

VISA
INFORMATION
SYSTEM (VIS)



VIS PASSPORT





EUROPEAN UNION

<http://ec.europa.eu/vis>



The implementation of the Visa Information System (VIS) is a key element of the common visa policy, which together with other policies allows the European Union to establish an area of freedom, security and justice.

Uniform Schengen visas for stays up to 3 months (“short stays”) are issued on the basis of the rules set out in the Visa Code and are, in general, valid for travel to and within the Schengen Area. So far harmonisation and mutual recognition of visas have not been supported by technological tools. The VIS will be such a tool and biometrics will be the key to its success and efficiency.

The main objectives of the VIS are to facilitate visa application procedures and checks at external borders and to enhance security. The VIS will more easily allow determining a visa applicant's reliability and the lawful use of previous visas, therefore facilitating visa issuance for bona fide travellers.

Progressively from 2011, persons applying for a short-stay visa at a consulate of a Schengen State and at the Schengen border crossing points will be required to provide a photograph and their fingerprints, with some exceptions such as for children under 12 years old.





The verification of collected biometric identifiers of a visa applicant will allow to know if a visa has been previously issued or applied for, including under a different identity, thereby helping combat visa shopping and identity fraud. At the external borders of the Schengen Area and within the territory of the Schengen States, national authorities will use biometric data of visa holders to verify their identity and the authenticity of their visa. Besides, biometric searches will also allow national asylum authorities to determine the country responsible for asylum claims, therefore facilitating their rapid examination.



Though beneficial, the collection of biometric data at consulates and borders will take additional time and the process should therefore be made as efficient as possible. This may involve new forms of cooperation either between Schengen States, such as Common Application Centres, or with third parties, in the form of outsourcing. As established by some Member States' pilot programmes and experience, efficient technological tools for enrolling and verifying biometrics are available and have produced excellent results. At the external borders of the Schengen Area technology will help biometric verifications in controlled environments like airports, but also at land and sea borders.



The Commission and its contractors have carried out extensive work in order to ensure that the VIS is fully operational, but there are also many responsibilities for each of the Member States. The amendments to the Schengen Borders Code and the Visa Code have been adopted, technical decisions necessary for the implementation of the VIS have been adopted by the Commission, national systems have been developed, extensive testing has been carried out, consulates in the first regions (North Africa, the Near East, and the Gulf Region) and borders have been prepared and staff has been trained. Preparations are also ongoing in the other regions where the VIS will be progressively rolled out.



The implementation of the VIS project is a perfect example of a cooperative venture at EU level between the Commission and the Member States and tools have been developed to ensure such collaboration.



The project consisting in providing Schengen States with a modern, efficient and secure border check system will represent a major step forward to enhance legitimate mobility and increase security of third country nationals travelling to the EU.





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