A STRONGER, MORE EFFICIENT AND SECURE EU VISA POLICY
An upgraded Visa Information System

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The EU's visa policy makes it easier to travel to the European Union for tourism or business. At the same time, EU visa policy mitigates risks in terms of security or non-respect of migration rules. In an area without internal borders, strong and efficient checks on persons entering the EU are needed to detect anyone who may pose a security risk. To ensure that such persons do not pass the EU's borders unnoticed, police officers and border guards need to have the right information at the right time in order to do their job of protecting EU citizens.

To ensure that sufficient security information is available about persons travelling to the EU with a visa, the European Parliament and the Council have decided to upgrade the Visa Information System – the EU database that contains information on all persons applying for Schengen visas (for short stays up to 90 days). The upgraded system will be fully interoperable with other EU information systems. The new regulation will also modernise and upgrade the system in light of technological developments and add long-stay visas and residence permits to the system. This upgrade will improve security checks on applicants for visas and residence permits and ensure that the EU is better equipped to respond to current and future security challenges.

What is the Visa Information System?

The Visa Information System (VIS) today contains information on non–EU nationals applying for short-stay Schengen visas. It connects border guards at the EU's external borders with Member States' consulates around the world. The system is one of the most advanced of its kind, containing almost 76 million visa applications and over 66 million fingerprint sets as of December 2020. In 2019, EU Member States processed around 17 million applications for short-stay Schengen visas.
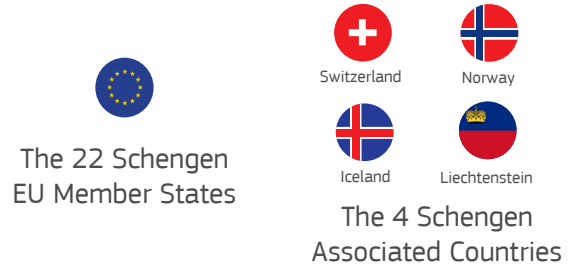
The VIS allows:

✓ Visa issuing authorities to share and rapidly check information on visa applicants.

✓ Border guards to conduct security checks and verify a traveller's identity.

What data does the VIS contain?

- Fingerprints
- Facial images
- Information on the visa application form
- Decisions on the visa application

Which countries participate in the VIS?

The 22 Schengen
EU Member States

Switzerland   Norway

Iceland   Liechtenstein

The 4 Schengen
Associated Countries

What are the agreed upgrades?

Enhanced interoperability with and automated queries of other EU information systems to enhance security

Closing information gaps and improving information exchange between Member States

Including more information in the VIS, such as long-stay visas and residence permits

Enabling checks by carriers prior to boarding to check the validity of the visa or residence permit

Who will be able to access data in the VIS?

- Visa authorities when examining visa applications and migration authorities when examining residence permit applications
- Border guards, to check the identity of the visa or residence permit holder and the validity of the document
- Migration authorities, to check the validity of a visa or residence permit and the identity of the document holder
- Asylum authorities, to determine the country responsible for examining an asylum application
- Law enforcement authorities and Europol, to prevent, detect and investigate terrorist and serious criminal offences

How will this improve security?

Swifter and more effective background checks

Visa officers, border guards and police officers will be able to do a single search in all EU information systems. This will significantly improve the detection of risks in terms of security or non-respect of migration rules, as appropriate, as well as speed up the application process and ensure quick border crossings.

Enhanced migration and security checks on visa applicants

Each Visa application goes through a mandatory check in the **European Search Portal**

Visa Information System (VIS)

Schengen Information System (SIS)

Eurodac

Entry Exit System (EES)

European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)

European Criminal Records Information System — Third Country Nationals (ECRIS-TCN)

Interpol systems

Europol data

Enhance information exchange on applicants for long-stay visas and residence permits

Currently no information is held at EU level on long-stay visas and residence permits. The upgraded VIS will include such information and allow for security checks on applicants. This will also allow border guards to quickly determine whether a long-stay visa or residence permit is valid or to identify the holder – closing an important security gap.

Data protection by design

The proposed upgrade of the VIS fully incorporates the data protection by design approach. Strict conditions will apply to the access of authorities to VIS data, in particular as regards biometric data of children. The upgrades ensure the necessary safeguards and mechanisms to effectively protect the privacy and fundamental rights of travellers, particularly when it comes to their private life and personal data. The necessary oversight by data protection authorities is guaranteed.