	<p> <i>IDO * International Dance Organization</i>  <i>Vice-President Michael Wendt</i>  <i>Address: Juergensallee 26, 22609 Hamburg, Germany</i>  <i>Phone: +49-40-82 55 62, Fax +49-40-82 61 85</i>  <i>E-Mail: <a href="mailto:competition.committee@ido-dance.com">competition.committee@ido-dance.com</a></i> </p> <p> <i>Executive secretary Kirsten Dan Jensen</i>  <i>Office address: Utsigten 3, Slotsbjergby, 4200 Slagelse, Denmark</i>  <i>Tel: +45 58 58 59 20, Fax: +45 58 58 56 77</i>  <i>E-Mail: <a href="mailto:kdj-dans@post5.tele.dk">kdj-dans@post5.tele.dk</a></i> </p>
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## **Report of my visit in the German Foreign Office in Berlin Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005.**

About seven years ago the NEW German foreign secretary changed the treatment of getting a German VISA, called "Vollmer-Erlass". This allowed much easier access to a Visa for Germany. But it created a lot of problems and opened up a long and emotional open discussion within Germany and the Schengen states.

Because of this action, in many countries, professional refugee companies, prostitute smuggling businesses, and other illegal professionals, brought a lot of illegal people into Germany and the Schengen countries.

The most heavily involved was the German Embassy in Kiev and the Ukraine. A year later it was stopped and changed, but the discussion and the very strict VISA granting policy in all German embassies, all over the world, is still going on.

I personally am very touched and concerned about this problem, because it will make our traditional goals and the IDO philosophy more difficult to bring young people together through dance and competitions, to improve their skills, to meet dancers from all over the world and make many new friends. This saddens me very much.

For two years now I have contacted the Foreign Ministry, in Berlin, for help and assistance so the German embassies in all VISA-problematic countries will be familiar with IDO and our wonderful competitions and championships in Germany.

Because of the above mentioned discussion, this problem has grown and the European presidency has accused Germany of not behaving in a careful enough manner. Recently, I traveled to Berlin and met with a very competent and helpful lady, from the German Foreign Office, who is involved in our problems.


Personally she fully understands these problems. But on the other hand she has explained to me, in detail, how difficult it is for the officers in the Embassy abroad, to distinguish between the people who need a visa for the purpose written in the invitation or for other, more or less, illegal business.

Basically it is the officer in the German Embassy, who decides who will or will not be granted a VISA.

*There is no exception: the embassy decides according of their personal investigation.*

Basically there are two possibilities to be granted a visa:

1. The person or company, who issues the invitation, has to assure that they will cover all expenses for travel, accommodation, food, daily expenses, and insurance, for all the people invited. Normally the signature has to be certified by a solicitor. We are dealing with at least 800 people from "visa-countries", per competition. This is not at all possible.

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2. The officer, from the German embassy, speaks with the person invited, person to person. During this interview they try to find out, if this visa granting person, needs the visa for the invited purpose, which in our case, is to participate at IDO events and really want to dance, and afterwards return to their home country, or if they just pretend to do so. *This is the important issue!*

Our friends from the Ukraine, for example, have danced a Hip Hop performance in the German embassy last year. This convinced the officers in the embassy that these Ukrainians really want to dance in Germany. They know each other by now. So this year only the dancers, who are traveling to Germany, **for the first time**, need to appear in person at the embassy.

Of course there is also the money aspect: all people requesting VISA for Germany must prove their ability to finance their stay in Germany **and their return trip**.  
*This is also very important!*

I need not mention that everybody has to have valid health and accident insurance for the time in Germany. "Valid" means "valid in Germany".

*I want to make it very clear indeed, that all dancers who are requesting for visa to Germany to compete at IDO events, MUST show a very strong desire to return to their country after the end of the dance event.*

In this case, there would be a good chance to get a VISA.

During past years, the IDO championships became rather well known at many German Embassies; resulting in a lot of good contacts, through many phone conversations, letters and faxes during the last few years.

#### **Result:**

If you go to the embassy in the future, show them some proof that you really intend to go back to your country after the event and that you have enough money to afford it.


#### **The List!**

To come into Germany, the group leader will have a list of the entire group that they are traveling with. Please present this list, on your return trip, to the officers at the "German border" and let it be stamped. This will prove that all people who have entered Germany have left after the event.

Please fax this list to me from your home +49-40-826185.

*This might help you for the VISA for next year.*

I personally am very sorry to have to write such a report. I personally would like all our wonderful dancers to come to our beautiful country and compete and be happy.

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But today's world and severe terror situation, as well as illegal actions from many national and international gangs, are touching and harming our wonderful IDO world of dance.

If all officers of the IDO member and contact countries, that need a VISA, will follow these suggestions and hints, and have the list departure list, with a copy of proof to me, then there will be a good chance for many German VISA'S in the future.

To waive any bad feelings regarding German authorities, similar and comparable procedures will be enacted by **all** European countries and the USA and Canada.

*Example*

*Austria also has not given our dance friends from Moldova the VISA for the European HipHop in Graz in June 2005. I only mention this to avoid any "black card" for Germany and IDO competitions in Germany. This is common treatment of today's international VISA granting policy – if we like it or not.*

*And I personally do not like it at all, as I mentioned before.*

I hope my suggestions and information will be of some help to you in obtaining your German VISA.



*Berlin / Hamburg September 14 and 15, 2005*

*Michael Wendt*

*IDO vice president and chairman competition committee*