

Schengen: second generation information system SIS II, development. Initiative Belgium and Sweden

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The European Commission has presented a communication aiming to : - present to the Council and the European Parliament the second generation Schengen Information Systems (SIS II) progress report for the activities carried out in the first half of 2003 and future schedule; - present an abridged version of the results of the feasibility study, which was carried out on the setting up of a new generation of the Schengen Information System; - highlight the budgetary repercussions of SIS II, based on the detailed budget estimates of the feasibility study; - suggest solutions for the location and future management of SIS II; - point out how synergies with a possible future Visa Information System (VIS) could be brought about. The SIS is an essential tool for the proper practical operation of free movement for persons within the area without controls at internal frontiers referred to in Title IV of Part Three of the EC Treaty. The current system devised around ten years ago and in operation since 1995, needs to be modernized and modified to allow the participation of all the Member States after enlargement. So far, work on implementing SIS II has proceeded exactly as scheduled. All the necessary measures have been taken to ensure that the ambitious schedule is adhered to. But this depends on all those involved in the project being highly mobilised, on strict compliance with intermediate stages and political decisions, no later than spring 2004, on additional functionalities and the location of the future system. The conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 5 and 6 June 2003 have enabled the Commission to issue an invitation to tender for SIS II in autumn 2003 as planned. On the basis of the recommendations in the feasibility study, the opinions of the SIS II Committee and the relevant Council Working Parties, the Council has decided to go for the centralised architecture and a uniform national interface in each Member State. The national interfaces must be supplied in the form of a standard turnkey solution ("RTS") and will not contain SIS data. Member States who wish to do so retain the option of keeping a national copy of the SIS data bank on their own responsibility alone. Those that do not wish to do so will be able to search in the central system direct, which depends on availability, integrity and regular updating of SIS data. Given the requisite high degree of availability, the Council has taken the decision to install a back-up system at a different place and to implement a communications infrastructure offering necessary assurance as to availability. The central system and the national interfaces must, of course, be of a suitably high security level. Regarding functional requirements, the Council has concluded that SIS II should be a "hit/no hit" system, with supplementary functionalities over those that exist today. Certain of these supplementary functionalities are already clearly identified in the Council conclusions, whereas others will have to be agreed on before the detailed analysis begins (i.e. no later than spring 2004) if the Member States want them to be operational as soon as SIS II comes on line (links between alerts, new fields in personal descriptions, conditions for storing digitised photographs and fingerprints of wanted persons, etc.). On the legislative front, the Council has asked for proposals to be prepared in good time for adoption. As for the location, management and long-term financing of SIS II, the Council has asked its relevant working parties to prepare conclusions for adoption by May 2004. The proposals for the establishment of an agency in this Communication could provide a basis for the discussions needed to prepare these conclusions, on which the possibility of setting up the new system and starting development work will depend. Concerning the financial aspects of the project phase itself, the feasibility study has identified an additional need for EUR 14.45 million on top of the estimates set out in an earlier Communication.³⁰ Likewise, the year-by-year distribution has had to be reviewed as proposed in the financial statement annexed to this Communication. Following the JHA Council Conclusions of 5 and 6 June 2003, the specifications of the VIS system will be incorporated in the invitation to tender for SIS II, but the development of VIS functionalities may begin only after the Council decision that is to be taken no later than December 2003. This approach will give the Member States time for the discussions on the financial

aspects of VIS and for deciding on the biometric identifiers to be use while preserving the possibility of synergies between the two systems. A second invitation to tender could subsequently be issued for the biometric functionalities envisaged for the two systems. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS : - budget line : 18 08 02 - (SIS II); - total allocation for action : EUR 31 300 million for commitment; - overall impact on human resources : EUR 3 951 750; - total : EUR 35 251 million; - period of allocation : 2003-2006.