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PRESSE 302

EU agency for large scale IT systems

The Council adopted today a regulation for the establishment of a European agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems on the basis of a compromise text with the European Parliament (*10827/1/11*).

The goal is that the agency starts working in summer 2012. The seat of the Agency will be in Tallin, Estonia. The tasks related to development and operational management will be carried out in Strasbourg, France. A backup site will be installed in Sankt Johann im Pongau, Austria.

Large-scale IT systems managed by the future agency will include the second-generation Schengen Information System (SIS II), the Visa Information System (VIS) and EURODAC. The agency will also be responsible for the management of any other IT systems which might be developed in the area of freedom, security and justice in the future. However, any integration of further systems will require a specific decision by the Council and the European Parliament.

P R E S S

The current EU IT systems: SIS, VIS and EURODAC

SIS II is currently under construction and was launched to replace the existing Schengen Information System (SIS I+). The global schedule presented by the Commission at the Council meeting in October 2010 provides for entry into operation of the SIS II by the first quarter of 2013. The Schengen Information System is a common database with stringent data protection rules which facilitates the exchange of information on persons and objects between national law enforcement authorities responsible, inter alia, for border controls and other customs and police checks.[1]

VIS is another database under preparation. It will support the implementation of the common visa policy and facilitate effective border control by enabling Schengen member states to enter, update and consult visa data, including biometric data, electronically. For the VIS to go live, the central VIS, managed by the Commission, the national VIS of each individual member state as well as preparations at the external border crossing points and in the consulates of the first roll-out region (North Africa) must be ready. The central VIS is expected to be ready by the end of June 2011. The whole system should start operating in the autumn 2011.

EURODAC is an existing IT system - currently managed by the European Commission - for comparing the fingerprints of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, in order to facilitate the application of the Dublin II Regulation, which makes it possible to determine the member state responsible for examining an asylum application (the country through which the asylum seeker first entered the EU).

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[1]   As of May 2011, the SIS contained more than 38 million entries on:
- over 1 million persons that were either missing (6 %), wanted for arrest (4%), wanted for discreet or specific checks (4 %), summoned to appear before a court (9 %) or that were not allowed to enter and stay in the Schengen area (77%);
- almost 37 million lost or stolen objects for seizure or use as evidence in criminal proceedings, including blank or issued documents (86 %) (e.g. passports, identity cards, driving licences, residence permits, travel documents, vehicle documents), vehicles and number plates (12 %), firearms (1 %) and banknotes (less than 1 %).