International tasks of the Federal Office of Administration

Administrative implementation of EU programmes and instruments as well as compliance checks

European Citizens' Initiative

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) enables EU citizens to call on the European Commission to revise or complement EU legislation in a field of activity by collecting at least one million signatures from a minimum of seven EU Member States. The statements of support may be submitted on paper, electronically and via eID. The Federal Office of Administration (BVA) coordinates the verification of statements of support, certifies the number of valid statements of support gathered in Germany, and reports its results to the EU and to the initiative.

European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) is the most important tool of the EU to support labour market and employment policy in Europe. The ESF aims at improving employment opportunities through training and qualification measures with lasting effects and at reducing disadvantages on the labour market. The Federal Office of Administration (BVA) performs diverse tasks within the context of ESF at the ESF administration body (administrative implementation as well as development and supply of the IT application ZUWES), the ESF certification body (financial monitoring and monitoring of expenditure), and the ESF audit body (auditing tasks).

IT applications in the area of internal and external security

Visa procedures

The BVA visa division serves as a communication and service interface between German missions abroad and numerous agencies in Germany which have to be consulted depending on the circumstances (foreigners authorities, International Placement Services (ZAV) of the Federal Employment Agency, national security agencies). On average, the BVA receives a request from the missions abroad approximately every ten seconds – around the clock, seven days a week.

Schengen Information System

The Schengen Information System (SIS) is a common investigation and information system of the Schengen countries. It enables, in particular, national police and judicial authorities to exchange investigation data and access them together.

Since autumn 2019, the BVA, together with the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), has carried out an EU project relating to the Schengen Information System ('SIS 3.0'). The three EU regulations fundamentally reforming the Schengen Information System entered into force on 27 December 2018. In the future, SIS must in particular contain return decisions taken by foreigners authorities and by

the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. In addition, the BVA should provide foreigners authorities, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the Federal Foreign Office, the missions abroad and the Federal Agency for Foreign Affairs (BfAA) with direct access to the national SIS (N.SIS) at the Federal Criminal Police Office. The subset of N.SIS data so far kept by the BVA will be discontinued as soon as the extended SIS is available.

Furthermore, the BVA is implementing a platform (SIS-Kom) for communication between the national central office for Germany located at the Federal Criminal Police Office, known as SIRENE, and the authorities connected by the BVA.

Visa Information System

The European Visa Information System (VIS) has been operated since 2011. It serves the trans-European interchange of data on visas issued for short-term stays in the Schengen area. It helps prevent visa fraud and assists in the identification and return of illegal immigrants. In its capacity as the national VIS unit, the BVA plays a central role in the communication between the EU and the authorities concerned. The BVA is the technical interface with the European central system, providing all authorized authorities with central access to the VIS. The national unit supports various data maintenance tasks, monitors the operation of the systems and is the central contact point for authorities having technical and administrative questions.

The VIS Regulation has been amended to address new challenges in the fields of migration and security: it expands the use of the VIS for long-stay visas and for residence permits, and it ensures interoperability between the VIS and other relevant EU systems.

Smart Borders, Entry Exit System, ETIAS

The European Smart Borders initiative aims at enhancing security at the external Schengen borders as well as at automating procedures and ensuring the seamless interaction of systems within the context of border control.

Integral parts of Smart Borders are the planned European information systems, such as the Entry Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). Ongoing projects examine and evaluate the impact of EU interoperability on EES and ETIAS.

The BVA implements this initiative of the European Commission together with the Federal Police (BPOL), the Federal Office for Information Security (BSI), the Federal Criminal Police Office and the Federal Information Technology Centre (ITZBund).

By using agile project management methods and tools, the BVA implements, in addition to the technical and administrative access to the European systems, also the national integration, i.e. it connects authorities permitted to access the data.

Passenger name records

The Passenger Name Record Act (FlugDaG), fully in force since 25 May 2018, implements the EU Passenger Name Record (PNR) Directive for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and serious crime. This act obliges air carriers to transmit passenger data collected in the context of the operation of flights within Europe or to/from third countries to a Passenger Information Unit (PIU) established at the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA).

In the framework of the PNR project, the BVA processes these passenger data on behalf of and in accordance with instructions from the Passenger Information Unit located at the BKA. With its core competence in the technical implementation and interdisciplinary co-operation, the BVA also implements the BKA's administrative requirements in the PNR project and establishes close cooperation with other EU countries with regard to standards and the interchange of data.

Coordination and communication

Internal Market Information System

The Internal Market Information System (IMI) was developed by the European Commission in collaboration with the Member States with the objective to facilitate the information exchange between authorities and to support cross-border cooperation in European administration. Since October 2007, the BVA has assumed the role of the National IMI Coordinator (NIMIC) for Germany. The NIMIC is the contact person for the IMI team at the European Commission and the respective NIMIC of the other EU Member States. He or she is also the communication interface between the federal ministries and the administrative and technical coordinators of the federal states (*Länder*) and gives advice to IMI users within the context of the national implementation of policies, such as the recognition of professional qualifications, the recognition of public documents, etc. Currently, IMI supports 67 procedures in 17 areas of legislation. IMI has modernized cross-border cooperation in administration and ensures that the internal market functions in practice.

EU Your Europe portal

Your Europe is a multilingual public information portal. It provides access to practical and user-friendly information for both individuals and businesses wishing to extend their activities or to move to another EU country. This portal informs the target groups of EU-wide rules as well as of national provisions and procedures of the Member States. Since 2005, the BVA has been the national coordinator. It transmits the relevant information for Germany to the European Commission. The BVA continues to carry out its task as the coordination office for information on national specifics regarding provisions governing the single market also within the context of the implementation of Regulation 2018/1724 and is represented in the relevant European bodies as well as in implementing bodies at federal, state and municipal levels.

By adopting this regulation in 2018, the EU started to create a single European digital gateway (SDG). For this purpose, the European Commission and national administrations are currently developing a network of hundreds of high-quality European and national websites, procedures and services that will all be available via one central access point on the Your Europe portal.

Bringing administrative services close to the citizens and making them user-friendly is an objective of both the SDG and the German Online Access Act (OZG). In addition, it is planned to provide access to all services via one single portal. By the end of 2023, the Your Europe portal will become the 'one-stop shop' for the administrative services of all EU Member States. Germany will provide a central access to the administrative services via the portal network.

Participation in European projects

Since 2007, the BVA has regularly taken part in (large-scale) IT projects of the EU – on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior or at its own initiative. Such projects include SPOCS (Simple Procedures Online for Cross-Border Services) and its successor e-SENS (Electronic Simple European Networked Services), both initiated by the European Commission. In the European TOOP (The ‚Once-Only‘ Principle) project, the BVA was responsible for project-related communication and public relations until March 2021 together with a Polish organization. The project was funded under the EU Horizon 2020 programme.

The BVA intends to participate also in European projects under the Digital Europe programme or the new EU Horizon Europe funding programme.

Assistance and consultancy for other European countries

EU Twinning project

This instrument supports the approximation of the legislation of future Member States to that of the European Union and assists them in the preparation of their EU membership. Since 2002, the Twinning concept has been used by the EU in countries without prospects of accession and has thus evolved into an institution-building instrument. Since 2005, the BVA has been responsible for implementing Twinning projects in the field of general administration (administrative organization and modernization, personnel management, data protection, civic participation, and public service issues within the context of corruption prevention) on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

In EU Twinning projects on the key issue 'corruption prevention', for example, the BVA has provided advice to the competent authorities in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland and Romania.

TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument)

This demand-driven instrument of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) supports EU candidate and neighbouring countries with regard to the approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation. The BVA provides technical support and expert advice for partner authorities and interest groups of these countries. It receives delegations, that benefit from EU funds for such study trips, and sends experts on consulting missions to the partner countries.

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