



## **EMN Ad-Hoc Query on Cooperation regarding Document Verification Officers**

Requested by Elisa VAN DER VALK on 1st August 2017

### **Visas**

Responses from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovak Republic, Sweden, United Kingdom, Norway (20 in total)

#### *Disclaimer:*

*The following responses have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided, to the best of their knowledge, information that is up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN NCPs' Member State.*

## **Background information:**

The Consular Cooperation Mechanism (CCM) is a Belgian led EU project that is funded as a specific action under the Internal Security Fund. The main objective of the project is to set up common actions to combat the use of fraudulent/false documents supporting a short term visa demand. The project partners have commonly agreed upon actions in third countries with a high risk of fraudulent Schengen-visa applications.

These actions are:

1. Deployment of joint document verification officers (DVOs) in the countries where there is a high risk of fraud/falsification of documents, to investigate the authenticity and reliability of information submitted in the ambit of Schengen-visa applications. These DVOs can be locally recruited agents or national agents sent abroad.
2. Trainings of consular staff in assessing supporting documents emitted by third countries (knowledge of basic security features, detection of fraud, ...) and analysing trends in Schengen-visa abuse and where relevant, training for third countries' authorities to reinforce the reliability of Schengen-visa source documents.

The purpose of this EMN ad-hoc query is to map the existing local cooperation mechanisms between DVOs with the aim of proposing financing in the framework of the Internal Security Fund under the Consular Cooperation Mechanism project (when eligible). Please find attached an information leaflet on the Consular Cooperation Mechanism project.

## **Questions**

1. Does your country work with Document Verification Officers (DVOs) in third countries in order to detect the usage of fraudulent documents in the framework of a visa application? YES/NO
2. If you answered YES to question 1: a) In what countries/cities is the DVO operational? b) Does the DVO strictly operate for your own national institutions or is his/her deployment the result of a partnership with other countries? c) What is the profile of the DVO? (e.g. employee of the Ministry of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Border Police, locally recruited, ...?) d) Could you briefly describe the chosen work method of the DVO (maximum 5 lines)? e) Does the DVO also organise trainings for the consular staff of the Member State(s) or for the authorities of the country where he operates? f) Has your country evaluated the work of the DVO and what were the results?
3. If you answered YES to question 1: a) Would your country be interested in continuing working with a DVO? b) Would your country be interested in exploring the possibilities to get funding for the existing local cooperation mechanism between DVOs –through the CCM-Project? This would imply that country partners in the CCM-Project would be given the opportunity to use the services of this DVO as well.
4. If you answered NO to question 1: a) Is there a specific reason why your country does not work with DVOs? b) In case your country has been working with a DVO in the past, could you please outline the main reasons why this deployment ended? c) What was the profile of the DVO

- (e.g. employee of the Ministry of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Border Police,...?) d) Could you briefly describe the chosen work method of the DVO (maximum 5 lines)? e) Has your country evaluated the work of the DVO you have worked with, and what were the results?
5. If you answered NO to question 1: a) Would your country be interested in working with a DVO? b) Would your country be interested in working with a common/shared DVO? h) Where does your country see a need for such a DVO (in what country/city)?

## Responses

	Country	Wider Dissemination	Response
 	Austria	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> The Federal Ministry of the Interior is currently sending document advisors to a total of 8 embassies or consulates of the Republic of Austria in 7 different countries. Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior.</p> <p><b>2.</b> a) At the moment, the Austrian document advisors are assigned to the following Austrian embassies or consulates general: • Austrian Embassy Bangkok/Thailand; • Austrian Embassy New Delhi/India; • Austrian Embassy Amman/Jordan; • Austrian Embassy Moscow/Russia; • Austrian Embassy Athens/Greece; • Austrian Embassy Ankara/Turkey; • Consulate General of Austria Istanbul/Turkey; • Austrian Embassy Beirut/Lebanon; • Opening of a new location in Teheran/Iran by mid-September. b) The Austrian document advisors provide their official duties for authorities of the Republic of Austria. Depending on the location and the local network, the consulate department of other countries is also supported in individual cases. c) The sent Austrian document advisors are without exception specially trained police officers of the Federal Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Austria. The document advisors operate in the police administrations of the provinces in various offices. During their foreign assignment they are assigned to the Federal Ministry of the Interior. d) The Austrian document advisors have special knowledge concerning safety features in the paper, printing techniques, plastic cards including laser engraving, typographic safeguards, biometrics in passports, machine readable zone, etc. The Austrian document advisors conduct document verifications at the Austrian Embassies/Austrian Consulates General during visa applications and also provide support at the airports for various airlines at check-in and, if necessary, declare discharge recommendations. Their activities cover consultation and support of airline staff,</p>

			<p>consultation of the Austrian representation authorities regarding passport and visa issues as well as negative recommendations for the issuance of visas. e) The activities of the Austrian document advisors also includes the organization and holding of information events for employees of the Austrian and other representation authorities, as well as for employees of various airlines on findings concerning the misuse of documents and the illegal entry, especially in the detection of counterfeit and falsified documents as well as the training of airline staff and border control officers. f) The activities of the Austrian document advisors are subject to an ongoing evaluation and, if necessary, adaptation regarding the defined areas of responsibility as well as mission destinations. So far, the results of these evaluations have been very satisfactory and the Federal Ministry of the Interior aims to expand the number of deployments of Austrian document advisors and to intensify the assumed activities. The work of the document advisors in the sending countries is without exception positively appreciated. The Austrian Court of Audit has also emphasized the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the document advisors in its review activities. Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior.</p> <p><b>3.</b> a) The Federal Ministry of the Interior is generally interested in an expansion of the activities of the Austrian document advisors or in an expansion of the cooperation with document advisors from other countries. b) The Federal Ministry of the Interior would like to intensify the cooperation and the exchange of experiences between Austrian document advisors and document advisors from other countries and welcomes any initiative to implement these efforts taking into account economic considerations and proportionality. Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior.</p> <p><b>4.</b> N/A.</p> <p><b>5.</b> N/A.</p>
	Belgium	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> Yes.</p> <p><b>2.</b> a) Ivory Coast (Abidjan); Cameroon (Yaoundé); Senegal (Dakar); Nigeria (Abuja); Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa and Lubumbashi); Morocco (Casablanca). b) The DVO only operates for Belgium except for the DVO in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa) who is deployed in the framework of the current CCM-project. (Note: DVOs work for the Schengen partners in those countries where Belgium is representing other countries.). c) The DVO is locally recruited. d) Work</p>

			<p>method of the DVO: - Collect documents presented in support of an application for a visa type C (short stay). - Check the authenticity of the documents by comparing them with an existing database. - Contact the local authorities. - Travel to cities, villages, different regions in the country to verify documents. - Report on the presented documents: statistics and elaboration on the form and the substance. e) This might happen but it is not part of the core business of the DVO. f) In general, the evaluation is positive - especially where documentary fraud is widespread.</p> <p><b>3.</b> a) Yes. b) Yes, this is already the case in the DRC (Kinshasa).</p> <p><b>4.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>5.</b> N/A</p>
	Croatia	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> No.</p> <p><b>2.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>3.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>4.</b> The Republic of Croatia may at some point need to cooperate with the counterfeiting officers and we will gladly use a help from the common officer if there is still a possibility.</p> <p><b>5.</b> For now, there is no need for referral of document / visa counterfeiting officers.</p>
	Cyprus	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> No</p> <p><b>2.</b> n/a</p> <p><b>3.</b> n/a</p> <p><b>4.</b> a) No b), c), d), e) N/A</p>

			<p><b>5.</b> a) Yes b) yes C) In cities where problems arise and where there is a Cyprus' diplomatic mission, such as Delhi, Beijing, Teheran, Beirut, Cairo and Amman.</p>
	Czech Republic	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> YES, CZ deploys DVOs to selected consulates.</p> <p><b>2.</b> a) In what countries/cities is the DVO operational? Based on a risk analysis the DVO are currently deployed to Ukraine (Lviv), Ghana – (Accra) in preparation, Belgrade (Serbia), Nigeria (Abuja); b) Does the DVO strictly operate for your own national institutions or is his/her deployment the result of a partnership with other countries? The DVOs operate for our own consulates. c) What is the profile of the DVO? (e.g. employee of the Ministry of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Border Police, locally recruited, ...?) DVOs are chosen from the Police specialized document fraud units (central or regional); the good knowledge of the migration problematic, visa procedures and foreign language are needed. d) Could you briefly describe the chosen work method of the DVO (maximum 5 lines)? The DVOs check the validity and authenticity of the documents presented for the visa or long-term stay applications, especially – travel documents, residence permit documents, invitations and other supporting documents (authentic instruments); the DVOs may also interview the applicant; the DVOs usually also follow the local issues that could potentially have negative migration influence; the DVO also participate in potential returns of the TCNs. e) Does the DVO also organise trainings for the consular staff of the Member State(s) or for the authorities of the country where he operates? No, they do not. f) Has your country evaluated the work of the DVO and what were the results? Yes, regular evaluation reports are drawn up by the heads of the consular section and sent to the relevant authorities for the further evaluation.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Yes, the Ministry of Interior is generally interested in exploring the possibilities regarding this issue, especially because we are not able to cover with our capacities all the problematic areas.</p> <p><b>4.</b> -</p> <p><b>5.</b> -</p>

	Estonia	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> NO.</p> <p><b>2.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>3.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>4.</b> a) The number of visa applications in most of Estonian visa-issuing representations is too small thus there is no need to recruit an additional DVO devoted only to Estonian visa applications. b) N/A c) N/A d) N/A e) N/A</p> <p><b>5.</b> Estonia has expressed its willingness to recruit a DVO in the framework of CCM, but due to administrative difficulties it has been postponed at this time.</p>
	Finland	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> Yes</p> <p><b>2.</b> a) in a high risk irregular immigration or in very a large number of visa applications countries b) national border guard experts are posted as ILO's in the Embassies c) sending authority will cover all costs, in some locations co-funded with EU-ISF d) the main task these officials is ILO, DVO is only one of duties e) in some locations yes, Finnish Embassies have also received training of the other Member States in some locations f) no information available</p> <p><b>3.</b> a) yes b) very limited possibilities, case by case decision</p> <p><b>4.</b> N/a</p> <p><b>5.</b> N/a</p>
	France	No	
	Germany	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> Yes, the German Federal Police conducts a pool of highly skilled and experienced police officers in the field of foreigners, asylum and Schengen law as well as ICAO regulations. These so called</p>

document and visa advisors are also experts in detecting the usage of fraudulent documents.

**2.** a)The document and visa advisors of the German Federal Police (Dokumenten- und Visumberater / DVB) are currently deployed in: Abu Dhabi, Accra, Addis Abeba, Algiers, Amman, Ankara, Bangkok, Beirut, Chennai, Colombo, Delhi, Doha, Dubai, Erbil, Hanoi, Islamabad, Istanbul, Cairo, Canton, Kiev, Kuala Lumpur, Lagos, Minsk, Moscow, Mumbai, Peking, Pretoria, Pristina, Seoul, Shanghai, St. Petersburg and Teheran. In addition to that the locations Panama City, Miami and New York are in progress to hold a DVB by the end of this year. b)The deployment of a DVB is - in the first instance - geared to national risk assessment regarding illegal migration. For that the DVB is mainly operating for Germany's institutions. But by being a part of an international LO's, ILO's and ALO's network the DVB is collaborating with other Schengen or local institutions as well. c)As mentioned before DVB are police officers of the German Federal Police, the former German Border Police. During a deployment they can be delegated up to four years in line with a long-term posting at a German diplomatic representation. d)• Cross-border cooperation • Prevention/fight against smuggling of migrants, trafficking in human beings, other cross border crimes • Exchange of information • Share of experiences & best practice • Advising, consultancy, mentoring, training e)DVB are organising trainings for the consular staff of the Member States, for the airline staffs and for local authorities. f)Within the time frame January 2017 to June 2017 DVB worldwide refused 7.002 carriages at the airports, turned down 7.920 visas at the visa offices and organised 336 trainings for 5.617 individual in total.

**3.** The worldwide network of document and visa advisers of the German Federal Police is a most valuable tool in combating illegal migration. Their deployment is subject to a permanent process of evaluation. Following this assessment all the relevant locations are presently covered by our document and visa advisers. Due to possible changes in migration routes it is absolutely imaginable that some of the project locations will come into consideration in the future.

**4.** n/a

**5.** n/a

	Ireland	No	
	Italy	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No</li> <li>2. N/A</li> <li>3. N/A</li> <li>4. Italy has not sent DVO abroad in recent times due to some unpopular experiences in the past (more than ten years ago), and due to the difficulties in identifying specific professional skills for the role.</li> <li>5. In view of the increased interest in the issue of falsified documents presented in support of visa applications, we have joined a joint program (partners: Holland, Portugal) for the joint submission of DVO abroad. We hope to experience and acquire the capabilities that will enable us to send DVOs abroad in the future. Under the joint project, an Italian police officer was selected to travel to Bangladesh in the coming months.</li> </ol>
	Latvia	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes.</li> <li>2. a) Latvia has few diplomatic and consular representations in third countries that issue visas. The DVOs are only in Georgia (Tbilisi) and Belarus (Minsk). b) The DVOs only operate for Latvia. c) The DVOs are employees of the State Border Guard. d) Work method of the DVO: - Consult the consular staff. - Check the authenticity of the documents by comparing them with an existing database. - Contact the local authorities to verify documents. e) This is possible, but it is not the main duty of the DVOs. The main duty of DVOs is to verify authenticity of documents when doubts exist. f) Results are positive.</li> <li>3. a) Yes. b) Yes. We are interested to get the opportunity to cooperate with the DVOs in third countries where documentary fraud is widespread, e.g., in China (Beijing), India (New Delhi) These are the countries of interest for Latvia as Latvia has embassies there.</li> </ol>

			<p><b>4.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>5.</b> N/A</p>
	Lithuania	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> No</p> <p><b>2.</b> N/a</p> <p><b>3.</b> N/a</p> <p><b>4.</b> a) No b) n/a c) n/a d) n/a e) n/a</p> <p><b>5.</b> a) YES, Lithuania sees a potential and benefit working with a DVO's shared with other MS's. However, this issue should be deeper discussed with other Lithuanian institutions. b) Yes c) Egypt (Cairo), Armenia (Yerevan), India (Delhi), China (Beijing), Azerbaijan (Baku), Turkey (Ankara), South Africa (Pretoria)</p>
	Luxembourg	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> NO. Luxembourg has few diplomatic representations abroad that issue short-term visas : UAE (Abou Dhabi), USA (Washington D.C., New York, San Francisco), Japan, Russia (Moscow), Thailand, Turkey, India (New Delhi), China (Shanghai, Beijing). Normally visa applications are handled by other Member States of the Schengen Area: 1) Austria: Kazakhstan (Astana)</p> <p>2) Belgium: Afghanistan; Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil (Sao Paulo), Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada (Montreal), Chile, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Korea, Ivory Coast, Cuba, Egypt, USA (Atlanta, Los Angeles), Ethiopia, Iran, Israel (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco (Casa Blanca), Mexico, Nigeria, Uganda, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Tanzania, Tunisia, Ukraine, Vietnam 3) Netherlands: South Africa, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada (Vancouver), Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, UAE (Dubai), Eritrea, USA (Miami), Georgia, Ghana, Indonesia, Irak, Macedonia, Mali, Morocco (Rabat), Mozambique, New Zealand, Oman, Russia (Saint Petersburg), Sudan, Surinam, Trinidad y Tobago, Venezuela</p> <p>4) France: Albania, Andorra, Azerbaijan, Benin, Central African Republic, Comoros, Republic of</p>

			<p>Congo, Djibouti, Fiji, Gabon, Haiti, Laos, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mauritania, Niger, Uzbekistan, Saint Lucie, Seychelles, Tchad, Togo, Vanuatu, Zimbabwe 5) Germany: Armenia, Bahrein, Belarus, Botswana, Cambodia, Kirghizstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Namibia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan 6) Italy: Saint Marino 7) Spain: Bolivia, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Equatorial Guinea, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay 8) Portugal: Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe 9) Slovenia: Montenegro 10) Sweden: Bangladesh and Zambia 11) Hungary: Kazakhstan (Almaty), Moldavia 12) Switzerland: Kosovo, Sri Lanka 13) Norway: Malawi</p> <p>2. N/A.</p> <p>3. N/A.</p> <p>4. a) See answer to question 1. The most part of our missions are situated in countries where forgeries exist but to a lesser extent. b) N/A. c) N/A. d) N/A. e) N/A.</p> <p>5. a) It would be interesting to hear some views on where this is going b) It is not excluded c) China (Beijing/Shanghai), Russia (Moscow), India (New Delhi), UAE (Abu Dhabi)</p>
	Netherlands	Yes	<p>1. No, not as such. The Netherlands Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) however employs 13 Immigration Liaison Officers (ILO's) who are available for consular sections of Netherlands diplomatic representations abroad for advice on documents. Also other diplomatic representations may consult ILO's.</p> <p>2. ILO's are deployed in the locations mentioned (in Dutch) underneath and are responsible for the region mentioned. ILO's are deployed by the IND, an agency of the Ministry of Security and Justice, and are all document experts level II. Providing trainings to the partners in their network is core business, this also may include staff consular sections of like minded countries and authorities of host countries. Also the Royal Marechaussee may be available for training on travel documents to authorities. Evaluation of ILO(-locations) is a continuous process, with shifts in locations as a result. Moskou, Russische Federatie Belarus Kiev, Oekraïne Armenië, Georgië Istanbul, Turkije Azerbeidzjan, Iran Beijing, China Mongolië Zuid-Korea Guangzhou, China Hong Kong Bangkok, Thailand Singapore, India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Maleisië, Indonesië, Vietnam, Myanmar, Filipijnen</p>

			<p>Pretoria, Zuid-Afrika Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibië, Mozambique, Botswana Nairobi, Kenia Tanzania, Oeganda, Ethiopië, Eritrea, Soedan, Somalië, Rwanda, DR Congo, Burundi Accra, Ghana Togo, Guinee, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivoorkust Lagos, Nigeria Kameroen, Gambia Amman, Jordanië Libanon, Egypte, Irak (inclusief KRG), Cyprus, Syrië Dubai, Verenigde Arabische Emiraten Koeweit, Bahrein, Saoedi-Arabië, Jemen, Oman, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Qatar Panama Stad, Panama Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico, Dominicaanse Republiek, Jamaica</p> <p><b>3.</b> a-b) Do not apply</p> <p><b>4.</b> a) See 1 – we work with ILO's. b-e) Do not apply</p> <p><b>5.</b> For us there is possibly a link to the RSCO-project. The deployment of Regional Schengen Cooperation Officers (RSCO) is a Dutch led EU project that is also funded as a specific action under the Internal Security Fund. We think that perhaps the two projects can strengthen each other. This needs more investigation and reflection however before we can answer the above questions.</p>
	Poland	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> Yes. Until now, Polish diplomatic missions have benefited from the support / training by the liaison officers from other countries occasionally. It should be stressed that all Polish consuls are trained in document fraud detection. If the decision on establishing "common" liaison officers are made, Poland will be initially interested in such form of cooperation. There is an open question about the financial side of such project. At this stage, Poland can not indicate places where such officers would be most needed, except for the general rule that, this applies to countries with high levels of corruption and low level of security of documents.</p> <p><b>2.</b> See answer to question 1</p> <p><b>3.</b> See answer to question 1</p> <p><b>4.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>5.</b> N/A</p>

	Slovak Republic	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> No.</p> <p><b>2.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>3.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>4.</b> a) No. b) N/A c) N/A d) N/A e) N/A</p> <p><b>5.</b> a) Yes. b) Yes. c) In countries with the highest number of granted visa like e.g. China, India, Vietnam, Egypt.</p>
	Sweden	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> No</p> <p><b>2.</b> NA</p> <p><b>3.</b> NA</p> <p><b>4.</b> The Swedish Migration Agency can see a need of increasing ID-expertise in the visa application process. However, we need to look into this in cooperation with relevant ministries and the Swedish Police, before taking further steps.</p> <p><b>5.</b> See answer to previous question.</p>
	United Kingdom	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> Yes - the UK has officers working in a number of third countries focused on detection of fraudulent documents, both in its visa sections through specific teams and the wider work of its Immigration Liaison officers, part of Immigration enforcement International.</p> <p><b>2.</b> We are operational in locations attached, DVO officers vary in their background dependent on location. Training is provided to visa staff and in some locations we look to develop the capacity and capability of the host authority.</p>

			<p><b>3.</b> Yes. But would need to understand more about CCM project.</p> <p><b>4.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>5.</b> N/A</p>
	Norway	Yes	<p><b>1.</b> YES.</p> <p><b>2.</b> a) Currently, Norway has three ID and document advisers posted at the following locations: Kampala, Ankara, Amman. A fourth ID and document adviser will be posted in New Delhi from January 2018 on. b) The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs advisers operate for Norwegian national institutions. c) The four ID and document advisers are employees of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. d) The ID and document advisers have a regional responsibility so that all Norwegian Foreign Service Missions have a point of contact for ID related queries. They focus on the control of ID-documents and control of person, and use the most common methods established today (technical and tactical control of documents, tactical control of person in the first line) etc. The main mandate of our advisers is to serve as a second line for ID-control for the Foreign Service Missions. They also perform training of the Consulates and focus on implementing and harmonizing the established routines for ID control. e) Yes, they do. Training sessions are a substantial part of the job. f) No, not yet as they have only been operational just over two years.</p> <p><b>3.</b> a. The Norwegian Foreign Ministry would be interested in working with a DVO. b. We are at present not able to make a confirmed stand on this issue. However, Norway is generally very much interested in contributing towards good and harmonized practices between the Member States within the field of ID control. However, we have not had enough time to consider this particular request properly; do get back to us.</p> <p><b>4.</b> N/A</p> <p><b>5.</b> N/A</p>