



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 23 October 2008**

**14629/08**

**LIMITE**

**VISA 328  
COMIX 756**

**NOTE**

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from : Presidency

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to : Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum/Mixed Committee  
(EU-Iceland/Liechtenstein/Norway and Switzerland)

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Subject : Draft Council Conclusions on a group of "Friends of the VIS"

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SCIFA/Mixed Committee examined on 6 and 7 October 2008 the draft Council Conclusions set out in 13628/08 VISA 297 COMIX 699.

There was general support for the draft. In the light of comments made at the meeting and further comments made in writing subsequently by delegations, the Presidency has prepared the attached revised draft Council Conclusions on a group of "Friends of the VIS".

SCIFA is invited to consider the draft with a view to its adoption by Coreper/Council in I/A procedure.

## Draft Council Conclusions on a group of "Friends of the (...) VIS"

The Council of the European Union:

Reaffirming the absolute priority to be given to the Visa Information System;

Recalling that the central VIS, its interfaces with national systems and the communication infrastructure between the central VIS and the interfaces with national systems will be tested by the Commission and the Member States in the course of the first half of 2009;

Welcomes the Presidency's proposal to implement an additional coordination mechanism supporting the development and implementation of the national elements for the use of and the connection to the VIS in the Member States, based on the following elements:

1. A group of "Friends of the (...) VIS" is established. The group will be chaired by the Presidency and composed of a senior official of each State participating in the VIS who is engaged in coordinating the different national services involved in the VIS project, and of the European Commission.
2. The " Friends of the (...) VIS" will follow the VIS project until the VIS is fully operational.
3. The " Friends of the (...) VIS" will aim at ensuring that all measures of the Member States accompanying the roll-out for the VIS are well coordinated, in particular:
  - arrangements to ensure that Member States' visa authorities or another Member State on their behalf collect and transmit the visa application data to the VIS according to the regional rollout.
  - arrangements to ensure that the VIS is used for checks at the external borders as stipulated in the relevant legal instruments,
  - enhanced local consular cooperation, in particular to ensure adequate reception of visa applications and accessibility for applicants in the regions concerned,

- timely and coherent information of the general public and the local authorities of the introduction of the collection of biometric identifiers from visa applicants.
  - appropriate training of consular personnel and border guards, especially for allowing capturing good quality fingerprints.
4. The " Friends of the (...) VIS" will also share their experience and best practises in various aspects of the national VIS implementation in the above mentioned areas as well as all relevant aspects related to the deployment of the VIS in consular and border posts.
  5. The " Friends of the (...) VIS" will complement the work of established mechanisms and will not interfere with the responsibilities established by the Treaty and the relevant legal instruments.
  6. The "Friends of the VIS" will aim at ensuring that technical testing activities, including at national level, are closely followed and monitored.
  7. The Presidency will regularly on the basis of the activities of the "Friends of the VIS" report on the development of the VIS project to the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum/Mixed Committee. That Committee will, as appropriate, report on developments to the Permanent Representatives Committee and the Council.

The Commission will continue to cooperate closely with Member States, in particular in the testing phase, in order (...) to facilitate transparent communication and the intensive collaboration needed for a successful completion of all preparations necessary for the start of operations of the VIS.