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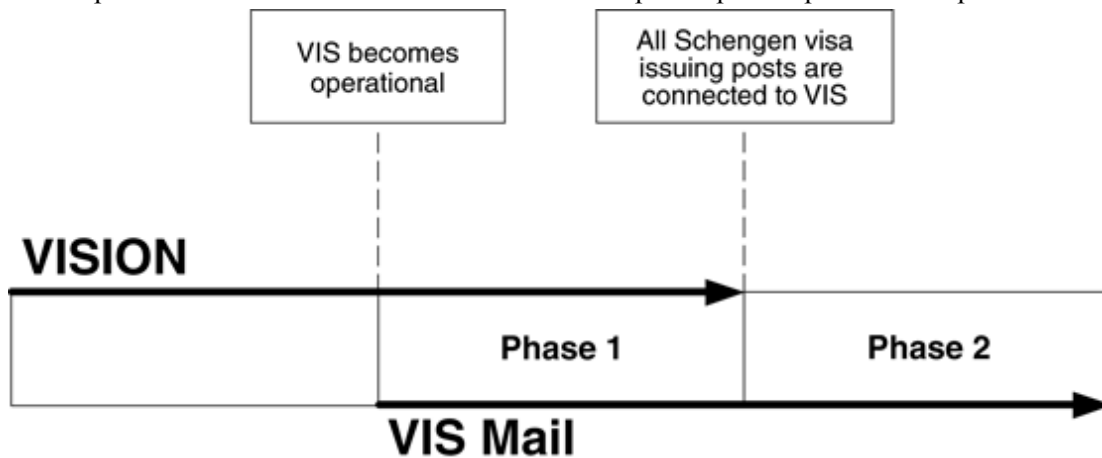
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1. Introduction

The VIS Mail Communication mechanism shall be based on Article 16 of Regulation (EC) No 767/2008, allowing transmission of information between Member States via the infrastructure of the Visa Information System (VIS).

The personal data transmitted within this mechanism pursuant to Article 16 of the VIS Regulation shall be used solely for the consultation of central visa authorities and consular cooperation.

The respective evolution of VIS Mail and VISION implies a phased process as depicted below:



Before VIS becomes operational, VISION shall be the unique communication network for consultations on visas⁽¹⁾.

In Phase 1, from the start of operations of VIS, the VIS Mail mechanism may be used for transmission of following types of information:

- messages related to consular cooperation,
- requests for supporting documents,
- messages on inaccurate data,
- Member State nationality acquired by an applicant.

The provisions of the VIS Regulation concerning the use of VIS Mail for the transmission of information relating to consular cooperation and requests for supporting documents (Article 16(3)), for the amendment of data (Article 24(2)) and for advance data deletion (Article 25(2)) are applicable in Phase 1. The VIS Mail mechanism, including the central mail relay and the national mail servers, needs to be in place in case at least one Member State intends to use the mechanism in Phase 1 to ensure that this Member State is able to transmit such messages⁽²⁾. During Phase 1 of the VIS Mail operation, VISION shall be used in parallel.

In Phase 2, when all the Schengen visa issuing posts are connected to VIS, the VIS Mail mechanism shall replace the Schengen Consultation Network from the date determined in accordance with Article 46 of the VIS Regulation. As from this date all types of messages shall be exchanged via the VIS infrastructure by means of the VIS Mail mechanism.

2. SMTP Mail Exchange Infrastructure

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The SMTP mail exchange shall use the VIS infrastructure, which includes national interfaces and the sTESTA network, and shall be based on national mail servers exchanging messages via a central mail relay infrastructure.

The central SMTP mail relay infrastructure shall be developed and installed in the VIS Central Unit and Back-up Central Unit sites. The management and monitoring of the mail relay including logging shall be provided by the Management Authority.

The national SMTP mail server infrastructure shall be prepared by the Member States. The national mail server infrastructure needs to be protected against unauthorised access to the messages.

3. Application Solution

The VIS Mail operations shall start in Phase 1 with business processes developed taking into account the technical solution of VISION to ensure a smooth switch-over between Phases 1 and 2 when VIS Mail will replace VISION.

Technical specifications describing the functionalities of the VIS Mail mechanism shall be without prejudice to the legal aspects of consular cooperation and visa procedures.

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- (1) This network is used for consultations between Member States, including representation, and for the exchange of information that a visa with limited territorial validity (VLTV) has been issued.
- (2) The fact that the VIS Mail mechanism may be used concerns the optional use of the mechanism itself, not the availability of the tool, which is then obligatory.

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