Factsheet - Report on the technical functioning of the Visa information System (VIS)

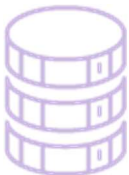August 2022

The Visa Information System (VIS) is an essential part of the Schengen acquis, connecting Member State consulates in non-EU countries and all external border-crossing points. It supports Member State consular authorities in the management of applications for short-stay visas to visit, or to transit through, the Schengen Area. Through the Biometric Matching System (BMS), Member State border authorities can identify and verify third-country nationals that travel to the EU.

The report provides an overview of the activities carried out in the VIS central system from 1 October 2019 until 30 September 2021, and its usage based on data provided by the Member States.

The system has met the expectations of Member States despite the difficulties due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 situation. In 2020, there was a fall in the number of stored visa applications and fingerprints in VIS for the first time, as a consequence the of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to travel restrictions very few new applications and new fingerprints were stored in the system during the COVID-19 period.

Performance and availability

The overall technical performance of VIS and BMS were in line with **the service level agreement (SLA):** availability in 2020 was **99.93 %** and in 2021 **99.98 %.**
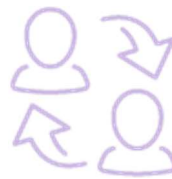
Use of VIS

The number of VIS operations in 2021 was **80.8 million** which is a reduction of **- 73 %** in comparison with pre-COVID year 2019, when the total of VIS operations was **294 million.**
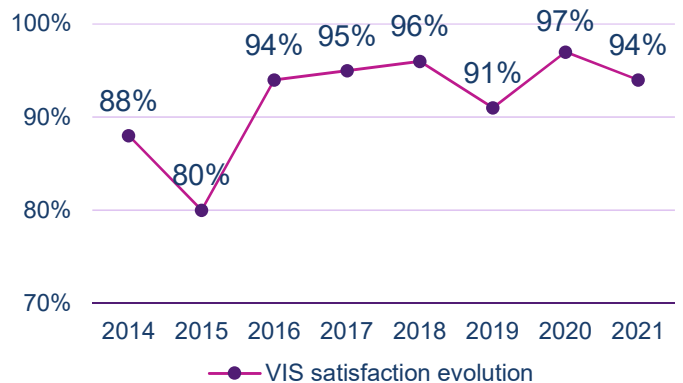
New access to VIS

In July 2021, **Bulgaria** and **Romania** achieved read-only access to VIS. This "passive access" gives new users access to only a specific subset of all available business transactions, but does not allow the creation or update of visa data in the VIS-BMS.

The VIS Customer Satisfaction Survey

Each year, eu-LISA asks Member States to evaluate eu-LISA's Service Desk performance, management and support. After years of increased overall satisfaction rates, the satisfaction rate for 2019 dropped for the first time in 3 years, but increased again the following years.

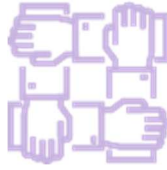**Figure 1 — VIS satisfaction rate 2014-2021**

Evolution and new functionalities

A VIS revision was adopted in July 2021, and will reform VIS and bring with it a **number of new functionalities,** e.g. integration of long-stay visas and residence permits.

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Training activities

eu-LISA provides training for relevant national authorities in the Member States and EU agencies. During 2020 and 2021, **3 training** activities were delivered by eu-LISA on VIS for each year.

Average processing times

Performance, in terms of the average processing time reported, was very good in 2020.

The average time for

- **alphanumeric** search: **0.76 sec** (SLA is 30 sec)

- **biometric authentications** search: **1.44 sec** (SLA is 3 sec).

Border operations and issued visas

The peaks for **border operations** and **issued visas** were still reached during the summer and holiday months in 2019. The 2020 peak of these activities was, in contrast to 2019, in **January**, before the introduction of the first COVID-19 restrictions.

During 2021, the ongoing pandemic continued to have a major impact on use of the system. The highest number of issued visas was in **November** and for border operations in **December**.
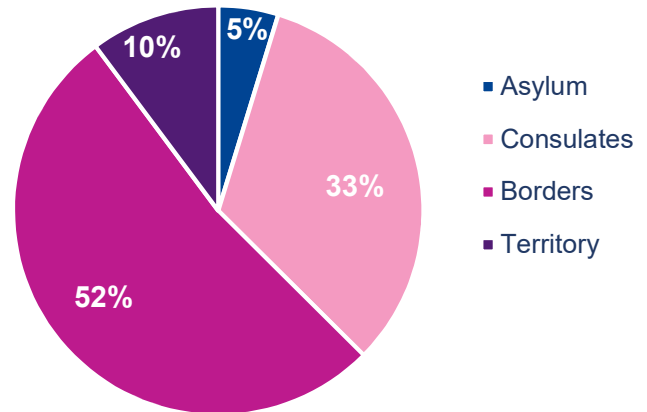
Applications and issued visas

During the reporting period Member States have registered over **8.2 million** visa applications and issued over **7.1 million visas**.

Use per activity reported by Member States

As per data provided by Member States, the majority of the VIS operations were conducted at the borders during the reporting period.

Figure 2 — VIS use per user group

- Asylum
- Consulates
- Borders
- Territory

5%
33%
52%
10%

Four Member States – France, Germany, Italy and Spain – handled **59%** of all visa applications, similar to what was reported in the previous reporting period.

Figure 3 — Main VIS users for visa applications

- FR
- DE
- IT
- ES
- Total other MS

23%
13%
11%
12%
41%

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