



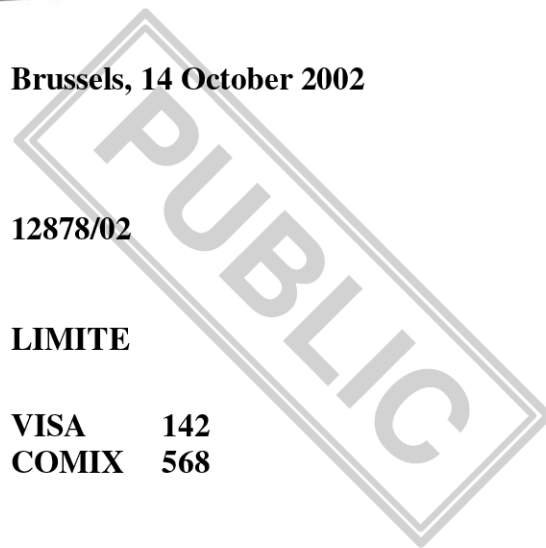
**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 14 October 2002

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LIMITE

**VISA 142
COMIX 568**



NOTE

from: Presidency

to: Visa Working Party/Mixed Committee (EU/Iceland and Norway)

Subject : Draft conclusions on intensified frequency of meetings within the consular cooperation for the purpose of exchange of information

Remembering the events of 11 September 2001 that created a need to intensify controls in connection with the movement of persons across the external borders, both in the short term and the longer term,

Recalling the Council meeting (Justice and Home Affairs) on 20 September 2001, where the Council requested the Member States to apply procedures for the issue of visas with maximum rigour and to this end step up local consular cooperation,

Recalling the European Council meeting in Laeken on 14 and 15 December 2001, where the Member States agreed that better management of the Union's external border controls would help in the fight against terrorism, illegal immigration networks and the traffic in human beings, and where the European Council therefore asked the Council and the Member States to take steps to set up a common visa identification system,

Considering the European Council meeting in Seville on 21 and 22 June 2002, where the Heads of State and Government recalled that top priority should be attached to the introduction, as soon as possible, of a common identification system for visa data, in the light of a feasibility study to be submitted in March 2003 and on the basis of guidelines from the Council,

Noting that guidelines for the introduction of a common visa identification system were adopted at the Council meeting on 13 June 2002, and that the result of the Commission feasibility study on the basis of the guidelines is expected to be ready in March 2003 after which the comprehensive work of creating the actual database will start,

Recalling that the common consular instructions lay down the framework for the consular cooperation, among other things in view of the exchange of information on applicants refused visa because they have used stolen, lost or forged documents, because they have not observed the time-limit for departure stated on previous visas, because of risk to security, and particularly in case of suspicion of attempted illegal immigration into the area of the Schengen states,

Recalling that for this purpose the missions have to hold meetings at a level that they deem suitable and at a frequency adapted to events,

Acknowledging that the exchange of information as part of the consular cooperation is an invaluable means of seeking at an early stage to identify persons related to terrorist threats, terrorists and terrorist groups,

Considering that at present there is a need for immediate action in order to increase the cooperation between Member States on the issue of visas in relation to internal security and the fight against terrorism, and taking into account that the common visa database will not be working for a few years,

The Council has adopted the following conclusions:

- The Council emphasises the importance of information exchanges in connection with visa applications, which could contribute to enhancing the fight against terrorism.
- The cooperation and exchange of information in the consular cooperation should therefore be intensified and include the exchange of information collected in connection with the processing of visa applications and deemed to be relevant in the fight against terrorism.
- The exchange of information shall not include information obtained from the national security services.
- The information shall be exchanged within the framework of national data protection rules and relevant international legal instruments.
- The Council invites the diplomatic missions of the Member States in third countries where networks involved in or associated with international terrorism are assumed to exist to exchange information obtained in connection with visa applications regularly and at least once a month.