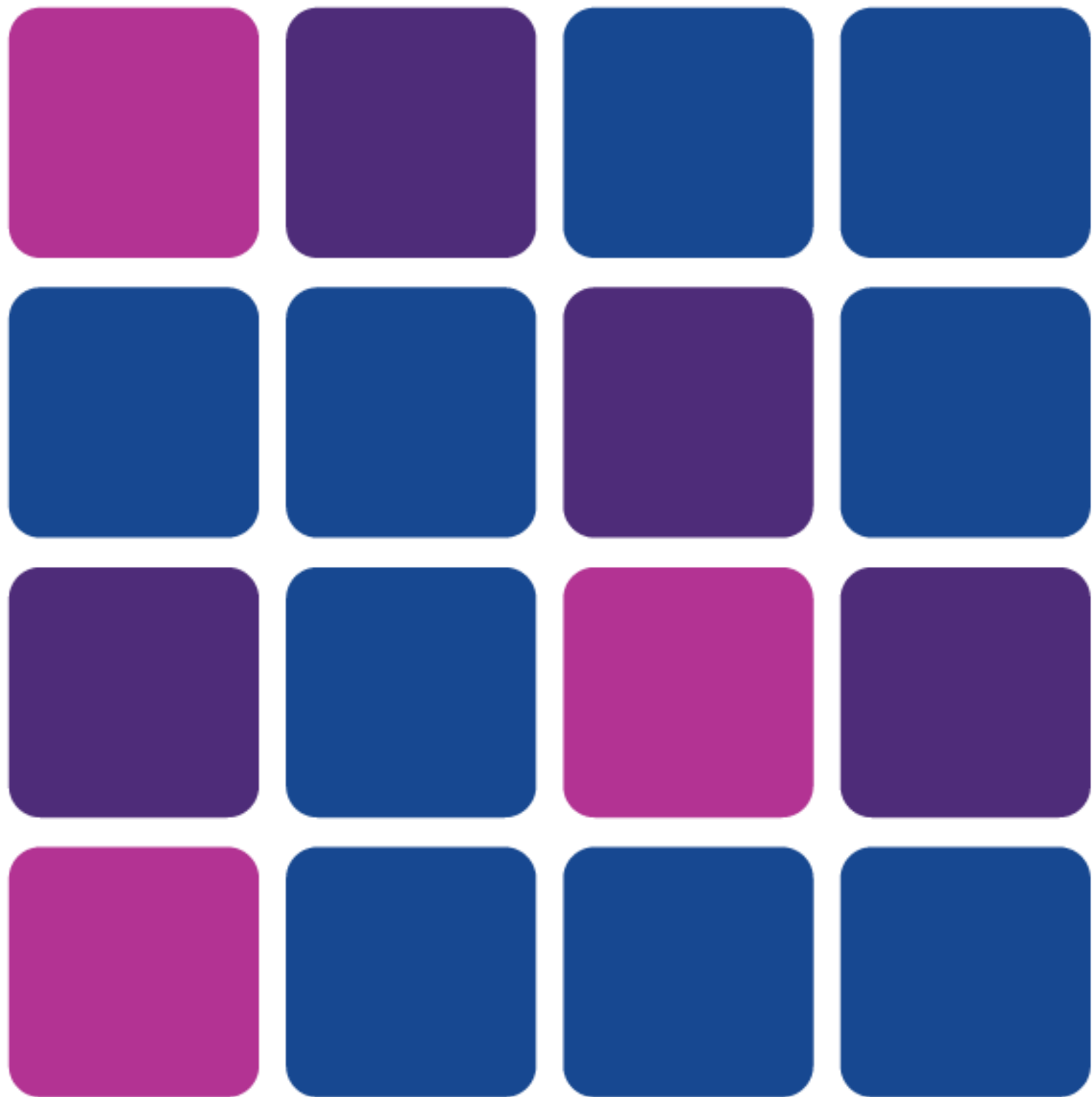




VIS

2023-2025
TECHNICAL REPORT

EU-LISA 

Manuscript completed in October 2026.

Catalogue number EL-01-26-018-EN-N

PDF ISBN 978-92-95237-24-7 ISSN 2467-3099 doi:10.2857/3465900

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Introduction

The **Visa Information System (VIS)** is a large-scale IT system that supports the implementation of the EU's common visa policy and facilitates checks at the external borders of the Schengen area. It allows Schengen states to process and exchange data on short-stay visas issued in Member States' consulates. In addition, VIS is consulted in all Schengen-area border crossing points. VIS constitutes one of the core elements of the Schengen architecture, helping combat visa fraud by identifying individuals who may not or no longer fulfil the conditions for entry, stay or residence in the Schengen area. Hence, VIS is contributing to preventing threats to internal security. VIS can also assist in the identification of the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application.

VIS deployment phases began in 2011, and the system has been operational worldwide since February 2016. Since 1 December 2012, eu-LISA (the 'Agency') has been in charge of the operational management and further development of the central system. The VIS central system is operated and developed in close coordination with the Member States and the European Commission. The system's development priorities, timelines and updates are planned through its Advisory Group, consisting of all Member States, the Commission and EU agencies using the system, and is supervised by eu-LISA's Management Board.

During the reporting period, key developments in VIS were connected to the entry of operation of new biometrics matching service (sBMS) and the Entry/Exit System (EES). VIS is currently undergoing vast developments, connected to the interoperability programme of the EU large-scale information systems and the revision of VIS. Two additional Member States – Bulgaria and Romania – gained full access to VIS in April 2024, having had passive, read-only access to the system since July 2021.

The report on the technical functioning of VIS is published every two years and submitted to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, in line with Article 50(3) of Regulation (EC) No 767/2008 (VIS Regulation) ⁽¹⁾ and Article 17(3) of Council Decision 2008/633/JHA ⁽²⁾. It covers the period from 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2025 and details the technical functioning of the VIS central system, providing an overview of main operations and development projects during this reporting period.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EC) No 767/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 concerning the Visa Information System (VIS) and the exchange of data between Member States on short-stay visas (VIS Regulation) (OJ L 218, 13.8.2008, p. 60, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2008/767/oj>).

⁽²⁾ Council Decision 2008/633/JHA of 23 June 2008 concerning access for consultation of the Visa Information System (VIS) by designated authorities of Member States and by Europol for the purposes of the prevention, detection and investigation of terrorist offences and of other serious criminal offences (OJ L 218, 13.8.2008, p. 129, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2008/633/oj>).

List of Acronyms

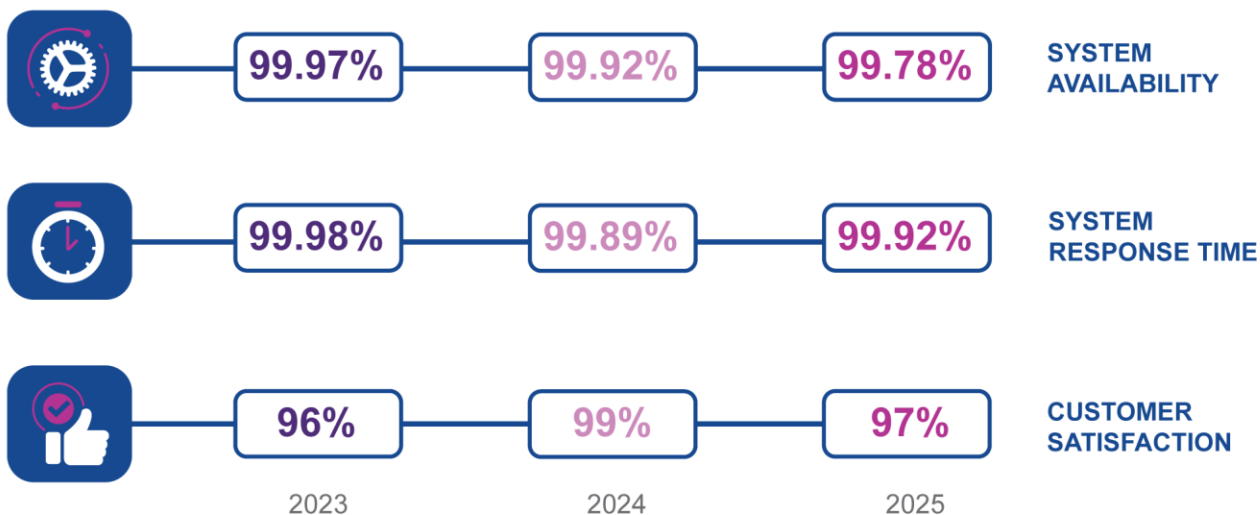
AG	Advisory Group
BCU	Backup Central Unit
BMS	Biometric Matching System
CERT-EU	Cybersecurity Service for the Union Institutions, Bodies, Offices and Agencies
CEST	Central European Summer Time
CIR	Common identity repository
CRRS	Central repository for reporting and statistics
CS-VIS	VIS central system
CU	Central Unit
DG DIGIT	Directorate-General for Digital Services of the European Commission
ECRIS-TCN	European Criminal Records Information System – Third-Country Nationals
eCODEX	e-Justice Communication via Online Data Exchange
EES	Entry/Exit System
EiO	Entry into operations
ENISA	European Union Agency for Cybersecurity
ESP	European search portal
ETIAS	European Travel Information and Authorisation System
eu-LISA	European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
EU VAP	EU Visa Application Platform
Eurodac	European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database
Europol	The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
Frontex	The European Border and Coast Guard Agency
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
MID	multiple-identity detector
MS	Member State
NI-VIS	VIS national interface
sBMS	shared biometric matching service
SIEM	Security information and event management
SPoC	Single point of contact
TAG	Transition Activities Group
TCN	Third-country national

TESTA	Trans European Services for Telematics between Administrations
TESTA-EIRIS	Enhanced Infrastructure for Reliable Interconnectivity and Security
VIS	Visa Information System
VIS4EES	VIS for Entry/Exit System
VIS AG	VIS Advisory Group
VISMAIL	VIS communication infrastructure

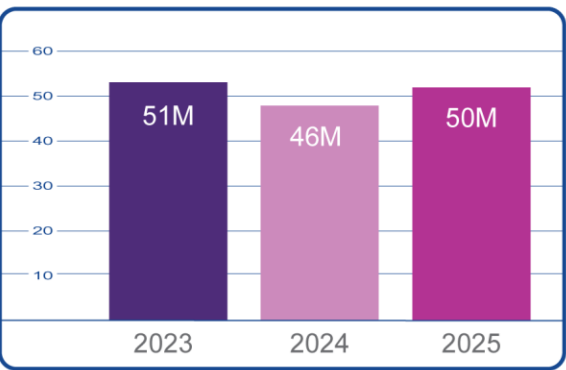
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SYSTEM FUNCTIONING

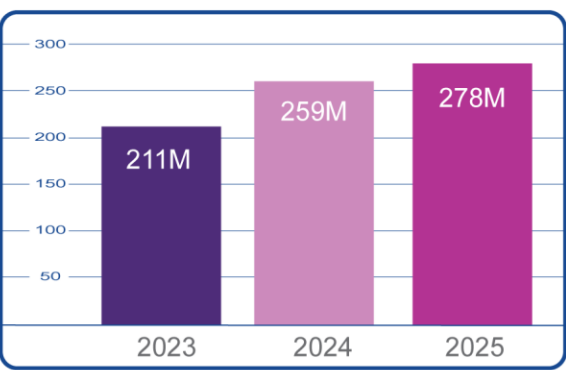
CORE BUSINESS STATS



DATA STORED



OPERATIONS



SYSTEM EVOLUTION



1

OPERATIONAL
MANAGEMENT

1. Operational management



VIS consists of the VIS central system (CS-VIS), the backup central unit (BCU) ⁽³⁾, a national interface (NI-VIS) in each Member State connected to VIS, and the communication infrastructure (VIS MAIL). The sharBiometric Matching System (sBMS, see Chapter 5.2) is an integral part of the VIS service.

Monitoring of VIS management is ensured through the close cooperation between eu-LISA and its partners through eu-LISA's Management Board and the VIS Advisory Group (VIS AG). The VIS AG is composed of experts from the Member States, the Schengen Associated countries (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland), the Commission, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol). Its role is to provide the Management Board with relevant technical expert advice, along with support on various technical matters relating to the evolution and further development of the system. In 2024 and 2025, the VIS AG focused on the implementation of sBMS (replacing BMS) and VIS integration with the Entry/Exit System (EES), but also on the planning for the revised VIS in the context of interoperability.

The day-to-day management of VIS is performed according to the Operator Manual, which describes the operational set-up, communication channels and escalation procedures for VIS users and stakeholders. The manual is a living document, maintained by the eu-LISA Service Desk. In 2024 and 2025, it was updated five times.

1.1. Performance and availability

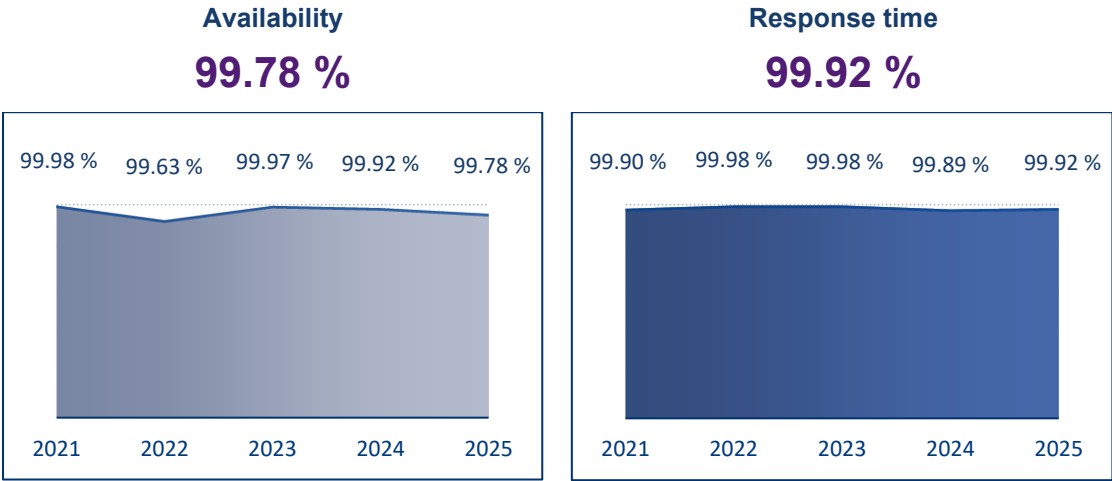
The Agency ensured the effective and continuous operation of the VIS central system and its biometric matching system, providing systems' end users (i.e. national authorities and Europol) with uninterrupted service and proactive and high-quality operational support. The performance of VIS remained within the required service-level-agreement targets.

During the reporting period, core usage volumes of the system remained in line with expectations, depending on the season (peaks during holiday periods). Overall data-quality deviations remained below 1 %, and system performance was broadly satisfactory, with only minor service-level-agreement deviations affecting specific channels.

The performance indicators were stable and remained within the service-level agreement margins, with system availability at 99.92 % in 2024 and 99.78 % in 2025. The response time was also kept at a high level, registering 99.89 % in 2024 and 99.92 % in 2025. Short periods of partial unavailability occurred due to maintenance and the entry into operation of the sBMS and the EES (see Chapter 5).

⁽³⁾ The backup site is located in Sankt Johann im Pongau (Austria) and ensures all the functionalities of the principal CS-VIS in the event of a failure or planned maintenance of the system. Data contained in the CU and BCU are kept always synchronised, guaranteeing business continuity.

Figure 1: VIS performance 2021–2025



1.2. Service management

To better support end users, reduce support risks and enable faster incident handling, eu-LISA is moving from the current Service Manager 9 tool to a new ServiceNow platform. Although the launch is planned for autumn 2026, the preparation for the new service, including informing all the relevant stakeholders, started in 2025. The new platform will improve responsiveness and contribute to delivering high-quality support through improved system monitoring, reporting and event management capabilities, including a new ticketing tool to increase efficiency and improve collaboration and the customer experience.

On 1 August 2024, the Agency connected the Security Information and Event Management System (SIEM) with VIS for collecting metrics and logs. The new system enables the real-time monitoring and management of events across all systems and infrastructure. Further connectivity work is ongoing for the EES and the sBMS. This will allow development of the dashboards necessary for efficient monitoring and will also efficiently store all technical logs.

1.3. Monitoring and troubleshooting

As with all other large-scale IT systems managed by eu-LISA, VIS central system is monitored 24/7 by the Agency's Service Desk. In the 2023–2025 period, VIS did not experience incidents that would have resulted in full system unavailability. In 2024, one incident caused partial unavailability of the system for 126 minutes. In 2025, up to the end of the reporting period on 30 September, three incidents resulted in partial unavailability of the VIS central system, with a total downtime of 515 minutes. Planned downtime occurred due to system maintenance, with the longest interruption occurring during the VIS4EES go-live on 20 May 2025, lasting 9 hours and 53 minutes. In 2024, in general, both service requests and incidents rose, then fell slightly in 2025. The increase was mainly driven by internally opened tickets, while most recurring tickets related to monitoring alerts, VIS mail and statistics.

1.4. Testing activities and releases

eu-LISA continued to coordinate testing activities, define testing requirements and plan testing campaigns for VIS releases. Prior to each deployment, comprehensive testing campaigns were conducted to verify system functionality, performance, stability and compliance with regulatory requirements. Deployment and release activities were carefully planned and executed to minimise any impact on operational services, with particular attention given to system availability and performance. During the reporting period, eu-LISA worked closely with Member States on a wide range of testing activities, ensuring the continued reliability, functionality and readiness of VIS in accordance with the requirements of the VIS Regulation.

During the reporting period, the most significant releases for VIS were connected to the go-live of VIS4EES and sBMS, which were planned simultaneously. Testing activities were performed both at the central level and independently by Member States concerning VIS4EES operations. Following an established practice to mitigate risks and test the transition process prior to the entry into operation, a joint rehearsal was organised for the EES, VIS and sBMS in April 2025.

The deployment took place on 19 May 2025. The VIS services were stopped for users at 18:00 CEST as planned. The upgraded VIS central system and the entry into production of sBMS (including finalisation of the data migration) were concluded by 3:30 CEST on 20 May. Following that, the VIS services were opened progressively to Member States in groups to ease the verification of operations and gain efficiency in troubleshooting. The last group of Member States started operations before 8:00 CEST on 20 May 2025, with no blocking incidents after that time.

The entry into operation went smoothly thanks to successful organisation and end-to-end coordination. Experts at eu-LISA and in Member States worked overnight to ensure the go-live and the smooth transfer to the new systems. Lessons learned and Member States' feedback were collected to be used in similar transitions in the future.

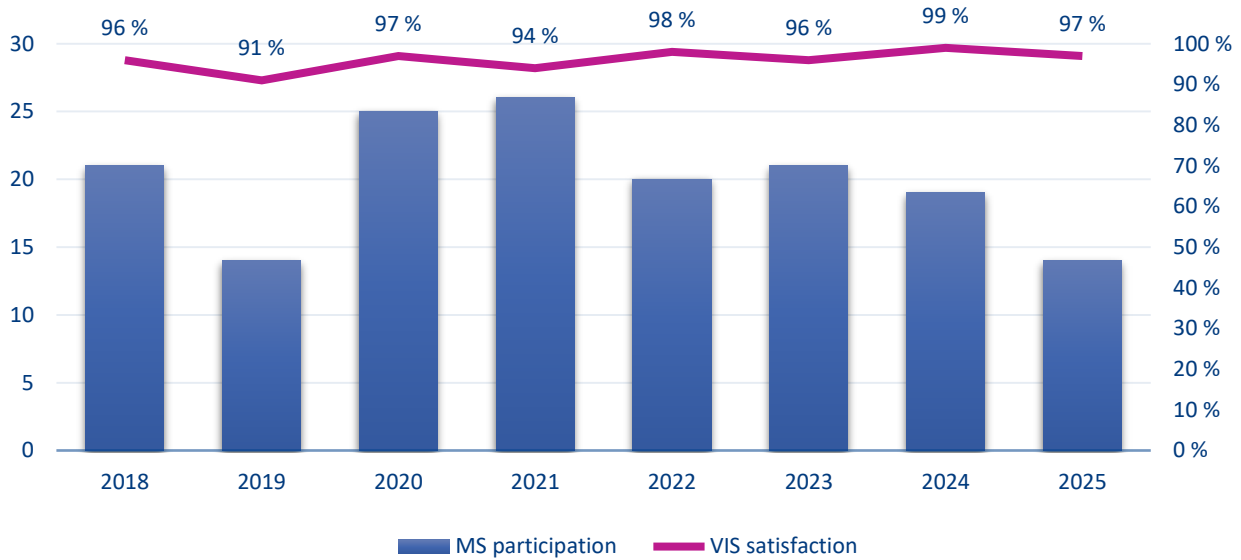
1.5. VIS user satisfaction

Each year, Member States assess eu-LISA's Service Desk incident and problem management, operational communication, technical assistance, support for national activities and release management.

VIS customer satisfaction has remained above 90 % since 2016, reaching a record 99 % in 2024. Based on the survey results, several follow-up actions were planned, including the further development of the monitoring dashboard and improved communication on release and testing.

Member States' participation rate in the survey has declined over the last two years, although it is still high enough to make the survey representative. eu-LISA will continue its efforts to encourage users to participate in the survey.

Figure 2: VIS satisfaction survey



1.6. VIS programme and projects

VIS will continue to be upgraded in the coming years. In 2021, a new legal basis was adopted, greatly expanding the scope of the system and making it part of the interoperability framework of EU large-scale IT systems. In addition, with the aim of fully digitalising the visa procedure, in November 2023 new legal instruments introduced an online platform for visa applications (EU VAP).

To plan, manage and implement all the changes stemming from those legal provisions, eu-LISA set up the VIS programme, overarching several projects and initiatives. The aim of the VIS programme is to ensure alignment among the different projects, offering a forum for exchanging practices, discussing challenges and handling the growing dependencies with other projects and systems. The VIS programme is an integral part of the interoperability roadmap – the integrated plan is regularly discussed, updated and endorsed by the home affairs ministers during the Justice and Home Affairs Council. The main projects composing the VIS programme are:

- VIS4EES,
- migration to sBMS,
- VIS4Screening,
- VIS4ETIAS,
- revised VIS,
- EU VAP.

To support the projects and align with the developments at the national level, as per practices used in eu-LISA, the Agency organises regular, dedicated online meetings with the relevant stakeholders, namely the VIS Project Management Forum.

1.6.1. Revised VIS and interoperability

While eu-LISA maintains and develops large-scale IT systems for internal security, law enforcement, migration and border management and justice, these systems have been developed independently. However, to ensure that the systems can exchange data, where necessary, and to improve their efficiency, eu-LISA, together with its partners, is working on their interoperability, as tasked by the EU co-legislator. This applies both to the systems already in use (the Schengen Information System (SIS), VIS, the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (Eurodac), the EES) and to new systems under development (the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS), the European criminal records information system – third-country nationals (ECRIS-TCN)). The four interoperability components are:

- the European search portal (ESP),
- shared biometric matching service (sBMS),
- a common identity repository (CIR),
- a multiple-identity detector (MID).

Furthermore, eu-LISA will deliver a Central Repository for Reporting and Statistics, along with an automated quality control mechanism. VIS will benefit from these overarching components, as the legal reforms adopted in 2021 expanded the scope of VIS and integrated it into the interoperability architecture established by Regulations (EU) 2019/817 ⁽⁴⁾ and 2019/818 ⁽⁵⁾.

Hand in hand with the interoperability programme, the Agency is working on a new and expanded VIS, as per the revised VIS regulation adopted in July 2021 ⁽⁶⁾. The revision of VIS aims to further improve the EU's management of migration and external borders while facilitating legitimate travel. The main additions of the revised VIS are:

- the enhancing of data exchange;
- the extension of the scope of VIS to long-stay visas and to residence permits;
- VIS interoperability with other EU systems.

The revised VIS requires a significant update of the central system, including redesigning business processes. Despite the elicitation of complex technical requirements and the ongoing drafting of the secondary legislation, throughout 2024 and 2025, eu-LISA progressed with updating the overall architecture and the necessary specifications for these new functionalities. Due to the many interdependencies, the development of the revised VIS has been incorporated into the overall interoperability implementation timeline.

The implementation of the revised VIS will have a significant impact on the visa process for all stakeholders. Following thorough assessments, eu-LISA has proposed that the full scope be developed in batches, which will be easier to handle for all stakeholders, including Member States. This will allow for the delivery of congruent batches for design maintenance, development and testing activities. The first batch – encompassing the creation of a visa application file, the creation of long-stay visas and residence permits, CIR integration and data quality checks – was presented to Member States in October 2025. It is envisaged that the system will go live in two different phases, with the first phase planned by the last quarter of 2028.

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2019 on establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of borders and visa and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2016/399, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240, (EU) 2018/1726 and (EU) 2018/1861 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Decisions 2004/512/EC and 2008/633/JHA (OJ L 135, 22.5.2019, p. 27, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/817/oj>).

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2019 on establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration and amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1726, (EU) 2018/1862 and (EU) 2019/816 (OJ L 135, 22.5.2019, p. 85, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/818/oj>).

⁽⁶⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/1134 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EC) No 810/2009, (EU) 2016/399, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240, (EU) 2018/1860, (EU) 2018/1861, (EU) 2019/817 and (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Decisions 2004/512/EC and 2008/633/JHA, for the purpose of reforming the Visa Information System (OJ L 248, 13.7.2021, p. 11, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1134/oj>).

1.6.2. Shared Biometric Matching Service (sBMS)



On 20 May 2025, eu-LISA launched the **shared Biometric Matching Service (sBMS)**, the EU's central biometric matching service, and upgraded VIS for its compatibility with EES (see next chapter). sBMS replaced BMS, the previous biometric matching engine that had supported VIS since its entry into operation. The main differences between sBMS and BMS are scalability, newer biometric matching algorithm for fingerprints addition of facial recognition capability and in the future, also support for palm print and latent prints.

Furthermore, sBMS is a centralised system that stores and compares biometric data – such as fingerprints and facial images – across multiple EU information systems. It is the first operational component of the interoperability architecture as it will enable biometric searches and identity checks across systems. The main goals of sBMS are:

- enabling faster and more accurate verifications and searches;
- enabling searches across systems in an easy fashion;
- harmonising the data quality assessment in EU information systems;
- improving data security and data protection;
- efficiently using technology and infrastructure resources through harmonisation.

sBMS and the other interoperability components facilitate the seamless exchange of data and services, thereby minimising the need for redundant data collection and storage in the different systems.

The migration of VIS data from BMS to sBMS started in April 2024 and was finalised in May 2025, with the entry into operation of VIS4EES together with sBMS. Prior to its entry into operation, sBMS underwent accuracy measurements with real data. The sBMS provides essential functionality to large-scale IT systems, therefore it was important to confirm the quality thresholds for biometric data. For this, demographic and biometric data were extracted from VIS (after concluding Data Protection Impact Assessment and green light from the European Data Protection Supervisor). To reduce potential bias, sample data from VIS were selected to ensure adequate representativeness based on gender, citizenship, age, date of visa application and quality of the biometric data. The accuracy measurement was performed by eu-LISA in collaboration with the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. Forensic experts from Member States participated in the creation of the 'ground truth' and the accuracy calculation.

VIS uses sBMS for:

- storing biometric data in a template format;
- creating, updating and deleting biometric data;
- biometric identification;
- biometric verification.

sBMS uses a microservice-based infrastructure, where core functionalities work independently of one another. This provides high resilience for the system, as the failure of one component does not affect the whole system. It also allows the easy scaling of components based on demand (e.g. in the event of a peak in queries). VIS was the first large-scale IT system to use the sBMS platform. Since the operational start of the EES, both VIS and the EES have used sBMS. By the time of writing this report, sBMS has also served the new Eurodac.

1.6.3. Entry/Exit System



VIS is closely related to the Entry/Exit System (EES), which digitally records the entry, exit and refusal of entry of third-country nationals travelling to and from the Schengen area. The EES went live on 12 October 2025, with a progressive roll-out period. This also marked a significant change and technical challenge for the VIS community due to the interdependencies between the two systems.

The EES is designed to allow authorities to perform certain tasks, including, when registering entries to and exits from the Schengen area, to retrieve visa-related information from VIS and import it to the EES, and to consult the EES when processing visa applications. The introduction of the EES will significantly help determine whether a visa holder has exceeded the permitted period of stay in the Schengen area. Based on the calculation of actual border crossing records, the system flags these third-country nationals as 'overstayers' ⁽⁷⁾. Border guards can consult the VIS via the EES. The VIS central system and the national systems were upgraded to be able to support this new process.

Throughout 2024 and 2025, extensive preparations were made both at the central and national levels to support VIS connectivity to the EES. A joint Transition Activities Group (TAG) was established, aimed at facilitating the transition to and entry into operations of the EES and VIS4EES. The group, composed of technical experts, began its work in March 2024 with regular meetings that increased in frequency as the transition phase progressed.

The EES, VIS4EES and sBMS were initially planned to enter operations at the same time. The complexity of the projects and the associated risks of a 'big bang' approach led the Management Board in autumn 2024 to request that eu-LISA explore opportunities for decoupling the deployments. Technical analysis was performed alongside intense discussions with the VIS community. It was concluded that starting the operations of VIS4EES and sBMS before the start of the EES would allow a more controlled entry into operations.

Several conditions – legal compliance, readiness at the central and national levels and technical dependencies – were investigated. By the end of January 2025, the Management Board decided to start with VIS4EES before the EES. VIS4EES went live together with sBMS in May 2025. As this report covers the period up to October 2025, when the EES started its operations with a progressive roll-out across border crossing points in Europe, at the time of writing, it is too early to draw conclusions about the impact of the EES on the use of VIS. It is expected that, with the EES operational at all external Schengen borders, the queries to VIS at the border would increase significantly.

1.6.4. European Travel Authorisation System



Similarly to the EES, the European Travel Authorisation System (ETIAS), which is currently in development, will have an impact on VIS processes. In the framework of the interoperability of large-scale information systems, VIS will also be connected to ETIAS.

After ETIAS will start operations and connectivity between VIS and ETIAS is established, visa authorities consulting the EES during visa examination will also be able to access the ETIAS travel authorisation information recorded in the EES. On the other hand, ETIAS central system will be able to perform automated checks involving VIS data, to identify security, migration or identity-related concerns. VIS data may be used to determine whether a visa of the applicant for an ETIAS authorisation has been previously annulled, revoked or refused.

1.6.5. Screening regulation

As part of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, the EU Screening Regulation ⁽⁸⁾ introduces a mandatory screening procedure for certain third-country national arriving at the EU's external borders. The Screening Regulation entered into force in June 2026, bringing changes into the large-scale IT systems maintained and developed by eu-LISA.

⁽⁷⁾ According to Article 3(19) of the EES Regulation, 'Overstayer' means 'a third-country national who does not fulfil or no longer fulfils the conditions relating to the duration of their authorised short stay on the territory of the Member States'. Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2017 establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) to register entry and exit data and refusal of entry data of third-country nationals crossing the external borders of the Member States and determining the conditions for access to the EES for law enforcement purposes, and amending the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement and Regulations (EC) No 767/2008 and (EU) No 1077/2011 (OJ L 327, 9.12.2017, p. 20, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/2226/oj>).

⁽⁸⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 introducing the screening of third-country nationals at the external borders and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817 (OJ L, 2024/1356, 22.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1356/oj>).

Screening authorities must verify a person's identity and security check by consulting relevant EU information systems, including VIS, where applicable. This helps determine whether the individual previously applied for or obtained a Schengen visa, and whether the identity claimed during screening is consistent with information already stored in VIS.

During the reporting period, direct access to VIS by screening authorities was developed. In the future, with full interoperability integration and the implementation of the revised VIS, the screening authorities will be able to access VIS via the ESP.

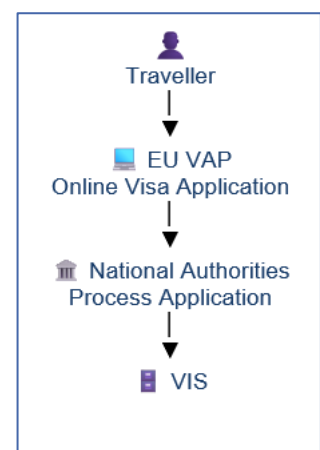
Since June 2026, screening authorities nominated by the Member States have direct access to VIS data for:

- the identification or verification of identity in accordance with Article 14 of the Screening Regulation;
- a security check in accordance with Articles 15 and 16 of the Screening Regulation.

Screening authorities can make queries to VIS, but they cannot insert data into the system.

1.6.6. EU Visa Application Platform

In November 2023, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a Regulation laying down rules for the digitalisation of the Schengen visa procedure⁽⁹⁾. Under this Regulation, eu-LISA was entrusted with the development and operation of the EU Visa Application Platform (EU VAP). The EU VAP will enable applicants to apply for a visa online, and the digital visa will replace the current visa sticker. The design and development of EU VAP have already started, and delivery is expected in 2030. Member States will then benefit from a transition period to decide to use the system. The process of data transfer from traveller to VIS using EU VAP is shown in the graph.



⁽⁹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2023/2685 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 November 2023 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1683/95 as regards the digitalisation of the visa procedure (OJ L, 2023/2685, 7.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2685/oj>).

1.7. Training activities



eu-LISA is responsible for developing, coordinating and delivering training on the technical use of the IT systems in the justice and home affairs (JHA) domain. These training activities are aimed at IT specialists, law enforcement officials from the Member States and staff of other JHA agencies. eu-LISA offers a range of profile-based activities, including live webinars, demo presentations, hands-on sessions, face-to-face training, and self-paced online courses and modules, available through its e-learning platform.

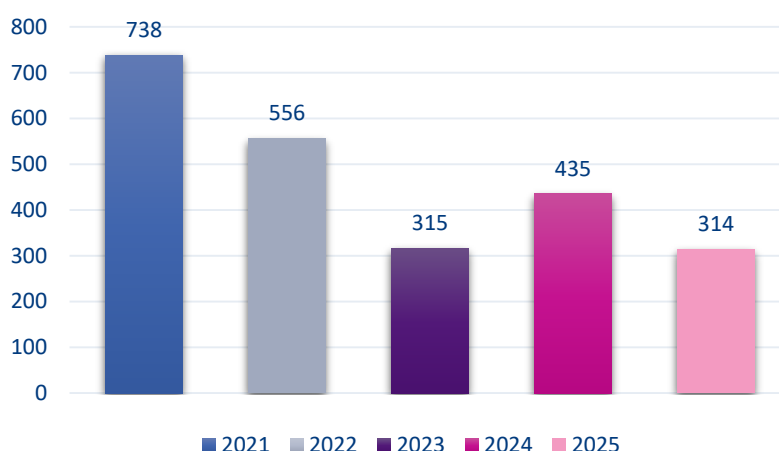
In 2023, eu-LISA delivered 41 training activities attended by 4 112 participants in total. Two of these activities were dedicated to VIS, with 315 participants taking part in the VIS training overall.

In 2024, four of eu-LISA's training activities focused on VIS. These included two editions of the webinar on new VIS functionalities for the entry into operation of the EES, as well as two cross-system sessions for both the EES and VIS communities on Service Manager 9. In total, 435 participants attended the VIS-specific training sessions.

In 2025, two activities were delivered for the VIS community, engaging a total of 119 participants. To support the entry into operation of sBMS in May 2025, eu-LISA training team organised an introductory webinar. Including the enrolments in e-learning courses, a total of 314 participants took part in VIS training in 2025.

The average satisfaction with VIS training is over **90 %**.

Figure 3: Participants in VIS training



1.8. Infrastructure



In accordance with Article 1(2) of Council Decision 2004/512/EC⁽¹⁰⁾ and the parallel provision in Article 2 of the Annex to Commission Decision 2008/602/EC⁽¹¹⁾, one of the three elements comprising VIS is the communication infrastructure between the VIS central system and the NI-VISs. That infrastructure provides an encrypted virtual private network dedicated to VIS data for communication between the Member States and eu-LISA, the authority responsible for the operational management of the VIS central system.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Council Decision 2004/512/EC of 8 June 2004 establishing the Visa Information System (VIS) (OJ L 213, 15.6.2004, p. 5). [EUR-Lex - L:2004:213:TOC - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁽¹¹⁾ 2008/602/EC: Commission Decision of 17 June 2008 laying down the physical architecture and requirements of the national interfaces and of the communication infrastructure between the central VIS and the national interfaces for the development phase (notified under document number C(2008) 2693) (OJ L 194, 23.7.2008, pp. 3–8) [Decision - 2008/602 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

The communication infrastructure between the VIS central system and national interfaces is provided via a European private secure network named Trans European Services for Telematics between Administrations – New Generation (TESTA-ng). Given that the TESTA-ng services can continue only until the end of 2027, preparatory activities for the successor solution have been underway since 2024. The current network will be replaced by TESTA-EIRIS, which will introduce a new, layered architecture and will be developed and provided by the Directorate-General for Digital Services of the European Commission (DG DIGIT), while eu-LISA will ensure that security and service-level requirements are preserved. The migration is planned to gradually take place from the third quarter of 2026, as early preparation and coordination will be essential given the impact the change will also have on national infrastructures. eu-LISA is working closely with DG DIGIT to minimise the impact on Member States' national core business systems.

As part of the continuous improvement of communication infrastructure, encryption layer solutions for VIS were updated in 2024.

In January 2025, eu-LISA adopted its first hybrid multi-cloud strategy ⁽¹²⁾ addressing critical infrastructure challenges experienced at eu-LISA's technical sites, which are approaching physical limits in electricity, cooling and space. Under the new hybrid multi-cloud approach, core production components containing personal data will still remain in eu-LISA's on-premises data centres, while the non-production environments can be hosted in cloud infrastructure. This approach will deliver benefits including immediate capacity relief, accelerated infrastructure delivery and improved scalability.

1.9. Security



Ensuring the secure and continuous operation of large-scale IT-systems is eu-LISA's core task. In the context of the Agency's security monitoring and incident management processes, no critical security incidents occurred during the reporting period. The Agency's security unit continued to maintain and develop security measures concerning both physical and system security.

In accordance with the relevant security principles, standards and good practices mentioned, the VIS security and continuity risk management strategy covers all layers of the security spectrum: physical security, personnel security, network security, operating-system security, application security, business continuity and data security. Security requirements are embedded in all development projects, changes and maintenance activities. eu-LISA's Security Unit is part of the VIS Operational Change Advisory Board and takes part in all VIS development projects from the initial phase to develop requirements. To ensure that the plans and procedures deal with any incidents, VIS business continuity and security plans are regularly reviewed and adopted by the VIS Advisory Group.

eu-LISA organises regular security and business continuity exercises to ensure an adequate level of security and resilience for systems under its mandate. In October 2023, the VIS 2023 Security and Business Continuity Exercise was executed, aiming to test the system's resilience and recovery capabilities. The exercise was concluded as a simulation exercise, combining both technical and operational levels. Following the consolidated tests, the exercise was closed, with lessons learned and measures to be implemented to further enhance the resilience of VIS.

In October 2024, the Agency completed its security and business continuity exercise for SIS, VIS, Eurodac and EES. The aim of the exercise was to test organisational resilience in addressing any unforeseen disruptive incidents and ensuring service continuity. The exercise, organised with the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), welcomed over 80 participants from Member States, the Commission and EU agencies, including observers from the security community (i.e. cooperation groups and networks). The exercise was organised to simulate a crisis in which several systems were involved and observe how it was dealt with within eu-LISA.

⁽¹²⁾ See eu-LISA, *Core Business Systems Cloud Strategy – A hybrid multi-cloud hosting framework – Public edition*, published in April 2025, <https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/our-publications/core-business-systems-cloud-strategy>.

In September 2025, together with its stakeholders, eu-LISA completed its security and business continuity exercise for SIS, VIS, Eurodac, the EES and the computerised system for the cross-border electronic exchange of data in the area of judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters (e-CODEX system). The 2025 exercise focused on identifying and mitigating potential disruptions in implementing incident management procedures, in the event of unexpected events and disruptive incidents. With its realistic scenarios and engaging injects, a tabletop exercise generated valuable insights for improvement, which will be used for future exercises.

Due to the evolving threat landscape, timely identification of and response to any threats requires continuous enhancement of the Agency's security logging and monitoring capabilities by improving relevant tools and processes, including Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) in conjunction with the Cybersecurity Service for the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies (CERT-EU). To reinforce the Agency's cybersecurity readiness and ramp up its security posture, the Agency also reviewed and assessed its maturity and outlined emerging tools and opportunities that could upscale relevant processes.

As part of the continuous improvement of its security management system, the Agency also strengthened its security framework and procedures by closing recommendations from various audits in addition to exchanging best practices and the latest information on security-related matters with security experts and communities (i.e. ENISA, the Security Officers Network, the JHA Security Officers' Network, and the Network and Information Systems Cooperation Group).

1.10. Data protection

Data protection is a key consideration in the operation of the VIS and its use by Schengen States. The legal framework sets out the conditions governing the use of VIS in visa procedures and border checks, including requirements relating to data quality and security. Compliance with the VIS Regulation supports Member States in carrying out visa-related processes, while safeguarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of third-country nationals applying for a Schengen visa.

Article 42 of the VIS Regulation's requires the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) to monitor whether management authority's processing of personal data is carried out in accordance with the Regulation and to conduct an audit at least every four years.

In 2022, the EDPS carried out an on-site inspection covering several large-scale IT systems, including VIS. This inspection resulted in 37 recommendations, of which 33 had been closed by EDPS by the end of 2025.

The most recent EDPS audit of VIS audit was carried out in 2024, and the final report received in October 2025. The audit included fieldwork at eu-LISA's premises in Strasbourg and focused on logging, data retention and monitoring procedures. It resulted in 44 recommendations.

To ensure the highest level of data protection, in full compliance with fundamental rights, EU data protection law and system-specific provisions, the activities of the Agency's Data Protection Office focused on the entry into operation of VIS4EES, sBMS, and the start of the EES.

2

USE OF VIS

2. Use of VIS

2.1. General trends

VIS has been operational since 2011 and has been accessible in all consulates of Schengen countries worldwide since 2016. Its use has increased over time, supported in part by the accession of new Schengen countries.

System usage peaked in 2019 at 294 million operations (see Figure 4), before falling sharply in 2020–2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, VIS usage dropped significantly. Since 2022, operations have been growing again, reaching 278 million operations in 2025, close to pre-pandemic peak.

In Figure 6, the monthly breakdown of visa operations shows clear peaks during the summer holiday period and again reflects the difference between ‘normal’ operations and the pandemic years.

Figure 4: VIS border operations (in millions)

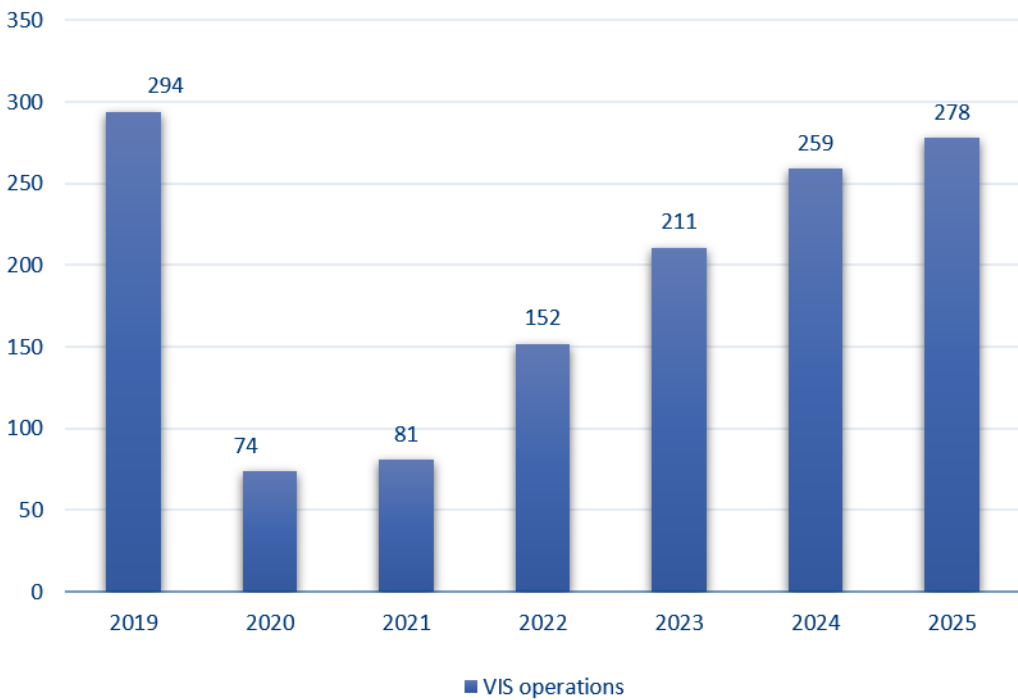


Figure 5: VIS border operations and visas (in millions)

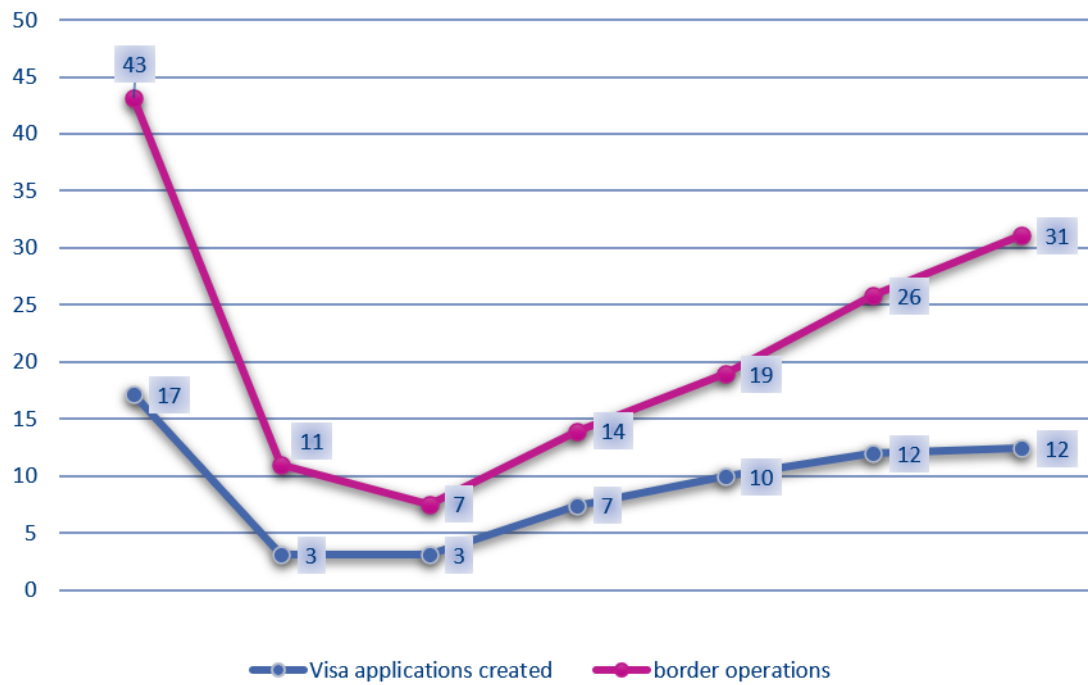
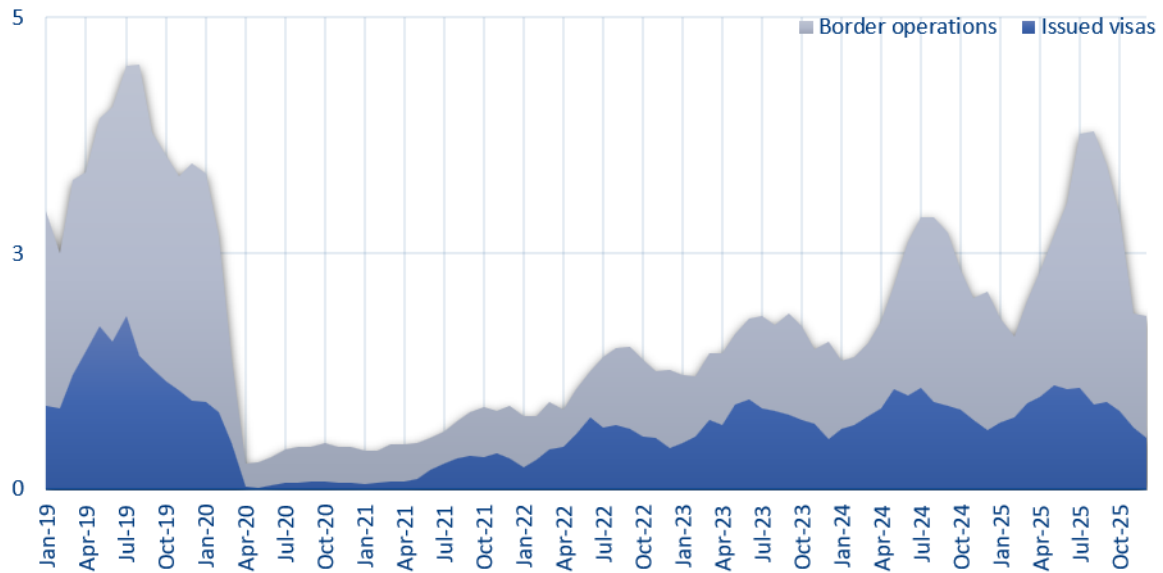
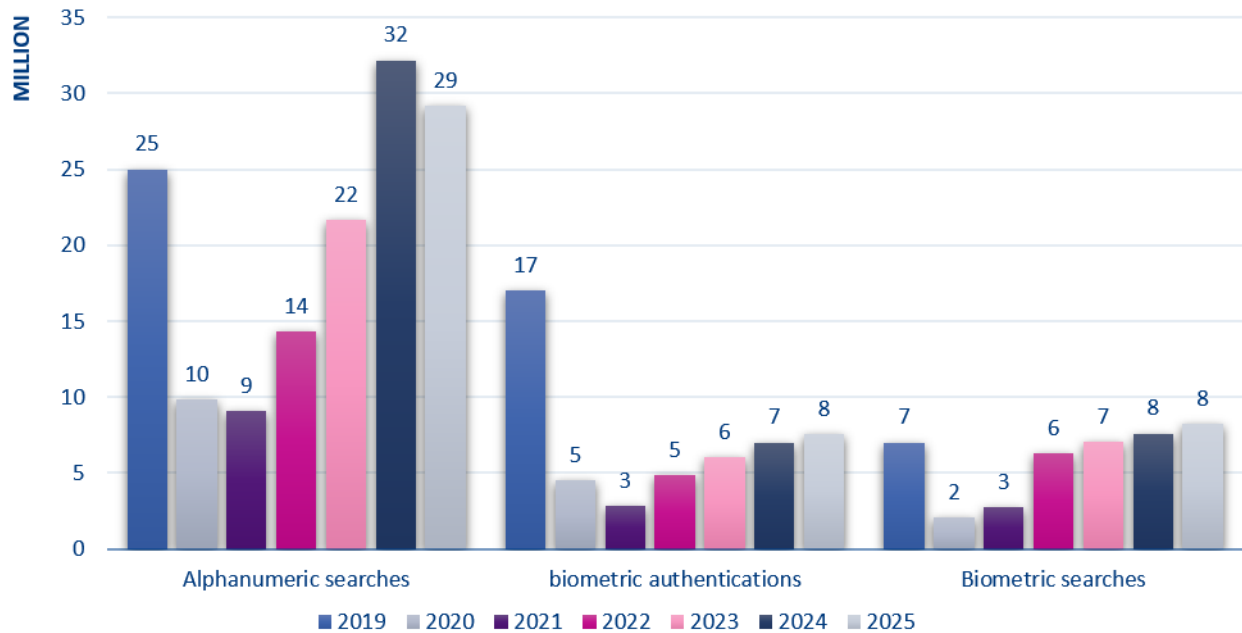


Figure 6: VIS operations and issued visas monthly (in millions)



Similar trends are seen in searches based on alphanumeric and biometrics, which reached pre-pandemic figures in 2023 and exceeded them in 2024.

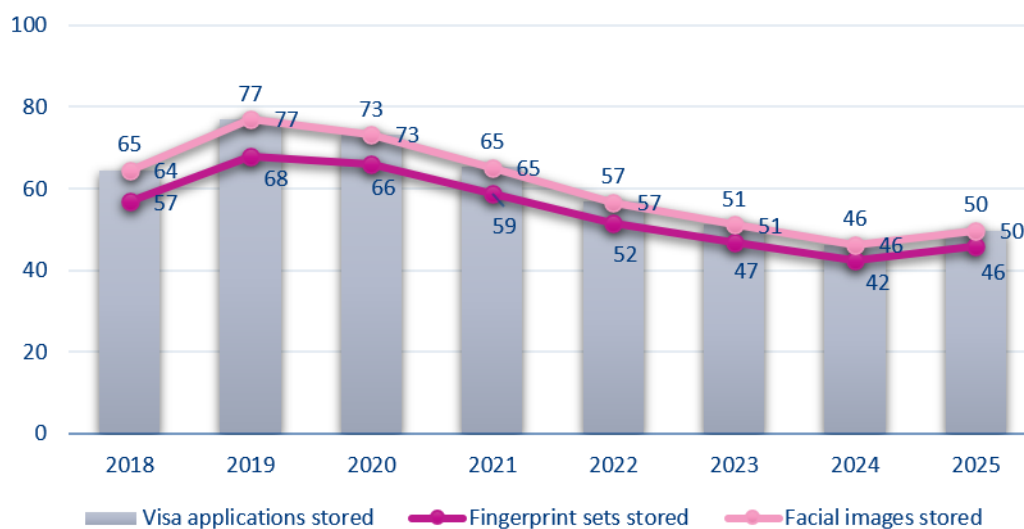
Figure 7: Main VIS operations by type



The total data stored in VIS (applications, fingerprints and facial images) have decreased since 2019 but increased in 2025 (50 million) compared to 2024 (46 million).

It is important to note the retention policy on VIS data: visa applications, including fingerprints and facial images, are deleted after five years. Thus, the data from 2019, the peak year of operations, were deleted in 2024, marking a decrease in the overall amount of data stored in the system.

Figure 8: Data stored in VIS (in millions)



2.2. Usage of VIS by Member States

To prepare the report on the technical functioning of VIS, eu-LISA collects information from Member States on the use of the system by national authorities. Data collection is initiated following the end of the reporting period and is based on a set of indicators agreed with the Commission and the VIS AG.



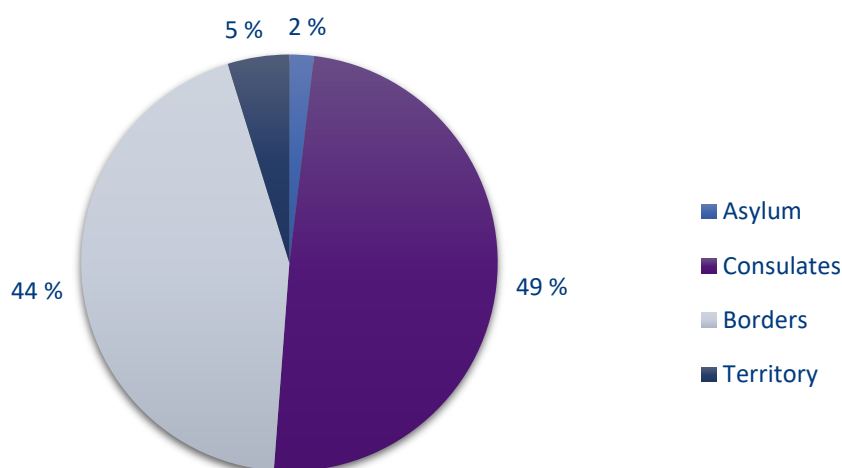
For the current report, all Schengen States submitted contributions, depending on the national use of the system and the availability of statistical data in national databases. Accordingly, they provided either a full or a partial set of statistical data for the report. As Bulgaria and Romania started using VIS in full in April 2023, they provided partial data for the period up to April 2024.

2.3. Reported usage of VIS as per the VIS Regulation

According to the statistical data reported by the Member States, almost half of the operations were performed by the consulates:

- 49 % of the operations were carried out at consular posts: applications registered, visas issued and visas refused (slight increase from 45 % during the previous reporting period);
- 44 % of the operations were carried out at the border: visa verifications and identifications;
- 2 % of the operations were carried out for asylum purposes ⁽¹³⁾: asylum searches and asylum identifications; compared to the previous reporting period, operations for these purposes decreased significantly (dropping from 3.6 million in the previous reporting period to 1.4 million);
- 5 % of the operations were carried out by the competent authorities within the Schengen territory ⁽¹⁴⁾: visa verifications within the territory and identifications within the territory.

Figure 9: VIS usage per user group

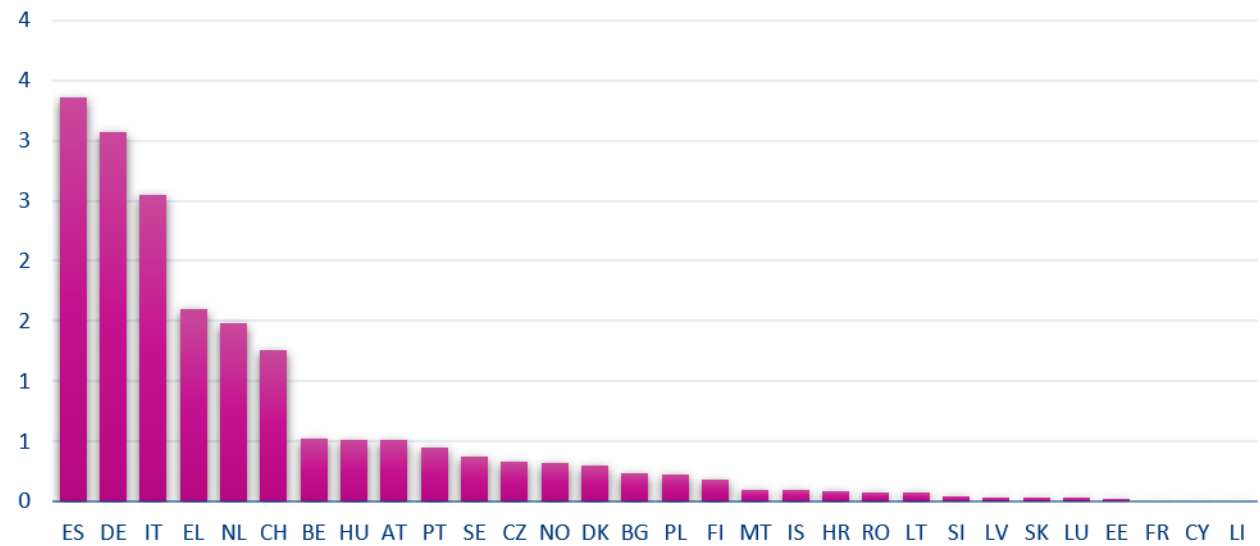


⁽¹³⁾ As per Articles 21 and 22 of the VIS Regulation.

⁽¹⁴⁾ As per Articles 19 and 20 of the VIS Regulation.

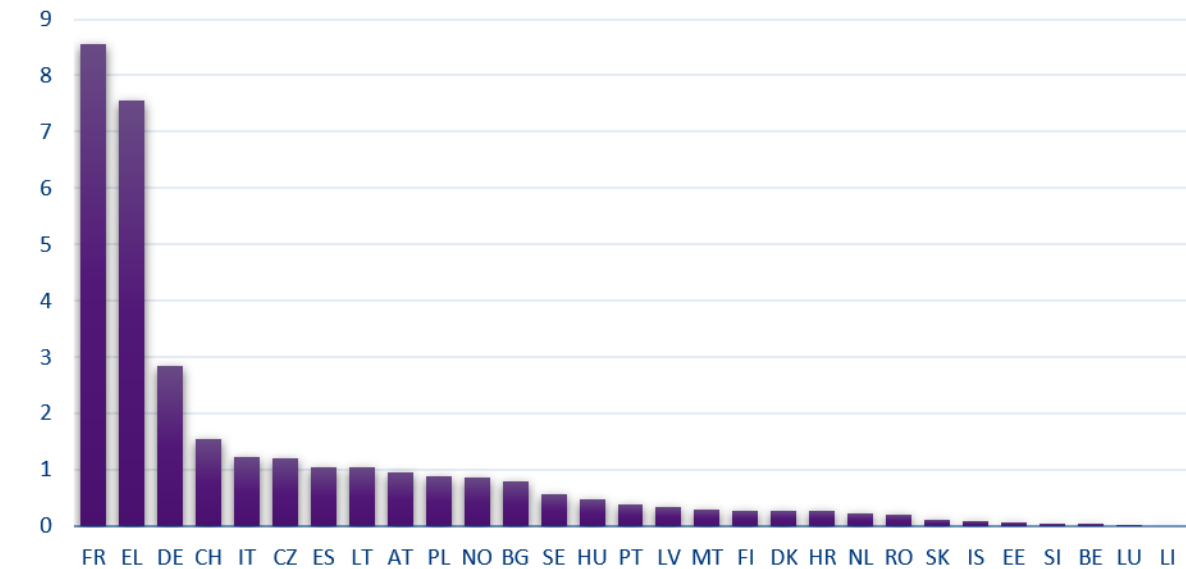
Based on Member States' reporting, overall, more than 18 million visa applications were registered in the system, with the highest numbers registered by **Spain, Germany and Italy**, as can be seen in Figure 10. It should be noted that based on the statistics available from the central system, **France** has the most visa applications registered in the system but has not been able to provide the figures for the report. The five countries with the highest number of Schengen visa applicants in 2024 and 2025 were **China, India, Turkey, Russia and Morocco**. The monthly breakdown of visa applications is available in the annex.

Figure 10: Visa applications registered by Member States (in millions) ⁽¹⁵⁾



Over 32 million checks were conducted at the external borders by Member States, with the most border operations (visa verifications and identifications combined) reported by **France, Greece and Germany** (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Visa operations at borders (in millions)



⁽¹⁵⁾ France did not report data on registered applications, but did report for border operations. Liechtenstein reported 0 for both categories.

2.4. Reported usage of VIS for law enforcement purposes

Pursuant to the VIS Decision ⁽¹⁶⁾, Schengen States' designated authorities and Europol have had the right to access VIS for the purpose of the **prevention, detection and investigation of terrorist offences and other serious criminal offences** since 1 September 2013. Europol was connected to VIS in October 2022.

Data on the use of VIS for law enforcement purposes are collected from Schengen States. However, in most countries, such data are not available for reporting on their own. Eleven countries provided data on law enforcement access to VIS for the current report, while several others confirmed their use but were not able to report figures on these searches.

In total, 43 035 law enforcement searches were reported by these eleven countries, with the highest figures reported by Spain, Czechia, Germany and Slovenia. Out of all law enforcement searches, only five countries were able to report urgent cases and, as such, the results are not representative enough to be reported.

Figure 12: Reporting on VIS usage for law enforcement purposes

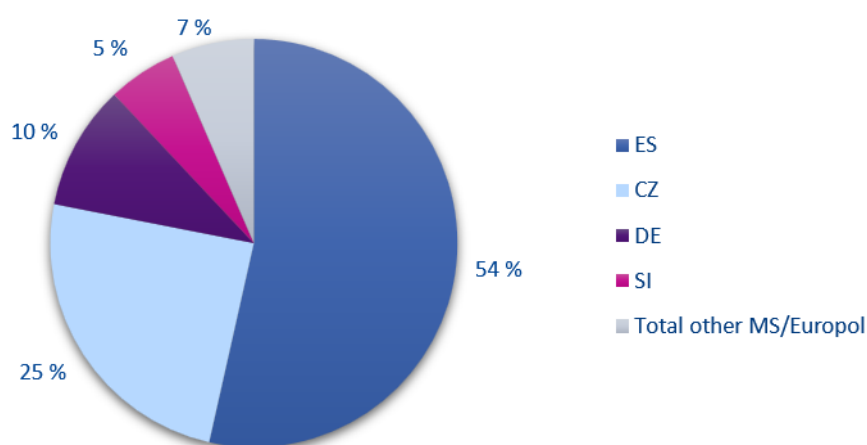
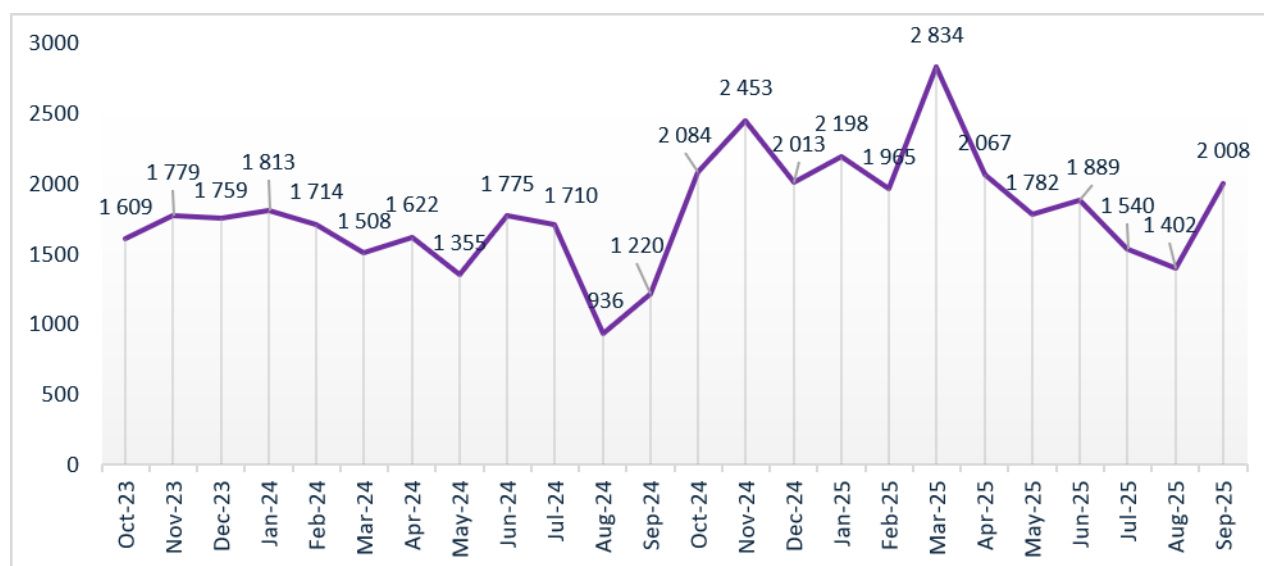


Figure 13: Monthly reported law enforcement searches



⁽¹⁶⁾ Council Decision 2008/633/JHA of 23 June 2008 concerning access for consultation of the Visa Information System (VIS) by designated authorities of Member States and by Europol for the purposes of the prevention, detection and investigation of terrorist offences and of other serious criminal offences (OJ L 218, 13.8.2008, p. 129, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2008/633/oj>).

Conclusion

The Visa Information System remains one of the key pillars supporting the EU's common visa policy and external border security, facilitating visa decisions, border checks and data exchange between Member States. During the 2023–2025 period, the system underwent several important developments, the most significant of which were the transfer to the shared biometric matching service and the connectivity with the Entry/Exit System.

eu-LISA continued to ensure the uninterrupted operations of the system, with the availability of the system being over 99 % annually. The new developments and upgrades were successfully implemented by the Agency and its partners, ensuring that business continuity was affected as little as possible.

VIS use by Schengen States has significantly increased compared to the previous reporting period, considering that 2021 and 2022 were still affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, two Bulgaria and Romania gained full access to the system.

In the coming years, the system will undergo further upgrades, with the revised VIS introducing new functionalities and ensuring interoperability with other large-scale IT systems.



Annex

Figure 14: Use of VIS as reported by Member States

	Registered applications	Registered applications with fingerprints	Registered applications without fingerprints	Registered applications without fingerprints – legal	Registered applications without fingerprints – factual	Issued visas	Refused visas	Refused visas per applicant	Refused visas – fingerprints could not be provided factually	Visa verifications at border	Visa verifications within territory	Identifications at border	Identifications within territory	Searches – asylum	Identifications – asylum	Successful identifications – asylum
Oct-2023	644 607	603 471	41 122	34 162	4 915	528 270	111 146	641	1 497	242 087	351	56 144	65 195	2,820	17 217	1 884
Nov-2023	594 259	552 233	42 012	35 232	4 792	482 894	107 531	885	768	129 393	260	48 336	55 881	760	1 869	1 645
Dec-2023	454 260	420 290	33 963	28 895	3 524	370 753	84 965	809	1 544	178 716	353	54 238	59 716	3,373	16 785	1 779
Total 2023	1 693 126	1 575 994	117 097	98 289	13 231	1 381 917	303 642	2 335	3 809	550 196	964	158 718	180 792	6,953	35 871	5 308
Jan-2024	575 458	537 628	37 806	31 784	4 158	473 956	94 032	831	1 329	151 384	430	49 374	66 825	3,089	13 306	1 550
Feb-2024	610 810	569 516	41 346	34 543	4 635	509 071	93 992	932	1 349	164 176	379	56 662	61 310	3,121	13 074	1 464
Mar-2024	706 517	658 815	47 690	40 526	5 105	596 809	95 797	954	1 175	355 435	334	54 643	60 241	2,091	9 679	1 363
Apr-2024	816 426	758 813	57 603	46 232	7 683	700 518	98 160	948	2 199	431 404	478	81 439	86 126	4,196	20 108	1 444
May-2024	962 489	881 781	80 680	64 980	9 540	823 088	114 113	1 175	2 208	505 690	441	102 809	97 485	3,703	17 328	1 505
Jun-2024	862 334	777 189	85 097	62 627	14 093	749 057	105 151	1 059	2 579	531 880	534	129 553	106 229	3,027	15 973	1 161
Jul-2024	969 968	870 846	99 086	67 831	16 546	831 497	123 557	1 120	3 568	531 728	789	213 126	122 384	4,824	24 478	1 439
Aug-2024	866 288	787 660	78 621	45 466	21 018	725 875	111 230	1 129	2 311	529 538	610	229 343	108 520	4,275	23 208	1 360
Sep-2024	791 605	731 909	59 672	36 207	15 592	665 847	108 628	1 091	1 922	514 006	482	210 034	84 378	2,671	12 893	1 517
Oct-2024	729 625	673 691	55 918	37 426	9 424	603 912	115 097	1 322	1 829	437 995	550	178 847	87 899	2,832	12 724	1 650
Nov-2024	630 590	577 020	53 562	36 506	6 997	510 947	106 159	1 292	2 051	368 411	464	115 249	52 937	2,265	14 805	1 433
Dec-2024	521 869	477 640	44 213	30 698	4 951	420 702	91 966	1 099	1 397	394 961	267	87 373	37 205	2,025	12 334	1 301
Total 2024	9 043 979	8 302 508	741 294	534 826	119 742	7 611 279	1 257 882	12 952	23 917	4 916 608	5 758	1 508 452	971 539	38,119	189 910	17 187
Jan-2025	616 279	573 709	42 560	32 095	5 366	501 830	96 964	1 260	17 639	1 244 561	7 713	581 414	449 739	22,566	105 661	1 407
Feb-2025	661 616	615 081	46 532	32 601	7 863	536 254	100 499	1 304	16 795	1 152 738	7 535	488 072	362 517	19,346	102 272	1 159
Mar-2025	802 170	745 397	56 665	41 352	10 150	671 125	108 539	1 335	21 255	1 344 252	9 212	690 849	159 707	17,372	108 369	1 087
Apr-2025	867 856	802 245	65 679	46 939	12 165	731 699	105 149	1 249	23 013	1 462 160	9 894	858 769	148 605	17,803	107 163	1 300
May-2025	972 293	884 714	87 567	57 942	20 148	813 230	117 915	1 371	26 668	1 671 755	11 727	981 603	213 760	16,885	108 666	944
Jun-2025	940 476	838 068	102 364	57 962	30 155	796 638	116 264	1 349	28 987	2 029 844	12 415	1 240 156	334 336	18,812	96 213	1 642
Jul-2025	993 585	891 566	101 949	59 806	33 003	832 837	130 970	1 786	32 210	1 916 070	14 560	1 871 321	183 158	19,517	105 218	1 511
Aug-2025	845 331	769 944	76 971	38 137	32 901	717 293	116 365	1 345	23 510	1 905 400	13 162	2 120 928	158 585	19,061	96 139	1 336
Sep-2025	852 467	785 210	67 247	33 451	28 600	724 497	124 824	1 730	30 716	1 900 717	14 747	1 722 672	241 700	22,023	120 000	1 404
Total 2025	7 552 073	6 905 934	647 534	400 285	180 351	6 325 403	1 017 489	12 729	220 793	14 627 497	100 965	10 555 784	2 252 107	173 385	949 701	11 790
Grand total	18 289 178	16 784 436	1 505 925	1 033 400	313 324	15 318 599	2 579 013	28 016	248 519	20 094 301	107 687	12 222 954	3 404 438	218 457	1 175 482	34 285

