accepted by the MS, giving a final sovereign decision: YES or NOT to grant a visa to a certain applicant.



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION IN COSTA RICA AND PANAMA

26 March 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) PANAMA 2012-2013 REPORT⁸⁹

1. Introduction

The EU Member States present in Panama are DE, ES (it issues visas for AT, BE, EE, EL, LU, NL and PT), FR and IT (MT). External service suppliers are not used for the collection of applications. In 2012, the Member States coordinated consular meetings (they were not strictly speaking LSC meetings). In 2013, meetings have been convened and coordinated by the EU Delegation.

The problem is that the LSC issue is handled by the EU Delegation in Nicaragua. In Panama the EU has a small office that does not have diplomatic accreditation as an Embassy but as an International Mission office. The office has just one Contract Agent and does not have the facilities for holding videoconferences.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

The EU Delegation did not convene or attend any meeting of the Member States in 2012. The first LSC meeting was held in the EU Delegation in Panama in January 2013 and was attended by the Head of the Nicaragua Delegation in his capacity as the person responsible for these matters. Since then, we have worked remotely on the basis of e-mail exchanges between the EU Delegation in Nicaragua and the Member States resident in Panama. IT holds the local consular Presidency and does the work in Panama on the EU Delegation's behalf. Before any meeting, IT discusses LSC matters with the EU Delegation in Nicaragua.

Attendance by the Member States at meetings is very good. Usually all the Member States resident in Panama attend.

As of 2013 the EU Delegation is responsible for preparing LSC reports. Rather than writing the reports, this actually involves summarising the information from the meeting and preparing new drafts of the documents discussed at the meetings.

⁸⁹ April 2012 – March 2013

3. Current situation

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

Due to the workload of the EU Delegation in Panama, it did not convene or chair the LSC meetings. There was someone in the EU Delegation in Panama who was responsible for LSC matters but the Delegation did not take any initiative in this respect. As already explained, the Delegation in Panama has only one Contract Agent who handles all cooperation issues between Panama and the EU.

In 2012, the regional EU Delegation (it also covers Panama) in Nicaragua decided that the Head of Delegation would take responsibility for LSC in Panama too. The first meeting in Panama attended by the Head of Delegation was in January 2013. Due to limited budget resources for missions, since then e-mails have been exchanged between the EU Delegation in Nicaragua and the Member States resident in Panama. The EU Delegation in Nicaragua is in contact with the IT Embassy (Consular President in Panama) to facilitate work locally.

Cooperation between the Member States and the EU Delegation is very good and quickly produced the first results. In March 2013, visa fees were harmonised (Article 16(5) of the Visa Code).

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

In January this year, the EU Delegation in Nicaragua drew up the first draft of the harmonised list of supporting documents and the list of common information on Schengen visas. Discussions and work on the two documents is on-going.

3.3. Exchange of information

The EU Delegation only began to play an active part in meetings from January this year. None the less, in meetings since then there has been a clear spirit of cooperation between the Member States and they informally and formally share any information on visas.

3.4. Other initiatives taken under the LSC

No initiative has been taken under the Presidency of the EU Delegation.

4. Challenges

The only challenge of the EU Delegation in 2012/2013 was the start of active participation and coordination of LSC matters in Panama. This target was achieved.

The most important challenge for the new period is to finalise the process of approving the harmonised list of supporting documents and the common information on Schengen visas. The challenge is complicated by the fact that this topic is handled by the EU Delegation in Nicaragua as Panama has only one Contract Agent and does not have the facilities for holding videoconferences (all the work is done by e-mail or telephone calls).

5. Other issues

N/A



28 June 2013

**LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) PARAGUAY
2012-2013 REPORT⁹⁰**

1. Introduction

The following Member States have embassies in Paraguay: France, Germany, Italy and Spain. There are plans to set up a UK embassy in mid-2013. The Member State that holds the EU Presidency is responsible for coordinating meetings. Spain acted as chair for consular affairs during the first half of 2012, followed by Italy in the second half of 2012 and Germany in the first half of 2013.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

A well-attended LCS meeting was held in 2012 while Spain was chair. The following topics were discussed:

Consular assistance to nationals of those Member States that have no embassy in Asunción;

Travel recommendations;

Safety of Community nationals and evacuation plans;

Other topics.

3. Current situation

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

The embassies of the Member States present in Paraguay represent for the purposes of Schengen visas those not present. Each Embassy represents several Member States.

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

Paraguay is on the list of countries whose citizens do not require visas to enter the territory of Member States for periods of less than three months within every six-month period, so only a small number of Schengen visas is issued by each Representation. It is not deemed necessary to harmonise the list of supporting documents for each reason for travelling. In any case, the basic documents are given in the Visa Code.

⁹⁰ April 2012 – March 2013

3.3. Exchange of information

In view of the small number of applications for Schengen visas, the Member States and the European Union Delegation agreed that the informal exchange of information and the level of harmonisation already achieved are sufficient. The Embassies frequently exchange their quarterly statistics on visas issued and refused. In specific cases, where necessary, ad hoc information is exchanged.



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO THE PHILIPPINES

Administration

14 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Manila, PHILIPPINES 2012-2013 REPORT⁹¹

1. Introduction

A total of 12 Schengen members (France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, Finland, Belgium, Austria, Greece and Czech Republic) are represented in the Philippines. In December 2012 Finland officially closed down its embassy. As from 1st April 2013 Sweden is represented by Norway.

Some of them use external service providers for the collection of applications.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

LSC meetings take place almost every month at the EUD except for summer and winter holidays. In general they are well attended, but sometimes attendance is poor; certain MS never attend. 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 or even non-Schengen Member States.

The Minutes/Reports of the meetings are drawn up by EUD.

The main objective of the LSC of the past 12 months was to finalise the harmonisation of the documents to be presented by visa applicants and to get a decision on the final list. The meetings were also the occasion of exchanges of good practices and meeting with various government bodies.

Despite the active participation of the Member States present at meetings, the absence of some of them makes difficult sometimes to get common decisions on the discussed topics

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

We can say that the Visa Code is largely applied by Members States in the Philippines. However, differences in the interpretation of some articles still appear. In one of the meetings the MS forwarded a suggestion to the Visa Committee if a visa calculator could be provided in the application of "stay not to exceed 90 days within a 6-month period" (Section 1 of Article 1) where they sought to have clearer guidelines on how to practice this.

⁹¹ April 2012 – March 2013

The biggest remark, however, is the volume of applications, mainly seafarers. A working group on harmonisation of seafarers' application procedures has been created recently.

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

The harmonisation of documents is at its final stage. After several amendments following the Visa Committee's recommendations, we have agreed on a final list and hope to get the COM Decision shortly.

A feedback on the harmonised documents from HOME in September 2012 was received and responded to by the MS on the issue of "will to return".

3.3 Exchange of information

3.3.1 Monthly statistics

Most of the MS submit their statistics regularly and EUD compiled. The statistics are shared with the MS and a copy of the annual statistics is sent to Visa Comm.

3.3.2 Cases of fraud

Information sharing is done pro-actively by emails and some cases were discussed during LSC meetings. Common cases encountered were on fraudulent documents and attempts on human trafficking.

3.3.3 Travel Medical Insurance (TMI)

The LSC has a shared list of TMI agencies that they regularly worked with. Most of these agencies are used by Schengen visa applicants.

3.3.4 Others issues

3.3.4a Biometrics

The LSC had exchange of information on who among the MS are using it. Only very few (BE, ES, FR and FI) started using it. ES is the only MS who currently use the services of an external provider for biometry.

3.3.4b Return Control

The MS have different practices in applying the Return Control but most of them closely monitor this.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

3.4.1 Training on Visa and Consular Officials and Local Staff in the Visa Section

The workshop seminar delivered by DE and FR on 18 September 2012 on forged document was received positively by the participants. In response the same trainers from the DE Consulate General and FR Immigration Liaison Office in Hong Kong deliver another similar workshop in February 2013. A good number of participants attended. As a result a level-up training on Fraud Document and Detection of Impostors is scheduled on 15 May 2013 at EUD to be delivered by the FR Immigration Liaison Officer from Hong Kong.

3.4.2 Human trafficking

To address the cases on human trafficking committed in the guise of entering the Schengen area via different types of visa applications a representative from the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) was invited to give a presentation about their organization. It was reported that most cases of organized crimes are related to human trafficking and the IACAT expressed its wishes to be in partnership with the LSC by way of first level of intervention through the Visa Offices to eliminate/avoid something that is already a threat during visa application and by forwarding videos and information materials to the MS.

3.4.3 Accreditation of Crewing agencies

A concern was raised by one MS in the workload involved in the accreditation process. To address this a meeting was specifically set in the discussion on the Guidelines and Procedures of accrediting shipping agencies. The agreed points are as follows:

1. Re- accreditation of shipping agencies. A public discussion among MS where feedbacks, assessment and actual reports how an accredited company performed will be dealt jointly to make a common decision to re-accredit or not. This will be done in a meeting annually.
2. Shared list of accredited shipping agencies. For information, each MS would share their list of accredited shipping companies. The list will be an "active list" which can be updated monthly.
3. Resource Person from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). The MS invited representatives from the POEA to provide information and answer questions that will be raised regarding the accreditation procedures of shipping/manning companies in the Philippines.

4. Challenges

The LSC has worked together in ensuring that each has given their share of information required to consolidate the documents requested to Schengen visa applicants.

The challenge to define common and minimum specifications for the mandatory insurance covering travellers to the Schengen States was not discussed thoroughly.

Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2013-2014):

To achieve harmonised procedures for handling visa applications

To achieve harmonised issuance of visas to Seafarers.

This report has been approved by all MS present.



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) MOSCOW 2012-2013 REPORT⁹²

1. Introduction

All Schengen Member States are present in Moscow with the exception of Liechtenstein which is represented by Switzerland. In addition, Denmark represents Iceland. At the end of March 2013, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland use external service providers in Moscow for the collection of applications.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

During the reporting period, ten LSC meetings were organised in Moscow.⁹³ All meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation (EUD) and well attended by Schengen Member States (as well as Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania). Furthermore, the working group on the harmonised list of supporting documents (see below point 3.2.) convened once⁹⁴ and on the common information sheet once⁹⁵. The Croatian and British Embassies in Moscow participated in two LSC meetings as guest speakers.

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.).

⁹² April 2012 – March 2013

⁹³ On 19 April, 15 May, 20 June, 14 September, 16 October, 7 November, 17 December, 29 January, 28 February and 27 March.

⁹⁴ On 12 April.

⁹⁵ On 9 October.

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

The harmonised list of supporting documents was finalised in Moscow in April 2012. The Visa Committee endorsed the list in July and concluded that the Member States should start using it in the absence of the formal Commission Decision (which will be taken only once the current list has been adapted to take account of the amended EU-Russia Visa Facilitation Agreement). With the exception of one Member State which emphasised the need to await the adoption of the related Decision, the implementation of the harmonised list started on 14 January 2013, after the LSC had translated it into Russian and agreed on the accompanying common information sheet, with its Russian translation, in October-December. The early experiences from the implementation of the harmonised list are generally positive and there have been no major problems.

3.3 Exchange of information

The LSC exchanged regularly information about monthly statistics; in 2012, the number of visa applications submitted by Russian citizens increased (by 15%), the rate of issued multiple-entry visas increased (to 49%) and the refusal rate decreased (to 0.9%) in comparison to 2011. Cases of fraud were regularly discussed within the LSC (as well as at local anti-fraud group meetings).

In addition to the issues mentioned above, the LSC exchanged information about relevant events (notably the Visa Dialogue, negotiations on the amended EU-Russia Visa Facilitation Agreement, EU-Russia Migration Dialogue, introduction of the visa obligation for air crews, Russian and EU migration legislation, bilateral talks with Russia on visa issues); cooperation with external service providers and travel agencies; practices of issuance of multiple-entry visas for tourists and LTV visas; visa fee waivers for disabled persons and accompanying persons as well as for participants in artistic events; opening of new consulates and visa centres; reasons for variations in visa refusal rates; personal appearance at the external service provider; cancellation and revocation of visas; provision of information to Russian authorities on the presence of Russians in the Member States; reactions to forged Schengen visas in Indian passports and to misused visas by Armenian citizens; visa applications by Syrian citizens; practices to requests for access to copies of visa application files of travellers whose entry has been refused by another Member State; local border traffic arrangements; period of grace of visas; collection of biometrics from visa applicants; practical verification of the applicant's willingness to return; proof of a valid insurance in long-term visas; calculation of the period of stay and the rule of stays of 90/180 days; separation of serial and passport numbers when printing visas; use of signatures in visa stickers; delays at the consulates from lodging the application to the delivery of the visa; local practices concerning visa applications from people resident in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; possible amendments or improvements to the Visa Code; consular personnel involved in the assessment of visa applications.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

The LSC also prepared a comprehensive table on consular presence in the Russian territory for the purpose of receiving visa applications as well as started to use the AGORA system for more secure internal exchanges of information.

4. Challenges

As regards the challenges indicated in the 2011-2012 report, the implementation of the amended EU-Russia Visa Facilitation Agreement and the full integration of Bulgaria or Romania into Schengen still remain potential challenges for 2012-2013.

The full implementation of the harmonised list of supporting documents will be a major subject for the next reporting period (2013-2014).

5. Other issues

The geographical size of the Russian Federation continues to pose particular problems for the Schengen cooperation (as described already in the 2010-2011 report). Furthermore, given that the EU's visa policies and issuance are matters of high public and political interest in the Russian Federation, regular negative and somewhat distorted reporting in the Russian media and statements by the Russian authorities render the working conditions of the Schengen consulates and EUD more difficult (as described already in the 2011-2012 report).

* * *

This LSC Moscow 2012-2013 report has been approved by all Member States present and EUD.



23/05/2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) ST. PETERSBURG 2012-2013 REPORT⁹⁶

1. Introduction

22 Schengen Member States are present in St. Petersburg. Finland, Latvia, the Netherlands and Switzerland represent Austria, Slovenia, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein respectively, and the following Member States use external service providers in St. Petersburg for the collection of applications: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Switzerland.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

During the reporting period, eight LSC meetings were organised in St. Petersburg⁹⁷, hosted by different consulates⁹⁸. All meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation (EUD) and well attended by Schengen Member States (as well as Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania).

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 St. Petersburg coordinate their practices closely with their colleagues in Moscow in line with the outcomes of the discussions in the capital. As a matter of fact, decisions in Moscow are in a vast majority of cases automatically implemented in St. Petersburg.

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.).

⁹⁶ April 2012 – March 2013

⁹⁷ On 26 April, 16 May, 19 June, 18 September, 25 October, 18 December, 31 January and 7 March.

⁹⁸ Consulates-General of Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, Italy and Hungary.

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

The harmonised list of supporting documents was finalised in Moscow in April 2012, with input throughout the process from St. Petersburg. The Visa Committee endorsed the list in July and concluded that the Member States should start using it in the absence of the formal Commission Decision (which will be taken only once the current list has been adapted to take account of the amended EU-Russia Visa Facilitation Agreement). The implementation of the harmonised list started on 14 January 2013, after the LSC in Moscow had translated it into Russian and agreed on the accompanying common information sheet, with its Russian translation, in October-December. The early experiences from the implementation of the harmonised list are generally positive and there have been no major problems.

3.3 Exchange of information

The LSC exchanged regularly information about monthly statistics; in 2012, the number of visa applications submitted by Russian citizens increased (by 15%), the rate of issued multiple-entry visas increased (to 49%) and the refusal rate decreased (to 0.9%) in comparison to 2011. Cases of fraud were regularly discussed within the LSC.

In addition to the issues mentioned above, the LSC exchanged information about relevant events (notably the Visa Dialogue, negotiations on the amended EU-Russia Visa Facilitation Agreement, EU-Russia Migration Dialogue,); cases of illegal migration; low level of issuance of multiple-entry visas by Russian consulates; visa refusal rates; processing of visa applications and internal cooperation between national authorities; opening of new visa (processing) centres; visa software; processing of applications from third-country nationals; further possibilities to ensure the submission of application in the consulate representing the main destination; cooperation with external service providers and travel agencies; cases of visa shopping after the rejection of the initial application; collection of biometrics from visa applicants; local practices concerning visa applications from people resident in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; Russian requests for information about a visa application; issuance of visas to a stateless person's document.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

The LSC also prepared a comprehensive table on consular presence in the Russian territory for the purpose of receiving visa applications as well as started to use the AGORA system for more secure internal exchanges of information.

4. Challenges

As regards the challenges indicated in the 2011-2012 report, the implementation of the amended EU-Russia Visa Facilitation Agreement and the full integration of Bulgaria or Romania into Schengen still remain potential challenges for 2012-2013.

The full implementation of the harmonised list of supporting documents will be a major subject for the next reporting period (2013-2014).

5. Other issues

The geographical size of the Russian Federation continues to pose particular problems for the Schengen cooperation (as described already in the 2010-2011 report). Furthermore, given that the EU's visa policies and issuance are matters of high public and political interest in the Russian Federation, regular negative and somewhat distorted reporting in the Russian media and statements by the Russian authorities render the working conditions of the Schengen consulates and EUD more difficult (as described already in the 2011-2012 report).

* * *

This LSC St. Petersburg 2012-2013 report has been approved by all Member States present and EUD.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
TO THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
THE HEAD OF DELEGATION

الاتحاد الأوروبي

مندوبية الاتحاد الأوروبي إلى
المملكة العربية السعودية
رئيس المندوبية

Riyadh, 20/12/2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) SAUDI ARABIA 2012-2013 REPORT⁹⁹

1. Introduction

A total of 18 Schengen Member States are represented in Riyadh. Five of them also have consulates in Jeddah. Some Schengen member states are making use of an external service provider to collect visa applications. This is currently the case for Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Malta and Spain. All are using the same company, VFS Global. Some of these MS only use the company's visa application centre in Riyadh, others also use those in Jeddah and Dammam.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

LSC regularly met every second month at the EUD, chaired by EUD. As guests, the heads of visa section of the US embassy was invited to two meetings during the reporting period and the head of the visa section in the Canadian embassy was invited to one meeting. One extraordinary LSC meeting was held in order to discuss priorities for the upcoming review of the visa code and a report was agreed on that basis.

Meetings were always well attended with usually 16 MS present. EUD drafted the minutes of the meetings and shared them with the MS. MS regularly inform their consulates in Jeddah of the outcomes of the LSC meetings. Most MS share the minutes with their capitals.

LSC continued to hold its meetings back-to-back with Consular cooperation meetings.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The VIS has been introduced without major problems. The main issue was the coordination of the approach towards visa applicants who are members of the royal family or government officials travelling for an official purpose but not as part of a delegation headed by a member of the government. In particular, the host country's military authorities have tried to exercise pressure on several member states' defence attachés in order to have the fingerprinting waived. Here, co-ordination with the USA has been helpful as the host country

⁹⁹ April 2012 – March 2013

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

MS are implementing the harmonised list of supporting document since 15 September 2011. MS have been reminded of the need to continue ensuring a harmonised application of the list and the need to publish it. The publication and distribution of the new Common Information Sheet (see 3.4) shall give it further momentum.

3.3 Exchange of information

LSC has started collecting and sharing monthly visa statistics as foreseen in the Visa Code. This is putting an additional strain on the limited human resources of EUD.

LSC has exchanged information on attempted fraud on a small-scale, involving visa applications for domestic staff allegedly working for members of the extended royal family.

LSC exchanged information about the impact of the Syrian crisis on the numbers and profiles of Syrian visa applicants resident in Saudi Arabia.

LSC exchanges information on TMI. EUD maintains a list of insurance companies which is updated by decision of MS upon request by an insurance company.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

LSC has agreed on a Common Information Sheet for applicants. EUD is tasked with producing posters and brochures for display in the consulates and the external service provider's premises.

LSC is working towards a more harmonised approach regarding the length of validity of visas issued to Saudi Arabian first time applicants as well as to Saudi Arabian applicants who are travelling for a second or further time. The same goes for the decision to issue multiple-entry visas instead of single-entry visas only.

4. Challenges

With the introduction of VIS the issue of representation has become problematic as several embassies in Saudi Arabia are also covering Yemen. Yemeni visa applicants hardly ever obtain a Saudi visa for travelling to an embassy to give their fingerprints. It has proven difficult for member states to find MS present in Yemen ready to take over their representation.

Host country authorities complain about cases of denials of entry at Schengen borders for the only reason of not having applied for the visa in the embassy of the country of main destination. Saudi authorities point out that the rules on the main destination are difficult to understand.

LSC has continued to seek to convene a third meeting of the Schengen-Saudi Arabia joint technical working group on visas (created in 2011 on Saudi demand). The host country authorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) have remained evasive.

5. Other issues

In preparation of the introduction of biometrics for Saudi visas, the host country conducted a survey amongst all foreign diplomatic posts about their visa policies. LSC decided to react to this survey jointly through EUD and to offer a meeting of the Schengen-Saudi Arabia joint technical working group on visas (see 4).

Contrary to its own legislation, Saudi Arabian procedures for the issuance of visas to business travellers continue being extremely lengthy, cumbersome and unpredictable. Several business delegations from MS had to cancel planned visits because of this. EUD continued pressing the host country's authorities to revise their practice. The issue was also discussed at the Market Access Advisory Committee in Brussels on 22 March 2013. However, the practice does not seem to constitute a violation of Saudi Arabia's GATS commitments.

Saudi Arabia usually only issues single-entry visas, including for business travellers. Saudi Arabia continues to put obstacles to visa applications from women. Saudi Arabia does not issue any tourist visa. Saudi Arabian embassies / consulates in MS are increasingly using external service providers which are, in general, inefficient and offer a very costly service. Saudi Arabian authorities do not issue visas to Schengen citizens and third country citizens resident in other countries who want to recur to the consular or visa services of a MS mission located in Saudi Arabia. This will create additional challenges with the introduction of the VIS.



Dakar, May 15 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) DAKAR, SENEGAL 2012-2013 REPORT¹⁰⁰

1. Introduction

In Dakar, 10 EU Member States are present at Ambassadors' level: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great-Britain, Italy, The Netherlands, Romania, Spain, and Portugal. Luxemburg is represented at Chargé d'Affaires-level. Switzerland is present at Ambassadors' level. Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Hungary and Slovakia have (honorary) consulates.

In 2012, Totals of A, C and LTV visas issued: Austria 431; Belgium 229; France 28 653; Germany 1765; Italy 2608; The Netherlands 761; Portugal 3601; Spain 3994; Switzerland 1748.

Spain and Portugal use external providers ("front office") for visa applications. Italy also has signed a contract with an external provider which will entry into force during the summer. In May 2013, both France and Switzerland announced that they will outsource their front office.

Many embassies fulfil a regional role and also represent their country in neighbouring countries, based from Dakar (e.g. The Gambia, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Mali).

As from 14 March 2013, Schengen visa are no longer issued in The Gambia, as Member States haven't got consular offices with biometric equipment in The Gambia.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Three meetings were held (21 June 2012, 28 February 2013, 16 April); these were well attended with each Schengen Member state present. End May 2013 there will be a next one, specifically targeting outsourcing issues. Meetings were chaired by the EU Delegation.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

No specific issues/ problems reported (yet).

¹⁰⁰ April 2012 – March 2013

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

This issue will be addressed in 2013. Incompatibility of systems is voiced as an argument against (further) harmonisation.

3.3 Exchange of information

- The Meeting in April discussed the statics provided by HQ (BXL). Explanation needed as many embassies issue visa for neighbouring countries; statistics thus rather incomparable.
- 1 case of fraud was reported during the April meeting.
- Room for improvement on regularisation/ standardisation exchange of information,

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

None.

4. Challenges

For 2011-2012, no report was drawn up.

Challenges/ subjects to be addressed:

1. VIS/ (political) relation with The Gambia;
2. (Continued) communication on visa (policy/ procedures), including clarification on respective responsibilities (policy: EU, execution: EUMS), both amongst ourselves as with respect to the general public;
3. Increasing number of applications (esp for France), with decreasing HR capacity;
4. Externalisation of application procedure: possibilities for enhanced EU-cooperation/ burden sharing/ common external agent?

5. Other issues

None.

This report was drafted by the EU Delegation in Dakar, and shared twice with the EU Member States present in Dakar and approved via a silence procedure on May 15th 2013.



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) SERBIA 2012-2013 REPORT¹⁰¹

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 General Consulate in Subotica.

The 3 MS that yet do not apply the common visa policy but committed to do so (BG, RO, CY) are also present in Belgrade. RO has also two Consulates General in Vrsac and Zajecar, while BG has a Consulate General in Nis.

Among States which decided not to apply the visa policy only the UK is represented in Belgrade.

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.

To be noted that some Schengen States issue in Belgrade also visas for residents in Kosovo*

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

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 meeting took place on November, 15, 2012 and was attended by 13 States applying the common visa policy, 3 States committed to apply it and UK as an observer.

The report of the November 2012 LSC meeting was 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, as well as reports.

Following a revision of the mailing list invitations for the following meeting, planned at the beginning of April 2013, will also be sent to locations outside the capital of those countries which do not apply the common visa policy yet but committed to do so, and reports will equally be shared to them.

* 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

¹⁰¹ April 2012– March 2013

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. To be noted that some Schengen States issue in Belgrade also visas for residents in Kosovo

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

Due to the situation described under 3.1 MS feels no need to harmonize documents at this stage, consider that practices are broadly speaking harmonized and assess that there are no specific risk of visa shopping.

3.3 Exchange of information

Information is exchanged on monthly statistics. EUD proposed to standardize information shared in accordance with Annex XII of the Schengen Visa Code.

See enclosed statistic compiled for 2012, according to the information provided by Schengen states.

LSC Serbia Schengen office 2012	A visas applied for	A visas issued	ME A visas issued	A visas not issued	C visas applied for	C visas issued	ME C visas issued	LTV issued	C visas not issued
BE	0	0	0	0	24	20	ND	0	4
CZ	0	0	0	0	404	402	199	53	2
DK	0	0	0	0	67	66	41	36	1
DE	1	1	1	0	1908	1820	1798	22	88
GR	0	0	0	0	310	310	310	0	0
ES	0	0	0	0	254	307	15	0	8
FR	1	1	0	0	42	34	17	8	8
IT	0	0	0	0	672	625	502	0	47
HU Belgrade	0	0	0	0	927	919	ND	0	8
HU Subotica	0	0	0	0	53	53	40	0	0
NL	0	0	0	0	44	43	24	0	1
AT	1	1	0	0	368	340	174	15	13
PL	0	0	0	0	111	107	53	0	2
PT	0	0	0	0	30	28	15	1	2
SI	0	0	0	0	235	228	202	0	7
SK	0	0	0	0	235	56	134 (incl. ME ltv)	164	15
FI	0	0	0	0	21	5	16	0	0
SE	0	0	0	0	43	38	ND	0	3
NO	0	0	0	0	28	27	0	0	1
CH	0	0	0	0-	505	502	ND	737	4

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

EUD proposed to exchange information on optional visa fee waivers and on the visa fee charged in local currency. The information collected so far is not complete. According to the information shared there are some difference in application of fee waivers and the visa fees collected in local currency can differ for around 10%. Nevertheless the general assessment of MS is that there is no substantial risk for visa shopping

4. Challenges in 2013-2014

There are no specific challenges related to the application of the provisions of the Visa Code, 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 increased numbers 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 5 countries most affected are BE, CH, DE, LU and SE. The issue is frequently labelled as "fake" asylum seekers, due to the fact that in general the rate of acceptance of the requests is extremely low, if not close to zero, due to the fact that the request of protection is often unfounded and driven only by economic reasons.

One of the measures envisaged to combat the phenomenon is the introduction in the existing Visa Regulation a suspension mechanism which would allow, under certain exceptional conditions, for the temporary reintroduction of the visa requirement for third country nationals benefiting from the EU visa waiver, proposed by the Commission in 2011

This mechanism is supposed to provide the EU with a tool, to be used in exceptional circumstances, for offsetting any possible serious adverse consequences of visa liberalisation, and in particular the arrival in the EU of a large number of irregular migrants or asylum seekers whose claims are not well-founded.

The agreement of the co-legislators on the amendments to the Visa Code, which include the suspension clause, has not been reached yet.

At the Joint EU WB JHA Tirana ministerial forum, Nov 5-6 2012 a Joint Declaration on visa-free travel was adopted unanimously by the WB delegations to stress their political commitment to address and counter the phenomenon of asylum-seekers originated from the region. In the Declaration, the Ministers resolved to enhance operational co-operation and information exchange within the region and with the EU Member States, Commission, and Europol; pursue effective investigations of facilitators of irregular migration; strengthen border controls; increase efforts to integrate the minority populations; and intensify information campaigns.

At the subsequent Senior Officers meeting in Brussels the Commission proposed a reinforced reporting mechanism that would require the Western Balkans states to deliver to the Commission periodic reports with updates on operational cooperation between the relevant authorities of the Western Balkans countries and EU Member States and EU agencies, information exchange, domestic investigations of facilitators of irregular migration, new programmes and projects assisting the socio-economic integration of minority populations, new information campaigns on the rights and obligations of visa-free travel.

At the end of 2012 the Commission registered a de-escalating trend of asylum applications from Serbia.

The next COM 6-monthly PVLMM Report would be presented to the JHA Council in June 2013.

The present LSC report has been circulated to the LSC Serbia and has been cleared on April, 5, 2013



19 June 2013

.LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) SINGAPORE 2012-2013 REPORT¹⁰²

1. Introduction

Singaporean nationals are exempted from holding a visa when crossing the external borders. 16 EU Member States (including IE, RO and UK) and 15 Schengen States (including CH and NO) are represented by their Embassies based in Singapore. Under global reciprocal arrangements, 6 Member States currently issue visas on behalf of one or several other Schengen States. [From May 2013 onwards, CZ is represented by HU.] No Schengen State uses external service providers to collect visa applications in Singapore.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

LSC meetings were held once every two months and scheduled to coincide with meetings of Consular Officers. They were chaired by the EU Delegation and well attended on the whole. Minutes were drawn up by the EU Delegation and shared with the Schengen States' Embassies.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Member States and the EU Delegation worked well together, based on the Visa Code requirements. The Head of the Political, Press and Information Section has been responsible for LSC since October 2011. The EU Delegation has occasionally requested ad hoc support on substantive questions from DG HOME.

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

Work on a harmonised list of supporting documents has started in early 2013. The issue was put on the agenda and discussed during LSC meetings.

An in-depth exchange of views on the locally relevant category of domestic servants accompanying European or Singaporean families travelling to the Schengen Area took place in 2012-2013, leading to the compilation of a table of practices followed by Schengen States in relation to this category of applicants.

¹⁰² April 2012 – March 2013

3.3 Exchange of information

The EU Delegation and Schengen States' Embassies exchanged information on trends in the numbers of Schengen visas issued or refused in the LSC meetings. The EU Delegation has been compiling the statistics for 2012 based in Schengen States' contributions with a view to reporting them to DG HOME.

LSC meetings were used to discuss general trends and ad hoc questions. They also provided an opportunity to exchange information on best practices, including the introduction of biometric capture devices, websites informing visa applicants and online visa application tools.

One Member State representative gave a comprehensive and very well received presentation on the Schengen House in Kinshasa at the LSC meeting in July 2012.

A deeper exchange of information on travel medical insurance (TMI) is foreseen to take place in 2013.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

The EU Delegation informed the Schengen States of any published developments in relation to the Schengen area whenever it was aware of those and distributed the relevant documents to the Schengen States' Embassies.

One Member State organised a practitioners' workshop on false, counterfeit or forged travel documents in June 2012, which was very well received.

4. Challenges

Joint work towards a more unified visa deliverance practice will continue.
Specific training of EU Delegation staff involved in this area appears desirable.

5. Other issues

Owing to different ways of calculating exchange rates, there is no harmonisation between Member States when charging visa fees in local currency. The EU Delegation circulates the exchange rate applied in the Institutions to all Schengen States' Embassies at the beginning of every month.



28 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) in South Africa 2012-2013 REPORT¹⁰³

1. Introduction

There are 18 full Schengen members present in South Africa – Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland. Furthermore, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania are also present and are invited to Schengen 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, some maintain Consulates General or Consulates in Johannesburg, which is a larger urban and economic centre. 9 Schengen states maintain permanent consular presence and issue visas in Cape Town, while 4 others (Visegrad countries) do it on a part time basis. In Durban, no Schengen state is present with full career consul any longer. Local Schengen cooperation takes place in Pretoria, involving Gauteng based consuls, and links with Cape Town are left in the responsibility of the Member states.

External service providers are used by many Member States both for locations where they are not present, but also for Gauteng. The precise functions contracted to external service providers vary from country to country.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Whereas before Schengen issues were treated in conjunction with Consular meetings (with non-Schengen MS leaving at that point), it was decided during the 2012 that separate meetings be held to deal with Schengen issues only. On average, consuls meet 6 times per year, of which 2 meetings are devoted to Schengen issues. It has been discussed in the LSC that frequency of these meetings may be increased.

During 2012 and early 2013 the LSC meetings were chaired by Denmark, as agreed in the group. EU Delegation provides administrative assistance to the Chair (drawing up agendas and minutes, circulating documents), and ensures continuity.

The meetings are well attended, and discussions are lively and topical.

¹⁰³ April 2012 – March 2013

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. Issues discussed include the specifics of South African travel documents and residence permits, exchange of information on MS practices regarding visa terms and the fees applied in local currency, use of the service providers, issues related to fraud and others. In particular, it is felt that existing provisions are not sufficient in ensuring a good level of conformity of visa fees in local currency.

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

Member States generally consider that harmonisation of practices is already largely achieved, save for some minor differences. A common information sheet was agreed, and is used by the consulates for more than 2 years. The need to establish the harmonized list of supporting documents was discussed in 2013, and it was agreed to start the work in this area.

3.3 Exchange of information

Statistics are gathered on regular basis, and the EU Delegation facilitates the sharing of this information.

Among the issues regularly discussed are:

- specifics of South African travel documents and residence permits;
- exchange of information on MS practices, for example, regarding validity periods of Schengen visas;
- visa waivers applied;
- experience with fraudulent documents;
- use of the service providers.

Application of visa fees in local currency has been discussed and information on MS practices was shared. It was felt that further harmonization in this area is required, and action needs to be taken above the local level.

Cooperation in issuance of visas has also been discussed to address – in ad hoc way – the periods of absence in smaller Embassies.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Croatia's decision to accept Schengen visas has been discussed to clarify situations when an applicant may be required to apply for a separate Croatian visa.

4. Challenges

Challenges for the coming period will be to develop the harmonized list of supporting documents and to launch the VIS and biometric collection of data.

This report has been shared with Member States and meets their acceptance.



30 juin 2013

**COOPÉRATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET
LES ÉTATS-MEMBRES (LSC)
Séoul/République de Corée
RAPPORT¹⁰⁴ 2012-2013**

1. Introduction

20 Etats membres (EM) sont présents en République de Corée. Chypre, l'Estonie, la Lettonie, la Lituanie, le Luxembourg, Malte, la Slovénie et la Croatie (pays en voie d'adhésion) n'ont pas de représentation diplomatique en Corée et sont suivis à partir de leurs ambassades situés à Tokyo ou Pékin.

Les accords de représentation en matière consulaire sont les suivants:

- l'Autriche représente la Croatie (pays en voie d'adhésion) et Malte,
- la Belgique représente le Luxembourg,
- l'Italie représente la Slovénie,
- la Pologne représente l'Estonie,
- la Slovaquie représente la Lettonie,
- l'ambassade de Suède à Séoul traite, en plus de celles qui lui sont adressées, les demandes de visa adressées au Danemark, à la Norvège et à l'Islande, en application de l'accord de coopération du Conseil nordique,
- la Suisse représente le Liechtenstein.

La Finlande a été amenée dans le passé à fournir des services consulaires à des ressortissants Estoniens. La Pologne a fait de même avec un ou des ressortissants Lithuaniens.

Dans tous les cas qui ont été rapportés, les consulats n'ont pas recours à du personnel externe (en dehors du personnel sous statut local) pour la réception des demandes de visa.

Les communautés européennes installées en Corée sont relativement faibles en volume (quelques milliers d'habitants, comme ailleurs il n'est pas facile d'apprécier le nombre d'expatriés en temps réel compte tenu que l'enregistrement consulaire n'est en général pas obligatoire). Le traitement des affaires consulaires ne pose pas de difficulté particulière. Le nombre d'Européens emprisonnés en Corée est très faible (moins d'une dizaine).

¹⁰⁴ Avril 2012 – Mars 2013

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2012-2013

D'avril 2012 à mars 2013, 2 réunions formelles de coordination ont été organisées le 30 mai et le 6 novembre 2012. Une réunion informelle a eu lieu le 12 décembre 2012, en marge du déplacement du groupe à l'aéroport international d'Incheon (cf. infra).

Les réunions de coordination sont présidées par la présidence locale ("local chair"). La présidence locale est désignée d'un commun accord par les chefs de délégation, lors de leurs réunions de routine, en fin de semestre. Sur proposition de la Délégation de l'UE, ces derniers ont toujours cherché jusqu'à présent à la coordonner avec la présidence tournante du Conseil de l'UE, pour plus de commodité et de lisibilité de l'action de l'UE en Corée. Le Danemark a ainsi exercé la présidence locale d'avril 2012 à juin 2012 et l'Irlande de juillet 2012 à mars 2013. Chypre ne disposant pas de personnel diplomatique en Corée, l'Irlande a exercé cette fonction à partir de juillet 2012 (nous suivons les dispositions de l'accord du Conseil de l'UE qui régit la présidence tournante dans les pays tiers là où la présidence tournante ne dispose pas de personnel diplomatique). Le consul de Chypre installé à Pékin a pris l'attache du point de contact à la délégation de l'UE à Séoul en mai 2012 en vue de s'assurer que qu'il n'y ait pas de vacance de la présidence locale et a approuvé la solution retenue.

Les comptes rendus de réunion sont préparés par la présidence locale qui les envoie pour relecture à la Délégation de l'UE avant diffusion.

La participation à ces réunions est satisfaisante. Sur les 20 EM présents, on relève généralement une quinzaine de présents (y compris les pays de l'UE non-signataires et les pays signataires qui n'appliquent pas l'accord). Même si certains EM participent aux réunions de manière plus assidue que d'autres, on ne relève aucun boycott. La Suisse et la Norvège participent également aux réunions (l'Islande et le Liechtenstein ne disposent pas de personnel diplomatique en Corée).

Le point de contact situé à la délégation de l'UE à Séoul assiste la présidence locale dans son travail de coordination.

3. État des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

Les EM sont bien préparés à assurer les tâches qui leur incombent dans le cadre de la coopération consulaire au titre de Schengen prévues par le Code des Visas. Le rôle de la délégation étant plus limité en la matière, la question de son éventuelle préparation ne se pose pas dans les mêmes termes que pour les EM, en tout cas à Séoul. Il n'est pas prévu que la délégation de l'UE en Corée préside les réunions de coordination consulaires. Le chef de délégation considère que la présidence locale doit continuer d'être exercée par un EM.

Certains EM ont délocalisé le traitement des visas (ex. : les demandes adressées au consulat des Pays-Bas à Séoul sont traitées à Kuala Lumpur).

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

Un travail d'harmonisation a eu lieu dans le passé, qui a abouti à une harmonisation partielle, mais il ressort des réunions qu'il n'est pas nécessaire d'aller plus loin en raison notamment du nombre peu élevé de visas de type C.

3.3 Échange d'informations

Il est apparu qu'il n'était plus nécessaire de collecter localement les informations relatives à l'octroi de visa car ces données sont centralisées au siège à Bruxelles puis diffusées à l'ensemble des EM et à la délégation à Séoul qui se charge d'informer les EM présents.

Nous n'avons pas eu à traiter de la question des assurances médicales de voyage au cours de la période.

En cas de fraude, les EM communiquent bien entre eux, ils échangent leurs informations et leur expérience en la matière.

La coopération a été parfaite dans le cas des documents de voyage émis par le pays d'accueil. A noter que nous sommes aussi en contact avec les autorités consulaires et les ambassades des EM présents en Corée du Nord *via* la parfaite coopération des 7 ambassades d'EM présentes à Pyongyang et de leurs homologues à Séoul qui se chargent de faire le lien avec nous ou de nous communiquer les adresses email.

Nous (EM, délégation de l'UE) entretenons d'excellents rapports avec les autorités coréennes, le Ministère des Affaires étrangères d'une part, le Service coréen de l'Immigration d'autre part (KIS – Korea Immigration Service). Ces autorités coréennes répondent rapidement aux questions que nous leur posons et nous invitent à leurs réunions périodiques organisées à l'attention exclusives des autorités consulaires, au cours desquelles elles présentent leurs dernières innovations en matière consulaire ou présentent leurs politiques publiques à l'attention des communautés expatriées (une réunion à leur initiative a eu lieu le 25 avril 2012).

Elles donnent suite également de manière favorable à nos demandes de visite de terrain, destinées à améliorer et à actualiser notre connaissance des procédures et de l'environnement locaux (cf. point suivant).

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Le groupe a été très accaparé par la montée de tension sécuritaire dans la péninsule coréenne au printemps 2013 suite aux menaces de guerre nucléaire proférée par la Corée du Nord. Quatre points méritent tout particulièrement d'être soulignés:

- de nombreuses consultations ont eu lieu par téléphone et par mail entre les membres du groupe durant les semaines de poussée sécuritaire. Il s'agissait essentiellement d'échanger de l'information sur notre compréhension de la situation et d'envisager les développements possibles,
- l'actualisation des recommandations aux voyageurs sur les sites Internet des ambassades qui disposent de telles recommandations a été suivie de très près et a été l'objet d'échanges entre ambassades présentes à Séoul. Cela concernait tant les recommandations de déplacement en Corée du Nord qu'en Corée du Sud. Les EM ont partagé des vues similaires sur le fond: si les recommandations à se rendre en Corée du nord ont été revues à la baisse durant la période de tension (mais ont été ramenées à la normale depuis lors), celles concernant la Corée du Sud n'ont pas été modifiées, même durant la période de tension,

- l'actualisation des plans d'urgence des EM et du plan d'urgence de la Délégation, au vu des risques encourus, a été renforcée,
- les relations du groupe avec les services consulaires des ambassades d'EM qui ne disposent pas de personnel diplomatique à Séoul mais suivent la Corée de Tokyo ou de Pékin (Chypre, l'Estonie, la Lettonie, la Lituanie, le Luxembourg, Malte et la Slovénie), et qui étaient intéressés à fournir de l'information actualisée sur la Corée à leurs ressortissants, ont également été renforcées. Nous avons été aussi en contact étroit avec l'ambassade croate située à Tokyo.

Nous avons invité le consul du Japon à notre réunion du 6 novembre 2012, durant la présidence locale irlandaise. Cette réunion a donné lieu à un échange fructueux qui nous a permis de rapprocher nos points de vue sur la question sensible des plans d'urgence en cas de crise.

A l'initiative du groupe, les services chargés des relations internationales et de l'immigration à l'aéroport d'Incheon (qui dépendent du KIS) nous ont invités le 12 décembre 2012 à visiter leurs services. Ils nous ont présenté à cette occasion leurs dernières nouveautés en matière d'automatisation du passage à la frontière.

La Corée est devenue Etat partie à la Convention sur la protection des enfants et la coopération en matière d'adoption internationale, dite convention de La Haye (entrée en force le 1 mars 2013). UK y était favorable et avait envisagé un instant de démarcher les autorités coréennes à ce sujet conjointement avec les ambassades des Etats-Unis et du Canada. En réunion LSC, vu que l'Union européenne détient la compétence exclusive en la matière et sachant que la Corée avait entrepris des démarches en vue de devenir Etat partie à la convention, nous avons décidé qu'il n'était pas nécessaire d'intervenir. Sur le fond, l'Europe est moins concernée que des pays comme les Etats-Unis.

4. Défis pour 2013-2014

Points à traiter au cours du prochain exercice (2013-2014):

- Poursuite de l'actualisation des plans d'urgence par chaque EM et la Délégation de l'UE,
- Poursuite de la réflexion sur la nécessité éventuelle d'une coordination des plans d'urgence des EM au niveau de la Délégation de l'UE, à l'instar de ce qui s'est fait au Japon suite à la triple catastrophe de Fukushima ou en RPC,
- Renforcement des liens entre les services consulaires des EM et la Délégation de l'UE d'une part, et les autorités coréennes d'autre part (MOFA, Ministère de la Justice), notamment la National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), en vue de partager les éléments des plans d'urgence (démarche de la présidence locale irlandaise en cours), sachant que nous ne sommes pas bien informés des détails des plans d'urgence des autorités coréennes,
- Renforcement de la coordination avec le Consulat Général des Etats-Unis et les services consulaires américains ("American Citizens Services unit").

5. Divers

Sans objet.



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and for the Republic of Maldives

Local Schengen Cooperation (LSC)

Colombo, 17May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) SRI LANKA 2012-2013 REPORT¹⁰⁵

1. Introduction

There are six Schengen diplomatic missions in Colombo (FR,DE,IT,NL,NO,CH) all of which provide representation for both Sri Lanka and the Maldives and they all process visa applications. All process visa applications on behalf of other Schengen Member States as well. Four missions (FR,DE,IT,NO) make use of the services of an external service provider VFS Global Lanka Pvt Ltd for the collection of applications. VFS has established a "Joint Schengen Visa Application Centre"

<i>Mission</i>	<i>FR</i>	<i>DE</i>	<i>IT</i>	<i>NL</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>CH</i>
<i>Members States</i>	<i>FR, ES,PT</i>	<i>DE,AT, HU,EE,LV</i>	<i>IT, MT</i>	<i>NL,BE,LU, PL,SI</i>	<i>NO,SE, DK,FI,IS</i>	<i>CH</i>
<i>Service Provider</i>	<i>VFS Global Lanka Pvt LTD</i>	<i>VFS Global Lanka Pvt LTD</i>	<i>VFS Global Lanka Pvt LTD</i>	<i>No outsourcing</i>	<i>VFS Global Lanka Pvt LTD</i>	<i>No outsourcing</i>

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Two regular LSC meetings were held (12 July 2012 and 12 December 2012) during the reporting period (1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013). The first LSC meeting was chaired by the EU while the second one was chaired by NL. Both meetings were well attended. The British High Commission and the Romanian Charge d'Affaires were invited to attend the meetings as observers like in the previous years. Romania was unable to attend both these meetings because the Romanian Embassy in Sri Lanka is a one staff operation and both the LSC meeting times clashed with an important bilateral meeting the Romanian Charge D'Affaires had with the government and on the second occasion he was involved with an official visit from Bucharest

It has to be pointed out that there were staff changes in the EU Delegation during this reporting period and some EU staff handling the LSC left the Delegation and this resulted in less meetings being held compared to the previous year. However since April 2013 other EU staff have been assigned to the LSC and as a consequence the regular meetings have resumed.

In general the EU Delegation Chairs the meetings (except for one meeting during this period) and facilitates the discussions and drafts and distributes the minutes and provides any other support requested by the Missions. The cooperation from and among the Missions is extremely good and all LSC activities and tasks are carried out on a burden- sharing basis.

¹⁰⁵ April 2012 – March 2013

According to some of the LSC members they have not shared the common report with their headquarters in the past but they would consider doing so from now onwards.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Schengen missions and the EU Delegation continue to show full preparedness to ensure the smooth running of tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code. The general consensus among the Schengen missions is that the current visa code is very good and it is being fully implemented.

A specific problem relating to the implementation of the Visa Code discussed in a LSC meeting during this reporting period included the procedure adopted by the Sri Lankan authorities to extend the validity of a passport via a stamp in an alternative page rather than modifying the machine readable part of the passport, or an endorsement of a after marriage name change manually etc which made the verification task of the Schengen visa officer extremely difficult. Secondly the Schengen missions were concerned that the "Enquiry Management System" a service provided by the Sri Lankan Immigration department on verification of information provided by visa applicants thanks to an IOM project, was extremely useful for them but unfortunately this IOM project was encountering funding difficulties and therefore there was a risk of this service being discontinued by the Sri Lankan authorities.

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

The Schengen missions in Sri Lanka have confirmed that they are all using the harmonized list of support documents.

3.3 Exchange of information

Schengen missions continue to exchange information on the following:

Statistics: Schengen missions continued to compile monthly and quarterly statistics which were then consolidated by the EU Delegation and discussions on the main trends were done periodically during this reporting period.

Travel Medical Insurance (TMI's): A list of the insurance companies commonly used by the visa applicants was compiled by CH during the last reporting period which was then reviewed by DE to see whether the TMI's offered by these companies corresponded to the Visa Code requirements.

Service providers: Schengen missions continued to exchange information on service providers. The VFS Global Lanka Pvt Ltd continued to run the dedicated "Joint Schengen Visa Application Centre".

List of contacts: A list of relevant contacts were regularly updated by the Schengen missions

Data sharing: Schengen missions continued to consult each other and exchanged information on issues regarding individual applications when required during this reporting period.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Schengen missions continued to visit each others missions to share information and experience, which have allowed the missions to better understand the differences in practices and have also helped in identifying best practices which have further helped in the harmonization exercise.

4. Challenges

A challenge listed in the previous report of setting up a "Joint Schengen Visa Application Centre" was achieved with the setting up of such a centre by VFS Global Lanka Pvt Ltd.

The current IOM project providing support to the immigration department coming to an end soon could mean that some of the services provided by the immigration department to the Missions on verification of visa applicants and returns through the re-admission agreement could be affected. While the EU hoped that the Immigration Department with the technical and financial support received so far, has put in place systems which could continue despite the IOM project coming to an end, the missions however felt that further support was necessary not to compromise all the work done so far. The Missions pointed out that CH and CAN funds were being provided for this project up till the end of 2013 and therefore urged the EU to find ways to continue supporting this project with EU funds beyond that period due to the importance of the project output to the Schengen Missions. In this regard the Missions suggested that the EU on behalf of the LSC a) contact IOM for a detailed funding request and b) to see if EU border protection funds could be made available for this.

5. Other issues

None



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) *KHARTOUM* 2012-2013 REPORT¹⁰⁶

1. Introduction

No major changes since last period except the fact that the German Embassy was stormed in September 2012 and that the consulate operations have not resumed yet. The delivery of visas has been taken over by other MS, more specifically by the Dutch.

Nine Schengen States Members, i.e. France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland are represented in Sudan.

Due to this limited number, the following arrangements are in place:

- The Netherlands are representing Belgium and Luxemburg;
- Germany is representing Austria, Slovenia and Hungary.
- France represents Portugal;
- Norway represents Denmark, Iceland and Sweden.

There is no use of external service providers for collection of application.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Meetings were organized on average every two months, meaning that the frequency has increased compared to previous period. Some specific session related to fraud were held including non-Schengen countries (UK, USA, Canada).

Generally speaking, meetings are quite regularly attended by most of Member States concerned and hosted by the EU Delegation under the dynamic lead of Norway.

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

All Schengen Member States are implementing Visa Code provisions. As for the tariffs, there are still some tiny differences but purely due to technical reasons (each MS is using its own exchange rate). The difference in rates does not affect the application flows, which is a positive point.

It should be mentioned that Sudanese passports are on the list of compulsory checks by Members States. This has a little impact on the delay for issuing visas, but the delays are not abnormally long (15 days is a maximum on average).

¹⁰⁶ April 2012 – March 2013

Two EU Schengen Member States don't recognize Sudanese passports as valid travel documents. As a result, some "limited" Schengen visas are issued by several Member States in Khartoum.

Visa requests from Eritrean citizens account still for a high proportion of total requests and are always a concern regarding the proportion of faked documents submitted.

The number of names of Sudanese citizens is also a source of concern as one person can submit different applications with different names and passports.

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

All Schengen Member States are using a harmonized list of documents as stated in the Visa Code. The cases for fee exemptions are usually the same for each Member State.

3.3 Exchange of information

The circulation of information between Member States and with the EU Delegation is excellent and regular. : Visas statistics, cases of fraud or debate of any kind of issues.

There are several TMI established in Khartoum whose offers fulfilled Visa Code requirements. The list is regularly updated and shared between the MS.

Member States and EU Delegation are well informed about the travel documents in use in Sudan whose list has been communicated to DG HOME two years ago.

3.4 Other initiatives taken in LSC

Due to the increase of flight schedules of Lufthansa, two German federal border police officers have been deployed at the Khartoum airport to supervise the handling of the German aircrafts (luggage /cargo area). When they are on duty, these officers are often asked by the check-in employees to verify travel documents and personalized permits. As a result, several falsifications/forgeries have already been detected.

4. Challenges in 2012-2013

Subject to be addressed within the next reporting period (2013-20134): Implementation of VIS should start in 2013.

5. Other issues

N/A



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

Head of Delegation

Dushanbe, 7 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Tajikistan 2012-2013 REPORT¹⁰⁷

1. Introduction

In Tajikistan three Member States, Germany, France and the United Kingdom have their Embassies on the ground. Two of them, namely Germany and the UK, have their consulates present here and implement consular activities. Citizens of the Republic of Ireland are also covered by the British Embassy Dushanbe. Germany – the only country issuing Schengen visas in Tajikistan - represents 13 Schengen states (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Sweden and Spain).

In 2013 an honorary consul of Sweden has begun his activity in Dushanbe. Swedish citizens are registered with him.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

In 2012 well-attended meetings were organised on ad-hoc basis, discussing issues of common concern and interest.

On 7 June 2012 a meeting was convoked how to implement the Guidelines of EU Human Rights Defenders in individual cases of active human rights defenders who are in imminent danger (threatened by officials, harassed by police) in the consequence of their human rights activity - i.e. how to issue them visa and assist them to leave the country in case of necessity. The Guidelines speaks about emergency cases which need to be harmonized with Schengen regulations. The German consul contacted Berlin about instructions. Finally, the issue of the Human Rights Defenders was solved within the competence of the German national authorities – i.e. the issuance of national visas (category D) would be considered for them in a special fast-track process as they would have to stay in the Schengen area for more than 90 days. The procedures agreed on with Berlin concern immigrant visas (D-visas) only.

Consular issues were also discussed during the EU Heads of Mission meetings taken place at fortnightly intervals.

¹⁰⁷ April 2012 – March 2013

3. State of play

3.1 Application/Revision of the Visa Code

The Visa Code is fully applied. Addition of biometric data will probably be introduced by the end of 2013.

Local Circumstances in Visa Issues: The Visa Code is fully applied; all applications must contain the documentation named in the Visa Code. Besides, the circumstances regarding falsifications of documents and issuance of false documents are a constant issue for the German visa section. A German officer checked the travel documents and visas of the passengers going to Frankfurt by the once-a-week direct flight to Frankfurt of the Somon Air, a local airlines, at the check-point in the Dushanbe International Airport. His contact came to an end in summer 2012 – but through lack of co-operation of the Tajik authorities no successor arrived although his work is of considerable importance to hamstring illegal immigration.

As to the on-going revision of the Visa Code we provided input (see our e-mail on 13 April 2013) on the local experience on the Visa Code and forwarded the suggestions based on the remarks of the local MS issuing Schengen visa.¹⁰⁸

The local impression/opinion here in Dushanbe is that the Visa Code is basically good, but the very different "interpretation" of its content necessarily leads to very different visa policies in places where more than one embassy issues Schengen visa. It is a unique feature of and great advantage for us here in Tajikistan that we only have one Schengen visa section (Embassy of Germany - which, albeit, does not cover the whole Schengen area) thus we are in the position to pursue one single visa policy – consequently, the problem of "visa shopping", which arises in many other places and which also derives from the very different visa policies of the member states, does not exist in Tajikistan.

¹⁰⁸ The remarks/suggestions were as follows:

- 1) Art. 1 (1): the periods of time should be specified from "three months within six months" to a specific number of days.
- 2) Art. 5 (2) b: Amendment: In case the member state of first entry is not represented in the country of residence of the applicant, the member state second entry is competent for accepting the visa application.
- 3) Art. 8 (2): this procedure should be stated as an exception, while Art. 8 (4) d should be the rule. This would not change present bilateral agreements, but it would show, that the procedure in lit. d should play a bigger role. The procedure stated in Art. 8 (2) takes very long usually, which is difficult both for the applicant and the member state representing.
- 4) Art. 8 (4): Amendment: The member state represented shall communicate the conditions and circumstances under which Art 4 (4) applies to the member state representing.
- 5) Art. 15 (7): this should only apply for official travels, not for private trips.
- 6) Art. 19 (4): Amendment: In this case, the Schengen visa should be limited to the territory of the member state issuing the visa.
- 7) Art. 20 (2): only if the visa applied for is for official purpose.
- 8) Art. 33: Amendment: In case of extension/renewal of a visa, the competent authority of the member state concerned communicates its decision to the consulate which issued the Schengen visa.

The practise of the Consular Section of the German Embassy is as follows: visa fees are charged according to Art. 16 of the Visa Code (EU Regulation 810/2009 as of 13.07.2009). The optional free-of-charge visas are named in section 5. They are applied for bearers of diplomatic passports and applicants who are invited by state-funded programmes, as well as for applicants travelling on behalf of inter-governmental/supra-governmental organizations (UN, EU, IAEA, OECD, etc.), as well as for direct family members of EU citizens.

The option named in section 6 is used very restrictedly, a decision is taken on the individual case, so a general rule can not be named. As mentioned before the danger of "visa shopping" is not imminent, as there is no other Schengen visa section in the country.

Citizens of the Russian Federation, of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Moldavia and Albania have to pay only 35,-€ due to special visa agreements. The visa fees are to be paid in Euros (cash), the Embassy does not accept any other currency.

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

Since in Tajikistan only one MS issuing Schengen visas is present the issue of harmonisation of practises is not applicable.

3.3 Exchange of information

The exchange of information does exist between the EU MS and EU Delegation - based on concrete and relevant issues. As only Germany issues Schengen visas, the present degree of information exchange is sufficient.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

All information regarding German national and Schengen visas can be found on the internet site of the German Embassy and as paper prints in the visa section.

The registration of non-German citizens at the German Embassy has been going on for a couple of years now – including the staff of the EU DEL - in anticipation of cases when the national passport get lost/stolen/destroyed in order to ensure to issue an emergency travel document which would make it possible to return to the country of origin (or Belgium/EU headquarters). Since 2010, when the German Embassy managed to raise the EU citizens' attention more intensively, more and more - but by far not all - EU citizens in TJK have registered with the German Embassy.

In 2012 the German Embassy's Consular Section started issuing a "Consular Newsletter", a general information instrument, which is meant for the EU citizens in Tajikistan, regardless of their purpose of their stay abroad. The German Consul informed the EU citizens registered with the German Embassy about the EU regulation "Rome III" (concerning regulations which national legislation is applicable in case of divorce when a citizen of a treaty member state resides outside of his home country). The Embassy of Germany continues this newsletter, which is more than emergency information.

Citizens of France register with their own Embassy. Citizens of the Republic of Ireland shall register with the UK Embassy.

4. Challenges

With growing exchange of travellers between Tajikistan and the Schengen Area the challenge for the upcoming years would be ensuring and improving information flow between the EU MS and EU Delegation. Exchange of relevant information has become a routine as shown by the urgency case mentioned above.

At present EUDEL cooperates with FR and DE in case of evacuation and crisis management, respectively. The development of further responses is well under process.

5. Other issues

Remark: This report has been approved by the MS present.



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) – Bangkok
2012-2013 REPORT¹⁰⁹

1. Introduction

In 2012, the number of Schengen embassies and consulates remained unchanged in Thailand. In total, there were nineteen Schengen embassies represented in Bangkok including Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

During the reported period, Schengen embassies issued 187,344 C type visas. When compared to previous years, it marks a nine percent increase from 2011 (170,613) and a sixteen percent increase from 2010 (157,998). 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 Denmark, Sweden, Norway, The Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Spain while TLS Contact manages for France and Switzerland.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Within the year of 2012, a total of seven LSC meetings were held. These meetings were well attended and participants of the meetings were active and cooperative.

Furthermore, due to the initial successes of last year's round-table meeting with travel agent representatives, a half year follow-up session was organized by the LSC group. The purpose was to remind travel agents of the Schengen visa application rules in order to maintain the positive momentum from the previous year and further reduce the occurrence of incomplete or incorrect visa applications for tourist groups especially during peak seasons.

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.

¹⁰⁹ April 2012 – March 2013

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

The list of supporting documents is partially harmonized. Many Schengen member states require particular supporting documentation, in accordance with their national law, for particular types of visas. It was agreed that Schengen member state embassies in Bangkok should follow the Visa Code: Article 10 – General rules for lodging an application; Article 14 – Supporting documents; and Annex II – Non-exhausted list of supporting documents.

3.3 Exchange of information

During 2012 LSC meetings, exchanges of information on a range of issues took place including topics concerning trends and incidents of fraudulent/suspicious behaviour, updates on local travel medical insurance companies and exchange of knowledge and acquaintances on specific travel agents among others. Furthermore, participants actively and frequently exchange emails informing each other of fraudulent/suspicious activities committed by particular individuals or travel agents as well as circulate the monthly visa statistics.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

In collaboration with Thailand's Immigration Bureau, on the 15th of May 2012, an ICE Team Interdiction Exercise was held at Suvarnabhumi International Airport. LSC participants were invited to participate. The exercise aimed at highlighting the procedural processes which the ICE Team's airport staff carry out when checking passengers and their travel documents. Suspicious cases involving counterfeited residency permits and visas have been detected recently, which highlighted the need for such exercises.

4. Challenges

EU MS are awaiting the implementation of the biometric visas.

However the Royal Thai Government has from a political level requested visa-free travel for its citizens to Europe, no steps have yet been taken from an expert level. The understanding of the difference between the EU and Schengen is clearly missing.

The implementation of biometric visas might give us new experiences in visa trends. It can be anticipated as one of the key issues for future reporting.

5. Other issues

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UNION EUROPEENNE

DÉLÉGATION EN TUNISIE

Section Economique Politique Information et Culture

COOPERATION LOCALE AU TITRE DE SCHENGEN ENTRE LES CONSULATS ET LES ETATS-MEMBRES (LSC) TUNISIE RAPPORT¹¹⁰ 2012-2013

1. Introduction

Procédure: L'Allemagne, la France, l'Italie et l'Espagne continuent de faire appel à un prestataire externe pour le traitement des demandes de visa. La France et l'Espagne, pour toute la procédure, y compris les mesures biométriques, l'Italie pour toute la procédure sauf les mesures biométriques, l'Allemagne seulement pour la prise de rendez-vous.

Représentation: L'Autriche représente la Slovaquie; la Belgique le Luxembourg; la Finlande la Suède, le Danemark, la Norvège, l'Islande et l'Estonie; l'Allemagne la Lituanie.

Les visas pour la Libye: Malte et la Roumanie continuent à délivrer des visas pour des ressortissants libyens à partir de la Tunisie même si ils le font à partir de la Libye aussi. Pour Malte, les demandeurs peuvent être résidents ou de passage. L'Ambassade de Bulgarie délivre également des visas aux ressortissants libyens en attendant la réouverture prochaine de son consulat à Tripoli ; de même pour la Grèce et la Roumanie. L'Autriche a rouvert son Ambassade à Tripoli.

2. Réunions LSC organisées en 2012-2013

Le nombre de réunions LSC est généralement de une par trimestre. Quatre réunions se sont tenues en 2012 : en Janvier, Juin, Septembre et Décembre. La première réunion de 2013 s'est tenue le 26 Mars. La participation à ces réunions est régulière pour la plupart des EM. La Suisse y participe également. Il n'y a pas de coordination LSC en dehors de Tunis. Toutes les demandes de visas de l'intérieur du pays sont à déposer auprès des consulats des EM ou à leurs prestataires, à Tunis.

3. Etat des lieux

3.1 Application du Code des Visas

L'ambassade de Malte a quelques problèmes aux frontières de certains pays européens, notamment l'Allemagne, concernant les porteurs de visas d'affaires à entrées multiples libyens qui envisagent d'effectuer des séjours touristiques dans d'autres pays européens que Malte. D'autres ambassades ont le même problème, surtout avec l'Allemagne et il y a eu des cas non seulement de refoulement des personnes mais aussi d'annulation de ces visas par la police des frontières.

L'Ambassade du Portugal voit se multiplier les demandes de visas pour lesquelles le Portugal n'est ni le point d'entrée en zone Schengen, ni le pays de séjour principal. Les demandeurs cherchent vraisemblablement à éviter les coûts et les délais d'attente imposés par les sociétés prestataires de services.

L'Ambassade de Suisse dénonce ce même phénomène.

¹¹⁰ Avril 2012 – Mars 2013

Concernant les délais de traitement, la France a annoncé 6 jours d'attente pour le RD et 5 jours ouvrables pour délivrer le visa.

Les Pays-Bas continueront de délivrer des visas en Tunisie en attendant la décision qui sera prise par les services néerlandais de délivrer les visas pour la région à l'Ambassade des Pays-Bas à Amman.

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

Les travaux d'harmonisation ont été finalisés et la liste a été transmise à Bruxelles au mois de Novembre 2012.

3.3 Echange d'informations

L'échange des informations LSC se fait par le biais de statistiques mensuelles transmises par mail et par des tours de table, EM par EM lors des réunions.

Les participants procèdent à l'analyse et à l'interprétation des statistiques, à l'échange d'informations concernant des listes de compagnies d'assurances médicales ou de traducteurs agréés les plus adéquats.

Ils procèdent également au passage en revue des cas de fraude les plus graves ou les plus récurrents et signalent également la recrudescence de certains phénomènes particuliers, tels que les mariages "mixtes" entre personne à très grande différence d'âge, les demandes d'asile, ou le phénomène du "visa shopping".

3.4 D'autres initiatives prises en LSC

Les membres du groupe ont suggéré d'intensifier l'échange d'information "en réseau" concernant les cas de fraude les plus importants, ce qui aurait pour finalité de faciliter la tâche des services compétents pour les visas.

4. Défis pour 2013-2014

Faire face aux demandes d'asile de jeunes qui ont augmenté depuis l'assassinat politique du mois de Février. L'Ambassade de France et de Pologne reçoivent les demandes, accordent un entretien au demandeur et envoient la demande pour examen à leurs capitales respectives.

Faire face à la fraude : de nombreuses Ambassades déplorent le fait de recevoir de nombreux documents frauduleux : extraits bancaires, attestations de salaires mais également actes de naissance et de mariage. C'est une première pour la Tunisie, car auparavant les actes d'état civil étaient considérés très fiables. Elles ont également eu affaire à des porteurs de faux visas, avec des vignette italiennes, belges et françaises falsifiées (ou, plutôt, vignettes authentiques avec changement de nom).

Faire face au "visas shopping" par plus de coopération, de communication et de fluidité. L'Ambassade d'Espagne a soulevé une objection à la règle qui oblige les services consulaires à accepter et à traiter toute demande, alors que certaines ne sont, d'emblée, pas recevables.

Faire face au phénomène des mariages mixtes (" mariages blancs") qui se multiplient.

"Tampons de refus" couverts par vignette visa chinoise ou, maintenant, indienne.

EUDEL a remarqué la grande différence en nombre de visas à entrées multiples délivrés par certaines ambassades par rapport à d'autres.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO TURKEY

Ankara, 22nd of October 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION TURKEY 2012-2013 REPORT¹¹¹

1. Introduction

The reporting period of this report relates to the period from April 2012 till March 2013 and covers all locations in Turkey where Schengen countries issue visas: Ankara, Istanbul, Edirne and Izmir.

The representation by Member States remained the same¹¹². However, new outsourcing agreements have entered into force for the Netherlands (Ankara, Istanbul) and Germany (Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir).

Turkish citizens also have the possibility to apply for a visa to Italy in Bursa and for a visa to Germany, in Antalya, Bursa and Gaziantep.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

The meetings were generally well attended. Occasionally a few MS were missing, but the average attendance of the Schengen countries was:

- In general: 63,4%, (71,7% in case the MS holding the presidency has a representation in Turkey)
- In Ankara: 74.6%, (84,3% in case the MS holding the presidency has a representation in Turkey)
- In Istanbul: 49,0% (55,4% in case the MS holding the presidency has a representation in Turkey or 75% if MS present in Istanbul only).

¹¹¹ April 2012 – March 2013

¹¹² **In Ankara:** Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland (totally 23 Schengen countries).

In Istanbul: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Malta, 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).

The participation of Bulgaria and Romania is not included in these figures; both countries have always been invited and have participated frequently. Non-Schengen Member States Ireland and the United Kingdom equally attended as observers at most meetings.

- 16th of March 2012 joint LSC-ILO meeting in Ankara.
- 16th of April 2012 joint LSC-ILO meeting in Istanbul.
- April 2012 a representative from DG-HOME Headquarters attended the meeting in Istanbul.
- 19th of March 2013 European Commission DG HOME Director Manservisi debriefed the EU missions in Ankara about his visit to Turkey, and the information was disseminated to Schengen colleagues.
- 17th of September 2013 a donor coordination meeting (Migration, Borders) was held at the UK Embassy. Present: EUD, UK, Sweden, Switzerland, France, Hungary, Greece, Bulgaria, Netherlands.

During the reporting period, a total of 9 meetings were held: 5 in Ankara and 4 in Istanbul.

The EUD included Edirne and Izmir MS representations into the mailing lists and equally shared the minutes of LSC meetings and the statistics were shared with all Schengen consulate locations in Turkey. Schengen MS consulate staffs in other locations are free to participate in the LSC meetings organized in Ankara and/or Istanbul.

Reports/minutes were drawn up by the EUD. The MS have been encouraged to share the LSC meeting minutes with their central authorities. In an effort to ensure transparency, all minutes were shared with all LSC locations in Turkey.

Denmark as rotating Presidency in the first semester of 2012 has had a constructive approach in both major locations.

The EUD ensured the continuity of the meetings, in the absence of a rotating Presidency both in the second semester of 2012 and in the first semester of 2013, as Cyprus is not represented in Turkey and Ireland is not a Schengen country (but attended the LSC meetings during their presidency).

Specific meetings were held on LSC's public policy development, notably aiming at explaining the Schengen visa system to the wider public in a more comprehensive manner and to specifically target businessmen associations and local chambers of commerce in different locations throughout Turkey (see detailed description under section 3.4. Any other initiatives)

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code – April 2012-March 2013

Given the importance and the recent EU Turkey developments, the LSC is considered an important platform to discuss and to harmonise MS practises. The attitude of the Turkish administration, media and public towards the efforts made within the LSC occasionally caused frustration. The "official" line taken by Turkey is targeting complete visa liberalisation; therefore the harmonisation and facilitation efforts within the remits of the Visa Code remained to be regarded as unsatisfactory. The facilitation of the application process through outsourcing companies has increased the satisfaction of individuals but has not contributed to any significant change in the perception of the Turkish press, government, local authorities and society on the visa system.

In addition to the adopted harmonised lists of supporting documents, the LSC collected information on

- Outsourcing
- Multiple entry visas with long period of validity
- Reasons for refusal of visa applications
- National D-visas
- A-visas
- Travel medical insurance
- Visas for seamen
- *Refoulement* at the border of holders of valid Schengen visas
- Visa lift for Special and Service Passports
- Collection of biometric identifiers by some MS
- Processing “alerts”

The results of these surveys have been distributed to all LSC colleagues in Turkey; they have been shared with the DG-HOME as well. They have proven very useful and have been actively used in related background briefings of the EUD.

In particular in relation to A-visas, LSC deemed them an unnecessary measure whose suppression would be perceived in positive terms.

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 has not carried out by the MS due to lack of resources. However, MS have regularly exchanged information on this issue and harmonized lists generally contributed significantly to more uniform practices regarding visa applications in Turkey as well as to the clarity of the processing for the wider public.

A debate has begun within LSC in relation to the relevance of requiring flight / travel reservations or other proof of transport/accommodation and evidence of hotel bookings for business-related visas, but the issue was deemed to deserve further analysis and reflection in the future.

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 local level.

As mentioned in point 3.1, several information requests have been circulated among the LSC. All were aiming at better coordination and harmonization of practices.

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, also including the exchange of statistics relating to both visa and asylum requests by Syrian nationals.

The validity of insurances subscribed by third country nationals without valid Turkish residence permit were equally addressed within LSC and later in the year a clarification by the Turkish Ministry of Finance was made sent to clarify this question.

LSC took note of the Greek pilot project with short stay visas from Aegean coastal areas to seven selected Greek islands, simplifying entry procedures during the summer season

LSC took note of NL and DE practices in relation to service providers and independent businesspersons, following the court ruling in the Soysal case.

Another discussion within LSC dealt with the "Top 10 Points where the Visa Code should be amended" and suggestions were sent to Brussels for further consultation with MS.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

- LSC also collected comparative information regarding the entry regime in Turkey for nationals of the Schengen MS, noting Turkey does not apply uniform rules in this regard, notably in what concerns the visa requirement. The different bilateral regimes and experiences as to the travel documents required from the citizens of the EU MS travelling to Turkey for a period up to 90 days were the object of analysis by the group.
- A first public diplomacy initiative was carried out in collaboration with the Central Chambers of Commerce in Ankara, which led to a mission to the Chamber of Commerce of Konya, with the participation of representatives of 7 Schengen States Embassies. The presentation reached an audience of around 100 businesspersons, sharing their questions and problems they have encountered upon obtaining business-related Schengen visas. Further missions are planned to target other provincial Chambers and businessmen groups.
- LSC updated two draft Schengen Information advertorials, for the purpose of future publication in the Turkish press, explaining the Schengen visa system to the general public in a comprehensive manner as well as flyers are to be published and distributed at Schengen visa locations
- LSC discussed and supported the need to translate the EU Visa Code and respective relevant annexes into Turkish, in order to make it accessible to the general public.
- With LSC agreement the EUD supported FRONTEX in organising training on documents' fraud (6th and 8th November), also open to locally hired visa officers, with a high rate of attendance. The workshop was generally considered very useful in improving officer's capabilities to recognise forged travel documents but also as a *forum* to exchange of good practices in processing Schengen visa requests.
- The participants also expressed the high value of these kinds of trainings and requested a second training session, focusing on forged supporting documents.

- LSC discussed problems connected to fraudulent travel agencies, which present themselves as collectors of visa applications, charging money to customers unduly. LSC recommended to raise this question in bilateral contacts with Turkish authorities and further discuss among MS central authorities
- LSC prepared a reply to a Verbal Note by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent to all Embassies – not only EU – containing complaints regarding the operations of external service providers. The Turkish government has not reacted to the note.

4. Challenges in 2013-2014

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 in regards to the debate on visa liberalization and the readmission agreement, which Turkey continues to link to each other in a specific way.

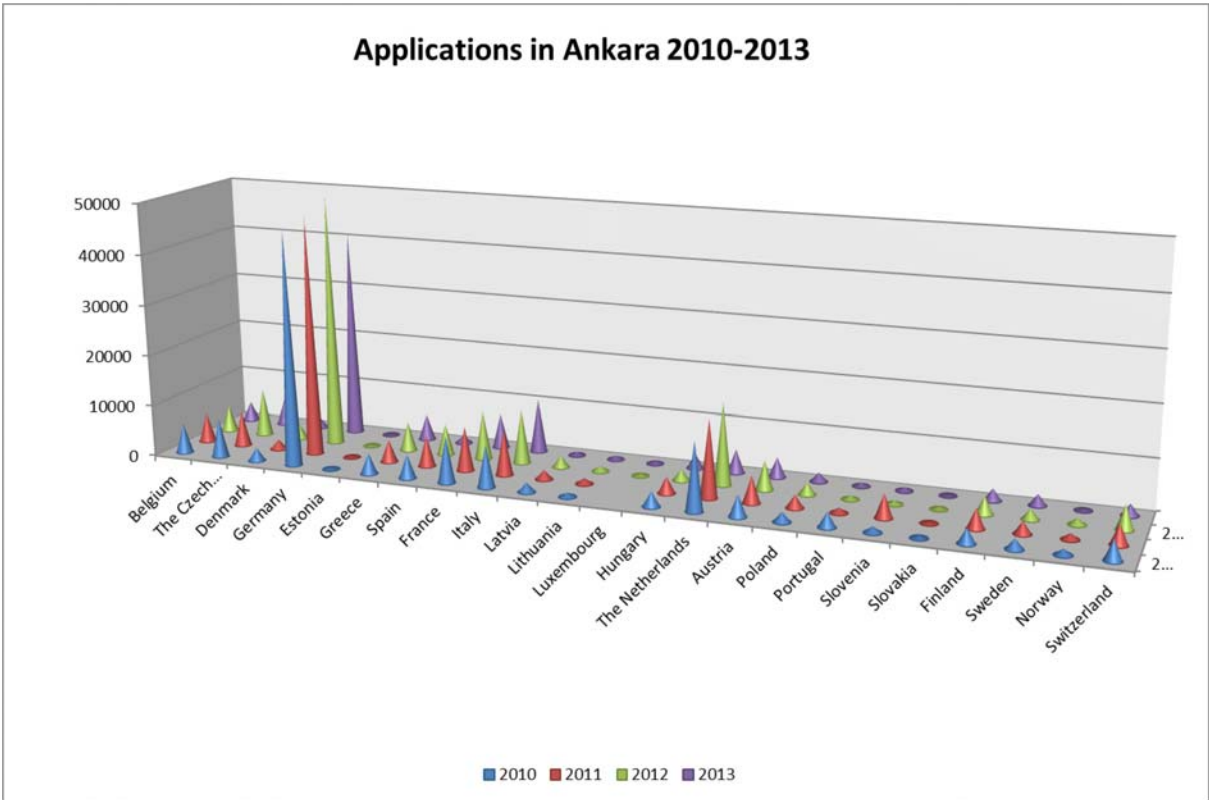
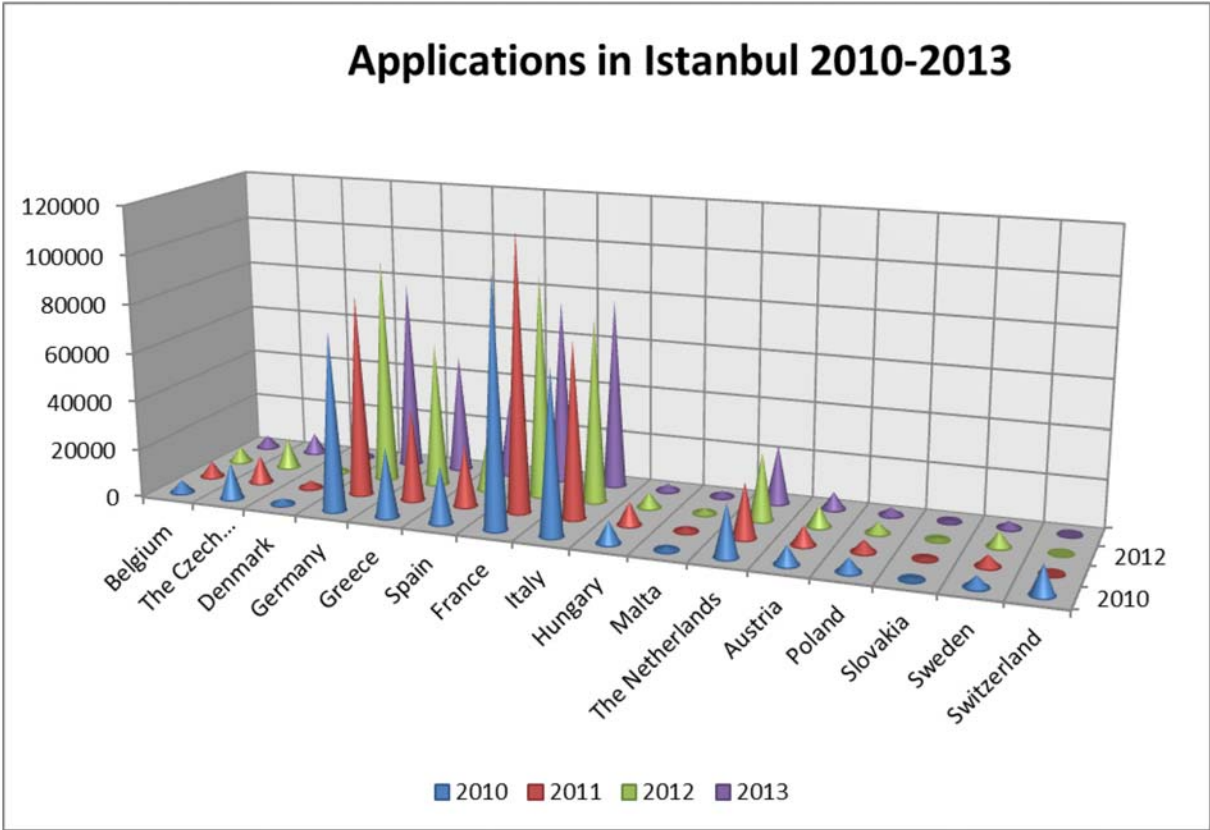
The same applies to the general perception by the Turkish public of the system, which requires LSC to devote resources for public diplomacy purposes, possibly through a systematic campaign directed at target groups, including pro-active, public information sessions with businessmen and advertisements in the media.

As the discussion on the “Top 10 Points where the Visa Code should be amended” has begun, one of the challenges for the LSC in Turkey will be to come up with proposals which, drawing on the local experience, will have the potential to influence the overall Schengen regime in a positive way, fostering economic growth and cultural exchanges by facilitating travel to the EU of all legitimate travelers.

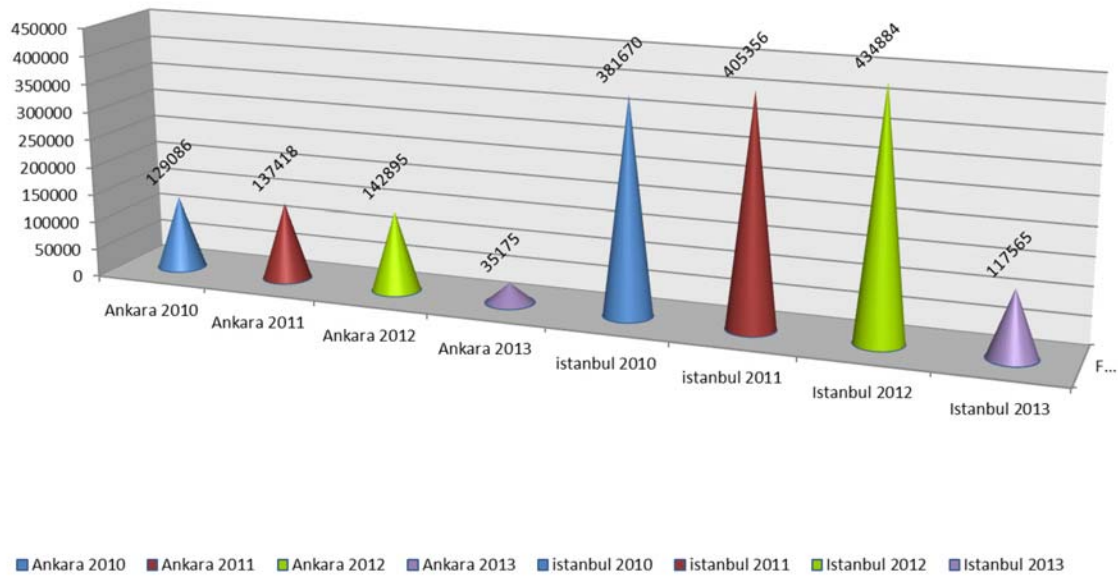
5. Other issues

Skilled human resource is necessary to make the LSC working adequately (organization of and reporting on monthly meetings in alternatively Ankara and Istanbul; specific initiatives and issues to be followed, statistics, etc.).

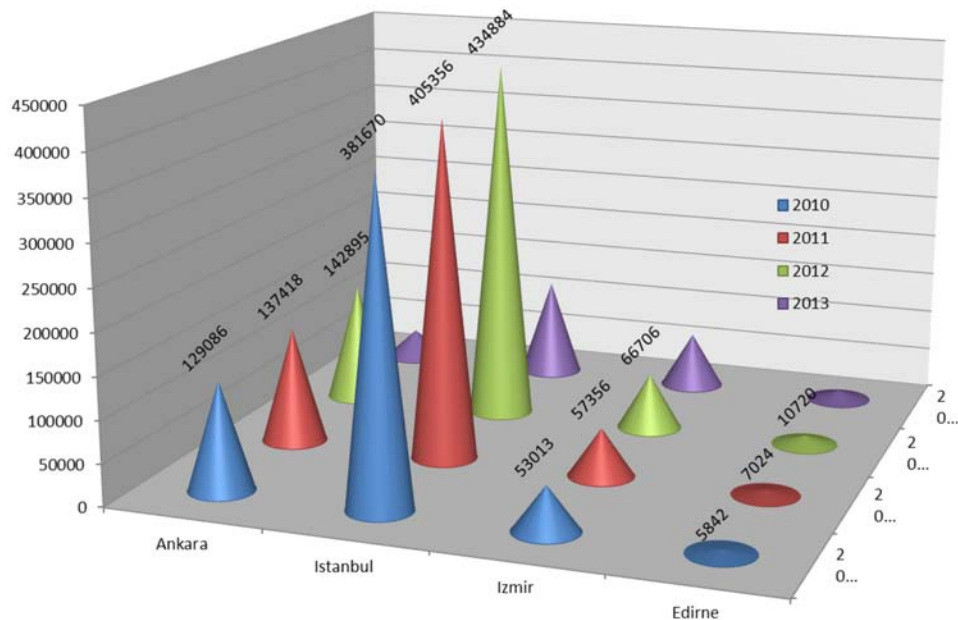
This report has been drafted by the EU delegation with the support of staff of the Portuguese embassy.



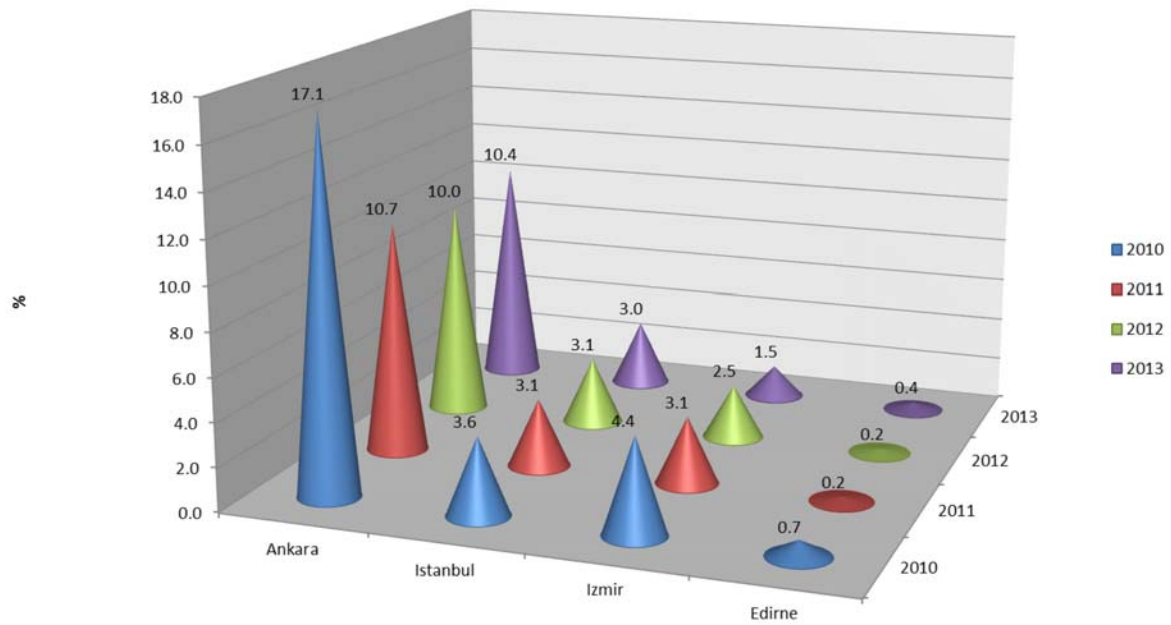
Applications, full years



C visas applied for, full years, all locations



Refusal %, full years, all locations





EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Kampala, 22 April 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Kampala/Uganda 2012-2013 REPORT¹¹³

1. Introduction

The Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Uganda chairs the EU Schengen group meetings. The following MS Embassies are present in Kampala:

- a. Austria, (no visa section, only development aid)
- b. Belgium, (also represents LU)
- c. Denmark,
- d. France, (also represents EL, ES, and PT)
- e. Germany, (also represents EE and AT)
- f. Italy, (also represents MT)
- g. Netherlands, (also represents SI)
- h. Norway, (also represents DK, SE, and IS)
- i. Sweden.

There were no changes during the reported period.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

During the reported period, (April 2012-March 2013), the scheduled EU Schengen group meetings were held on:

- a. 31 May 2012,
- b. 18 July 2012,
- c. 29 November 2012,
- d. 05 February 2013.

There were no ad-hoc meetings.

Attendance to meetings varies from good to excellent.

The chair (EU) prepares draft minutes that are distributed to all Members, (present or not). Members can comment and the minutes can be updated. Some Members forward these minutes to their capitals while others do not.

In case of absence an EUMS can take the lead on chairing a meeting. This occurred in February 2013.

For some relevant topics speakers are invited to make a presentation followed by a Q&A session:

- a. EURINT, (July 2012),
- b. Antifraud Nairobi, (AUS, CAN, USA) (February 2013).

¹¹³ April 2012 – March 2013

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The first and major issue encountered by all MS in Kampala related to "original supporting documents" – many are either fake or genuine obtained fraudulently.

The second major problem is the uncertainty of what happens when problem cases are handed over to local authorities. In some instances the same persons showed up shortly after at another MS again to apply for visa.

MS apply different euro exchange rates, (in some cases imposed by the capital), and periodicity of revision of the rate varies between MS.

The formal obligation required for visa with invitation varies greatly among MS and has a different legal basis.

All national visas (type D) give right to travel and therefore imply by definition Schengen visa (type C).

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

MS have drafted a standard document listing the minimal requirements for supporting documents, (see enclosed). Additional documents may be asked by certain MS in certain cases.

A draft comments on the assessment within local Schengen cooperation of the need for harmonisation at local level (list of supporting documents): UGANDA, (*Doc reference HOME/B3/Visa Committee/14/2012*) is now available and must be put on the agenda of the next Schengen meeting.

3.3 Exchange of information

MS are willing to share monthly statistics. Regularity varies.

Cases of fraud are informed via email exchange or discussed during the meetings.

MS frequently use the network to enquire about applicants, (in case of doubt regarding the case being genuine or not), or to inform MS, (in case of fraud).

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

Members are interested and willing to harmonize the fees. Unfortunately a number of technical problems seem to make this difficult if not impossible. It appears that capitals should be involved in this exercise. The two main problems identified are:

- Not all Embassies are allowed by their capitals to receive euro payments,
- Frequency of and authority setting the exchange rate UGX-euro vary,
- Some accounting or banking systems defined/imposed by the capitals provide insufficient flexibility and only accept predefined currencies resulting in the impossibility to find a one-fits-all solution.

There is room for improving cooperation with the host country's authorities.

4. Challenges

See point 3.2 above.

A draft comments on the assessment within local Schengen cooperation of the need for harmonisation at local level (list of supporting documents): UGANDA, (*Doc reference HOME/B3/Visa Committee/14/2012*) is now available and must be put on the agenda of the next Schengen meeting.

5. Other issues

The EU Schengen group in Kampala has agreed to also invite other Embassies to discuss issues of interest beyond the Schengen group but common to other Consular sections, (passport fraud, fraud in supporting documents, and so on).

This report was prepared by the EU Delegation in Uganda. Members of the EU Schengen group have been invited to comment on the draft.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO UKRAINE

21/06/2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) UKRAINE 2012-2013 REPORT¹¹⁴

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*, Luxembourg

Representation from Helsinki: Republic of Iceland

Representation from Moscow: Republic of Malta

A Visa Application Centre is run by the VFS GLOBAL for the following 11 Schengen countries: Kingdom of Belgium, Kingdom of Denmark, Republic of Finland, French Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Kingdom of Norway, Republic of Poland, Kingdom of Spain, Kingdom of Sweden, Swiss Confederation; by Visa Management Service for Republic of Italy; by Pony Express for Republic of Estonia and Republic of Latvia.

The EU Delegation is in charge of the coordination of meetings.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012

- Number of meetings held: 8
- Meetings well attended
- Meetings chaired by the EU Delegation
- One ad-hoc-meeting was organized
- At some meetings participation of 3rd parties (*e.g.* Ukrainian MFA)
- Reports drawn up by EU Delegation (not regularly)
- Sharing common reports with capital: yes

¹¹⁴ April 2012 – March 2013

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Visa Code is applied by individual member states in accordance with national instructions. Meetings of LSC are dedicated to coordination and harmonization of practices, in particular as regards harmonization of the list of supporting documents, exchange of information on insurance companies and cooperation with commercial intermediaries (travel agencies).

3.2. Exchange of information on the visa fee charged – possible need for harmonisation

Local practices vary among member states: visa fee charged partly in local currency, partly in Euros and in US Dollars. Procedures need to be harmonized in order to avoid visa shopping.

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

A harmonization of the list of supporting documents has been identified by LSC as one of the most important challenges. A draft list was discussed by the Visa Committee several times. Throughout 2012 and first 3 months of 2013 LSC has continued discussions on the basis of comments sent by DG HOME/Visa Committee. It is expected that the list should be finalised by the time of entry into force of the amended Visa Facilitation Agreement (expected on 1 July 2013).

3.4 Common information sheet

It is planned to draft a common information sheet once a Commission decision on the harmonised lists of supporting documents has been taken.

3.5. Exchange of information

Monthly statistics are shared among the parties. For monitoring of cases of fraud a working group has been established with participation of the UK, Canada and US. The group meets every 3 months in average. Exchange of information within LSC covers also TMI and list of accredited travel agencies.

4. Challenges in 2013-2014

One of the biggest challenges for 2013-2014 will be implementation of the amended Visa Facilitation Agreement and of the harmonised list of supporting documents. Other issues include: combating fraud and visa shopping, shortening the length of procedures.



March 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) – UNITED KINGDOM 2012-2013 REPORT

1. Introduction

All Member States and associated states applying the common visa policy are present in London. Ten Member States cooperate with an external service provider for the purpose of the collection of visa applications.

During this reporting period the Polish Consulates General in Edinburgh and Manchester have been closed.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Since the last reporting period three meetings have been held and meetings are very well attended.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

Member States continue to experience a considerable increase in number of applications. This means that the Member States concerned are not always in a position to respect the deadlines for giving appointments for lodging applications as foreseen by the Visa Code.

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

The Commission Implementing Decision establishing the list of supporting documents to be presented by visa applicants in the United Kingdom (Edinburgh, London and Manchester) was adopted on 11 July 2012 and Member States started applying it immediately.

Member States have confirmed that they have not experienced problems with the implementation of the harmonised list except for those who did not previously require applicants to present a confirmed flight ticket upon the lodging of the application. It appeared that applicants now comply with this requirement.

3.3 Exchange of information

Statistics are exchanged but the statistics are rarely complete because many Member States omit to send their contribution to the Member State having volunteered to compile this data. 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 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.).

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

N/A

4. Challenges

The following issues are considered as challenges by the Member States' consulates present in the United Kingdom:

- The increasing work load generated by an increasing number of visa applicants and which is generally not matched by allocation of additional staff, thus entailing long waiting times.
- The high volume of fraudulent supporting documents presented.
- Increasing number of applicants (i.e. students) from mainly China, India and Pakistan.
- Visa shopping (often caused by long waiting times at some Member States' consulates/external service providers).

5. Other issues

N/A



LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Washington D.C. 2012-2013 REPORT¹¹⁵

1. Introduction

All Member States are present in Washington, 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 D.C. for Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Finland. Liechtenstein is represented by Switzerland for LSC purposes. 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 will help this coordination as Local Chairs will be competent for LSC coordination purposes.

Since US citizens do not need visas for short stays in the Schengen area, issuance of Schengen visa is generally limited to third-country nationals legally staying in the US, thus pre-vetted by the US authorities. Some consulates (BE, MT, NL, PL) also issue visas for third-country nationals residing outside the US, but within the Western Hemisphere (Caribbean, Mexico, Canada), either due to non-representation in certain countries or following the centralisation of visa issuance in Washington D.C. as a regional support office (NL). So far no external service providers are used for the collection of applications.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Four LSC meetings were held in Washington during the period considered, with on average about five Member States not attending, while some Member States sent more than one colleague. Washington LSC meetings are chaired by EUDEL, while non-Schengen consular meetings continue to be chaired by the rotating EU Presidency. LSC reports -taking the form of meeting conclusions (submitted separately)- are drafted by EUDEL and agreed with Member States colleagues who are encouraged to share the conclusions and any other information/reporting with their headquarters. (Coordination with) LSC outside Washington is left to Member States, with the EU Presidency continuing to "play a special role" as agreed at 30 April 2010. However, whenever the "Out of the Beltway" project is in place, it will be up to the designated "Local Chairs" in every district to assure the Schengen coordination.

Since February 2010, LSC has also worked through a Working Group composed by several Member States as a privileged way to examine at early stage different subjects and provide solutions aimed at finally being approved by the whole LSC group. This have been the case for harmonising visa fees and supporting documents locally, Travel Medical insurance requirements, issuance of visas to spouses and family members etc.

¹¹⁵ April 2012 – March 2013

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS are well prepared to ensure the tasks to be carried out in LSC under the Visa Code. The initial learning process after entry into force of the Visa Code has very much improved. However there are still some doubts raised by MS to clarify the rules which have been answered through EUDEL by competent services in Headquarters. There is a fluent communication on this between MS and with EUDEL regarding especially re-entry documents, travel medical insurance coverage limits and reliable companies and visa refusals.

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

After agreeing on a proposal containing the harmonised list of supporting documents, the document was sent through the Washington Consulates to the other Consulates in the country and consulted with the central authorities of the Member States. The final proposal was formally submitted on July 9th, 2012 to DG Home to be assessed by the Visa Committee (VC). The VC (July 20th 2012) approved the document with minor suggestions which were incorporated in the text and re-submitted for approval to the VC. The VC delayed for a long time its decision not because of the US list, which was, according to the services, "approved" by the Committee, but because of problems with two other locations included. In the meantime, a clarification on the scope of the decision in the US was made to include New Bedford.

Finally, on March 26th, 2013, it was adopted 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).

MS were aware of the binding nature of this Decision, although as per the VC recommendation, MS's Consulates had already started using the harmonized list. MS committed to ensure harmonized implementation and above all update their information to the public normally through web pages and public information boards. No particular problems are envisaged in the implementation of the common list.

3.3. Exchange of information on the visa fee charged – no need for harmonisation

The conclusion reached by the LSC Group on the first year recommending that further harmonisation of visa fees and fee waivers was not necessary has been reaffirmed. The observed differences (e.g. visa fees varying +/- 12% between minimum and maximum) are not perceived to cause any significant 'visa shopping', also in view of the low migratory risk from visa applicants in the US (cf. section 3.5 below).

3.4 Common information sheet

Washington LSC was considering the need to have a common information sheet for visa applicants (as required by art. 48, 2 of the Visa Code), and have mandated accordingly the Working group to further study the subject. However the COM services informed EUDEL that they are starting the preparation of a common model. Therefore the Group agreed that it would be wiser to wait until this model has been completed to adapt it, if necessary, to the circumstances in the US.

3.5. Exchange of information

Statistics.

- The collection and discussion of monthly visa statistics every six months for the jurisdiction of Washington-based consulates (except Estonia – cf. section 1) is running smoothly. EUDEL is in charge of finally collecting the statistics in a single document shared with MS. Several MS raised the point of the different scope of the statistics as the territory covered by the different Consulates varies. It has been reminded that the idea at the beginning of this exercise was to collect statistics for the whole US territory. However it was decided to limit it to Washington Consulates. In any case, the present statistics will serve their purpose (signal changing in trends and prevent “visa shopping”) as the parameters to be compared remain the same during the years.

Travel medical insurance.

- LSC considers that there is no need to elaborate a sort of “black list” for problematic or unreliable insurance companies. Nevertheless a possible *vis-à-vis* the US Association of Travel Insurances in order to provide further information on the EU requirements has been envisaged but not undertaken yet. LSC encourages consulates to exchange information on their experiences with insurance companies. Clarification on the interpretation of the minimal insurance coverage was obtained from Headquarters.

Visa refusals.

- The group has especially focused on the kind of information exchanged under this title. The practice varies. There are some MS who systematically shares specific data on visa refusals. Others exchange numbers without further information. After consulting Headquarters on the nature of the obligation under Visa Code, art. 48.3 b), the Group concluded that, in absence of a straight forward instruction and especially because of the lack of danger of general fraud, each consulate remains free to exchange this information the way it considers best.

Travel documents.-

Information on travel documents issued by the US has been sent by EUDEL to DG HOME in due time. Specific coordination on the need to have a visa for holders of refugee travel documents was undertaken by the Group. A roster was elaborated to show that a great majority of MS request the holders of refugee travel documents to have a visa to travel to Europe.

Biometrics data collection.

- In preparation of the future launching of the Visa Information System (VIS), the group elaborated a roster which shows that a great majority of MS have biometrics machines that can also be used for Schengen visa purposes.

Stamping the passport.

- The nature of the obligation from MS Consulates when facing a visa application where the individual passport has already been stamped by another MS Consulate was discussed and consulted with headquarters.

Migration and mobility.

- The group has not considered that there is a risk of irregular migration and visa fraud from the US to EU. Therefore a regular dialogue on migration and mobility is not deemed appropriate.

Specific visa questions (e.g. recognition of US documents, fraud cases) are regularly discussed via e-mail among the LSC group, which is perceived to be useful. EUDEL shares regularly with MS information provided by Headquarters (VC reports, modifications to Visa Code, etc)

4. Challenges in 2012-2013

LSC Washington envisages (further) work on the following issues:

- Implementing the harmonised list of supporting documents (MS Consulates publication)
- Ways/documents proving the right to re-enter the US ('Green Card', etc.) – recognition of forged documents
- Criteria/procedures for the recognition of spouses in view of issuing visas for family members
- Introduction of the VIS.

Washington LSC has reached cruising speed, but resources at EUDEL continue to be a concern (sustainability in view of competing priorities). The designation of "Local Chairs" representing the EU will probably provide a path to improve LSC coordination outside Washington DC.

5. Other issues

Invitations to external US interlocutors have not been customary to LSC group so far unlike the Consular meetings chaired by rotating Presidency. However LSC has decided to open its meetings periodically to host external interlocutors in matters that could be of common interest (e.g. forged documents).

The information on Consulates from EU MS in US have been updated with the help of all MS and sent accordingly to DG JUST to be included in the Consular Protection webpage.

This report has been approved by all MS present.



06/03/2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) Uzbekistan 2012-2013 REPORT¹¹⁶

1. Introduction

The Republic of Uzbekistan hosts 8 diplomatic missions issuing Schengen visa (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Switzerland) and 2 missions applying the Schengen policy (Romania, Bulgaria). The EU Delegation, launched in June 2011 and starting to assume its functions after the arrival of the Head of Delegation in 2012 - took responsibility for coordination of LSC in September 2012. Prior to this, the coordination of MS in the area of Schengen cooperation was undertaken by the Embassy of the Czech Republic.

This report has been agreed with LSC members.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Members of the LSC have agreed to hold regular meetings once every two months, with the possibility to organize additional ad-hoc meetings if needed. These meetings are prepared and chaired by the EU Delegation and take place within its premises. Separately, the UK Embassy organizes coordination meetings for matters of consular protection.

In April 2012 – March 2013, the EU organized 3 LSC meetings – on 18 October 2012, 4 December 2012 and 27 February 2013. The meetings are normally attended by all embassies issuing Schengen visa in Tashkent, plus 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. There are no LSC sub-groups at the moment working on specific issues of harmonization. No meetings were organised with third parties in 2012. Contacts with non-Schengen embassies take place usually within the Consul club meetings organized by different embassies in Tashkent roughly every other month.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

The visa code implementation is well under way in Uzbekistan. The LSC and embassies continue to discuss some practical aspects of the implementation, including the preparation of the harmonized list of supporting documents with the objective of trying to agree on a common list in 2013.

¹¹⁶ April 2012 – March 2013

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

The EU Delegation has launched the discussion within the LSC about the assessment of the need to harmonize the lists of supporting documents. The initial draft questionnaire prepared by the EU Delegation was discussed by LSC members on 4th December. Based on input of member states and their previous experience with harmonization of the lists of supporting documents in other countries, the EU Delegation revised the questionnaire as to conduct the assessment and agree on a common list. The work will continue in 2013.

3.3 Exchange of information

There is a good exchange of information among member states related primarily to problems with travel agencies (failure to inform consuls when purpose of the trip was changed after issue of visa; sometimes falsified documents; etc.), visa shopping/abuse of issued visa, timing of visa applications from government officials (last minute), “accreditation” of insurance companies, change on currency exchange regime in the country which prevents individuals from the possibility to obtain hard currency in cash (most Schengen embassies charge visa fees in USD and in cash), etc. The Delegation 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 regularly being updated by the Swiss embassy. The German embassy proposed for consideration by the LSC adoption of an EU wide code of conduct for travel agencies that would stipulate conditions for possible blacklisting of travel agencies in breach of trust cases. The discussion about the proposal will continue in 2013. The EU Delegation together with the Latvian embassy led the process for revision of the TMI list based on the request from Gross Insurance company – LSC agreed to include the company on the TMI list at the end of 2012/beginning of 2013.

4. Challenges

The short work of the LSC in 2012 identified three main challenges that will require action in 2013:

- a) Harmonization of the lists of supporting documents – the initial discussion around this point showed an interest of all MS to agree one common list as to avoid the possibility of visa shopping.
- b) Harmonized approach to travel agencies – there were several cases when travel agencies breached the trust of different embassies and were blacklisted until the change in their conduct (at least 6 months). LSC members showed the interest to agree on a clear position for blacklisting of travel agencies but also for their possible re-institution.
- c) Further and improved exchange of information about suspicious case/applications and practices of individual embassies for issue of multiple and long term visas

5. Other issues

At the beginning of 2013, new currency exchange regime for travellers has been put in place (Uzbekistan does not have a fully convertible currency). In line with the new regime, individuals are no longer able to exchange their local currency into hard currency cash. Instead they can receive credit on their foreign currency based credit cards, which can be used only outside of the country (remittances and salaries can be still withdrawn in hard currency). Schengen embassies currently charge for visa mostly in USD (some in Euro and some in local currency) and in cash. Should there be complaints from individuals about their inability to pay due to the lack of hard currency cash, the LSC members would need to jointly decide about other ways of charging for visa.



Caracas, 21 May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) CARACAS 2012-2013 REPORT

1. Introduction

The following 10 Member States are represented in Caracas: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands. Two Associated States are also present: Norway and Switzerland.

The Belgian consulate in Caracas will close during the year and Belgium will be represented by the Netherlands. Norway, which has been representing Finland and Sweden to date, will also be closing its consulate in Caracas and will manage its consular affairs from Bogotá.

Italy and Portugal have consulates-general in Maracaibo and Valencia respectively.

Venezuelan nationals do not need a visa to enter the Schengen area. The number of visas issued is therefore low in comparison with other countries, with most of the visas issued in Caracas being applied for by nationals of other countries residing in Venezuela.

Many of the Member States' consuls in Caracas are responsible for other countries in the region and in some cases have representation agreements with other Member States.

2. LSC meetings in 2012-2013

Four LSC coordination meetings were held from April 2012 to March 2013 with an average participation rate of 50 % of the Member States represented.

Owing to the small size of the consulates, certain Member States do not usually attend LSC meetings.

Two LSC meetings are held every six months and are chaired by the Delegation of the European Union, who also draw up the minutes and distribute them with the agreement of the Member States present. The majority of the Member States attach these minutes to the reports they send to their capitals.

Arrangements are being made to invite the consuls-general from outside the capital to attend the LSC meetings and to collect statistics from them on the numbers of visas issued.

3. Current situation

3.1. Application of the Visa Code

At the coordination meetings, information is exchanged on specific problems encountered by some Member States when issuing visas.

As regards implementing the Visa Information System (VIS), the Member States take the view that the VIS will complicate the management of passport and visa applications in countries under their jurisdiction outside of Venezuela and consider it necessary to speed up international representation agreements for consular affairs in those countries.

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

The Member States are examining different practices in relation to the list of supporting documents, but do not believe that much progress can be made because of the rules and regulations peculiar to each Member State.

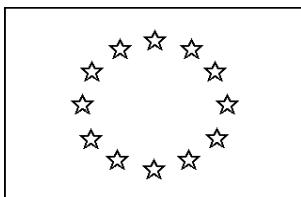
3.3. Exchange of information

The following information is regularly exchanged at LSC meetings:

- monthly statistics;
- cases of fraud;
- usual practices for applying for visas or specific cases that draw attention;
- information is currently being exchanged on the stamps that each Member State puts on passports to indicate that they have been rejected;
- Norway's system allowing for payment of visas by international credit card in order to avoid local problems with obtaining foreign currency has been discussed;
- other matters of common interest.

4. Challenges

Owing to the closure of certain Member State consulates in Caracas and the large number of countries the consuls are responsible for, there is considerable interest in pressing ahead with concluding representation agreements with other Member States in places where those Member States are better represented. The Member States are aware that this process would have to be handled by their respective capitals.



EUROPEAN UNION

Office of the European Union Representative
(West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA)

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) JERUSALEM 2012-2013 REPORT¹¹⁷

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 or Jerusalem.

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, and MT)

or from

- Embassies in Tel Aviv (FI, NO, CZ, PL, PT, SK, EE, LV and LT).

IS and LU have no representation of their own in this jurisdiction. IS are thus represented by DK and LU is represented by BE. CH represents EE and SI in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. SE represents CH in Gaza.

A main 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, Tel Aviv in order to lodge their applications in person (collective restrictions on movement imposed by the Israeli authorities).

A local Schengen office in Gaza (BE, SE & DK) funded for 75% by EU border fund was opened in 2012. A number of MS have showed their interest in joining the project.

7 MS currently have offices in Gaza and are able to receive visa applications there (BE, DK, NO, SE, AT, DE and FR)

¹¹⁷ April 2012 – March 2013

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

All LSC meetings in the jurisdiction are held in the office of the EU Delegation in Jerusalem irrespectively of the location of each MS visa office.

Five regular LSC meetings were scheduled between April 2012 and March 2013. One meeting was cancelled due to the conflict in Gaza in November 2012. Compared to the meetings 2011 – 2012 the attendance has improved with an average of 14 MS present at each meeting.

The EU Delegation is in charge of the coordination of the meetings. Agenda and summery reports are co-drafted by SE who co-chaired the meetings.

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. Minor issues remain as described below.

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

Draft lists have been agreed upon and have been sent to the Visa Committee in April 2012

3.3 Exchange of information

Monthly statistics

Statistics for Gaza during 2012 have been collected but have yet to be analysed and circulated within the LSC.

Travel Medical Insurance

The TMI working group (SE, BE, CH) has identified four companies active in the West Bank and Gaza who provide TMI which fulfil the majority of the criteria set out in the Visa Code (see also 4). The information on these TMI's has been circulated within the LSC together with a standard text for each mission's home page concerning which TMI's are accepted and the criteria for how an insurance company can apply to try to get a TMI accepted.

Cases of fraud

Individual cases of fraud are shared among the MS. The anti-fraud group (formerly called Fraud and Illegal Migration) has been split into a West Bank Working Group headed by DE and a Gaza Group headed by SE and with the participation of EL and ES. The anti-fraud group Gaza has initiated work on a best practice guide to anti-fraud assessment for visa application from Gaza.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

In preparation for the future roll-out of the new Visa Information System VIS foreseen in November 2013, when applicants need to appear in person for the collection of biometry (photo and fingerprints), BE, DK and SE have taken the initiative to create a Common Application Centre (CAC)/Schengen office in Gaza. This European project led by Belgium is being implemented with the support of the External Border Fund, with the amount of EUR 230,000 for the 1st phase of the project which ends on June 30th, 2013. 75% of the costs are borne by the EU and the remaining 25% is shared equally by the partners (currently BE, DK and SE). Other MS have expressed interest in joining the CAC/Schengen office. An application to extend the project to 2015 has been submitted to the Commission.

4. Challenges

- The response to challenges, if any, listed in the 2011-2012 report:

Harmonisation of visa fees

Due to difficulties in harmonising locally the visa fees charged in local currency, the Commission has decided to raise the issue centrally.

Visa fee waiver Visa Code Art 16.5

No harmonisation has yet been achieved on visa fee waiver for the categories of applicants listed in Visa Code Art 16.5 (children between 6 and 12 years of age; diplomatic and service passports etc).

TMI

No insurance company has a TMI that integrates the period of grace in its policies.

Lodging applications without being present – Visa Code Art 10

Some MS still allow applications to be lodged by mail, contrary to the provisions of the Visa Code. In Gaza the CAC/Schengen Office has proposed a variety of solutions.

There are four possible ways to avoid this breach of the rule:

- The MS becomes a partner in the CAC/Schengen office in Gaza,
or
 - The MS concerned establishes a visa office in the area (or, together with other MS, a CAC),
or
 - The MS concerned enters a representation agreement with a MS present in the area,
or
 - The MS enters into an agreement with an external service provider.
- Subjects to be addressed within the next reporting period (2013-2014)

The main subject will be the roll-out of VIS in Jerusalem Gaza and the West Bank foreseen in November 2013. MS face a number of practical and technical challenges in collecting biometric data in Gaza, such as:

- a) the Israeli blockade 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,
- b) MS have opted for different technical solutions/platforms to collect biometry. The result of this is that MS cannot use each other's biometric equipment to collect the necessary data,
- c) no MS has so far installed a fixed biometry station in Gaza (Denmark plans to do so),
- d) the majority of MS offices' in Jerusalem, Ramallah and Tel Aviv covering Gaza lacks portable biometry kit,
- e) the majority of MS lacks office space in Gaza and have to rely on applications being sent by mail to the respective office in Jerusalem or Ramallah (BE, DK, SE as well as AT, DE, NO and FR have offices in Gaza),
- f) some MS lacks portable biometric equipment but must still collect biometry due to the fact that processing of short stay and VTL visas takes place in Tel Aviv. To solve this issue some MS have had to ask applicants to travel through Rafah border to Cairo to lodge applications at respective embassy. This is in no way an ideal solution. One should also note that although the exit restriction at Rafah is not as severe as for Erez, restriction of exits concerns especially men between the ages of 20 to 40. In most cases the Egyptian authorities allow only travellers into Egypt when they have a valid visa for a third country, but as the purpose of traveling to Cairo is to obtain a visa, hardly anyone can comply with this rule.
- g) the coordination and entry procedure with Israeli and de facto authorities in Gaza as well as travel to and from Gaza is time consuming, creates a need for long-term planning and involves a lack of flexibility. Sometimes, planned and approved missions have to be cancelled due to the deteriorating security situation in Gaza. Also the low number of applications for some MS makes traveling to Gaza to receive applications for them a time consuming and inefficient exercise.
- h) Due to the security situation in Gaza the use of armored vehicle for MS staff in Gaza is a necessity. One should note that not every MS is in possession of such vehicle.

The CAC/Schengen office in Gaza can offer a solution for the applicants in Gaza but the lack of portable equipment for some MS remains an issue. It is not possible for every MS in the CAC/Schengen office to install its own fixed biometric equipment in the waiting room of the office. Sweden and Belgium work in the Gaza office with portable biometric equipment. Denmark will install its own fixed biometric equipment but it is not known at this stage if that equipment or any other installation could be used by several MS.

Another issue recently raised is the possible use of external service providers to handle applications as well as biometry in accordance with Visa Code Art 43 and annex X. This issue, the possibility and the suitability of this in areas such as the West Bank and Gaza will be further explored in the coming meeting in the LSC during spring/summer 2013.

On the issue of TMI, thus far, four insurance companies who offer adequate TMI will be contacted and persuaded to integrate the period of grace in their policies in order to make available an adequate and Visa Code compatible TIM.

The issue of visa fee waiver in accordance with Visa Code Art 16.5 will be resolved.

5. Other issues: No other issues are reported from LSC Jerusalem.



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND COMESA

8th May 2013

LOCAL SCHENGEN COOPERATION (LSC) ZAMBIA 2012-2013 REPORT¹¹⁸

1. Introduction

Compared to the situation prevailing in 2011-2012, there have been some changes, in particular in the representation arrangements between Schengen countries. There are still 7 EU Schengen Member States present in Zambia, out of which only 5 issue Schengen visas (Finland and the Netherlands are represented by Sweden).

The representation arrangements are now as follows:

Denmark represents	Estonia, Slovenia, Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands
France represents	Portugal
Germany represents	Austria and Hungary
Italy represents	Greece and Malta
Sweden represents	Belgium, Finland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Spain.

The collection of visa applications is not externalised.

In view of the closure of the Netherlands Embassy in 2013, the Embassy of Sweden has taken over the issuance of visas for Netherlands as well as for the countries previously represented by the Netherlands (Belgium and Luxembourg). Sweden also signed a representation agreement with Latvia during the reporting period.

2. LSC meetings held in 2012-2013

Between April 2012 and March 2013, 6 local Schengen meetings were organised. They were well attended, even if – compared to the previous reporting period - some MS participated less often (especially when they have started being represented by another MS).

No ad hoc meeting was organised during the reporting period neither by the LSC group, nor with non-Schengen MS.

¹¹⁸ April 2012 – March 2013

The meetings are chaired by the EU Delegation which draws up the reports. There is no co-chair.

EU MS do not draw up their own report on the LSC meetings. Except for Italy who does this regularly, and Sweden occasionally, MS do not share the minutes of the meetings prepared by the EU Delegation with their capitals.

There is no LSC coordination outside the capital, since all visa issues are only dealt with in the capital.

3. State of play

3.1 Application of the Visa Code

MS have no difficulties to ensure the tasks requested from the local Schengen coordination (visa statistics, exchanges of information on cases of fraud or on local travel documents).

Progress has recently been made for the harmonisation of documents and the LSC group in Zambia has sent a draft list to DG Home for comment by the Visa Committee.

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

Following discussions between the EU MS, the LSC group has been able to agree upon a draft list of documents and to submit it for review by the Visa Committee.

The list shows that almost all documents requested by the EU embassies are the same, except for two: i) evidence of sufficient means of subsistence (a document which is not requested by some Member States for all categories of travellers) and ii) documents which show the existence of trade relations (for business visas).

The LSC awaits the comments from the Visa Committee in order to finalise the list.

3.3 Exchange of information

The exchange of information within the LSC is regular. During the reporting period, the following were discussed in particular:

- Visa processing procedures: Due to recent changes in staff, MS exchanged information on visas processing procedures (stamp, processing time, refusal procedures..) to ensure that they were in line.
- Visa statistics: MS regularly send their visas statistics to the EU Delegation and they are discussed 2 to 3 times a year. During the current reporting period, the statistics have highlighted a relatively higher number of cases with visas "not issued" by the German embassy. In order to understand whether these figures indicated a higher number of "dodgy" visa applications submitted to Germany or a stricter application of the rules, Germany presented the different kinds of cases they are faced with. It appeared that they received a higher proportion of applications for which there was an elevated risk of uncontrolled migration. The other MS agreed on the analysis and the reasons for refusal.

3.4 Any other initiative taken in LSC

No other initiatives were taken during the period.

4. Challenges

The lack of progress on the harmonisation of supporting documents was reported last year as one of the main challenges faced by the LSC group. This has been addressed and a draft list of supporting documents has been agreed upon by the group and submitted for comments by the Visa Committee.

Another issue was the lack of recognition of the Zambian travel documents (TD) by the Polish authorities. After transmission of the samples by the EU Delegation to the Polish authorities via DG Home, the recognition process was completed and officially notified. The recognition of Zambian TD by Poland has facilitated the treatment of Schengen visas by MS locally as Schengen visas are now uniform visas, instead of LTV visas before.

The main changes that are expected to have an impact on the work of the Local Schengen Cooperation are the following:

- New changes in representation arrangements over the next reporting period, as the Danish embassy will close in 2013. Denmark currently represents 5 countries (Estonia, Slovenia, Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands) which may have to discuss representation arrangements with one of the remaining 4 EU Schengen Member States operating in Zambia.
- The roll out of the VIS, which will take place in June 2013.
- Sweden mentioned its intention to start using an external service provider for the collection of applications.

5. Other issues

Nothing to report.
