

VISA INFORMATION SYSTEM ROLL-OUT

SEPTEMBER 14TH 2015

BACKGROUND

The Visa Information System will be implemented, region by region, until all Schengen States' consulates worldwide are connected. The global roll-out is scheduled to be finalized by end November 2015.

The start of operations means that consulates will start collecting fingerprints and digital photos from visa applicants and that the applicants' data will be stored in the VIS. The data can be consulted by all visa-issuing authorities of the Schengen States, and is counter-checked by border authorities at the entry of the visa holder into the Schengen area.

The VIS has already been rolled-out in North Africa, Near East, in the Gulf region, in West and Central Africa, in East and Southern Africa, in South America, in Central and South-East Asia as well as the occupied Palestinian territory, in Central and North America, the Caribbean and Australasia, and in Turkey, the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – FAQ

- **I received a multi entry visa before September 14th, do I have to apply for a new visa to give my fingerprints and take a picture?**

No, all visas issued before the implementation of VIS, will still be valid for travel until the expiry date.

- **Do I have to meet in person to apply for a visa after the VIS roll-out?**

Yes, everyone who is applying for a visa has to meet in person to give their biometric data (fingerprints and digital photo).

- **Where can I meet in person to apply and provide my biometric data?**

You can apply either at the visa centers operated by VFS (external service provider) or at the Norwegian Foreign Service Mission closest to where you live. Please note that the Foreign Service Missions only accept applications by pre-scheduled appointments.

- **Are there any exemptions from the obligation to provide fingerprints?**

There are four categories of applicants who do not need to provide fingerprints:

- Children under the age of 12
- Person for whom fingerprinting is physically impossible
- Heads of State or Government and their spouse when they are invited for an official purpose
- Sovereigns and senior members of a royal family when invited for an official purpose

This list is mandatory and exhaustive! No exemptions will be made.

- **Do I need to give my fingerprints every time I apply for a visa?**

No, your fingerprints will be saved for a limited amount of time. If your visa application is rejected, the fingerprints will be saved for five years after the rejection date. If you are issued a visa, the fingerprints will be saved for five years after the expiry of the visa you have been issued. If you are issued a new visa after this, the fingerprints will be saved five years after the expiration of the new visa. If you are a frequent traveler, this means that you most likely only will have to give your biometric data once (unless there is reasonable doubt about your identity).

You need however, to provide a new photograph. This can be scanned from a photograph on photo paper.

- **Who can access my biometric data?**

Schengen States' authorities responsible for the issuance of visas, border and immigration checks, and asylum procedures have a direct access to the data stored in the VIS. Law enforcement agencies and Europol may request access to the data under very strict legal conditions. The data will not be made available to third countries or international organizations.

- **Will the commercial company that runs the visa centers have access to my biometric data?**

No, the fingerprints will immediately be transferred to the VIS servers. It is to be deleted from the servers of the commercial company. No information regarding the applicant or the application is saved with the external service provider.

- **Which data will be saved in the Visa Information system apart from fingerprints and picture?**

On receipt of an application, the visa authorities of the competent Schengen State will create an application file in the VIS and will register the alphanumeric data contained in the Schengen visa application form.

If the applicant is travelling in a group the application files of the travelers will be linked in the VIS. If a previous application has been registered for the same applicant, both applications will also be linked in the VIS. When a **decision has been taken on the application** (issuance/ refusal of the visa) or subsequently (annulment, revocation, extension), **the information is registered in the VIS.**

- **Will there also be changes in the case handling, making it more difficult to be issued a visa?**

No, the introduction of VIS has no impact on whether or not a person is issued a visa according to the Visa regulations. The rules and regulations for deciding upon a visa application remain unchanged.

- **Will the Finnish (or other Schengen) foreign service missions also introduce VIS?**

Yes, all Schengen foreign service missions in Russia will implement the Visa Information System on September 14th 2015.

- **Can I know what information is stored about me in VIS?**

Yes, you have the right to obtain communication of the data recorded in the VIS related to you from the Schengen State which entered the data into the system. Any person may also request that inaccurate data related to him/her is to be corrected and the unlawfully recorded data to be deleted.

- **Who makes sure that nobody misuses the data stored about me?**

In each Schengen State, national supervisory authorities monitor independently the processing of the personal data registered in the VIS by the Schengen State in question.

The European Data Protection Supervisor monitors the data processing activities by the VIS Management authority.

- **What is the point of the Visa Information system?**

The Visa Information System (VIS) allows [Schengen States](#) to exchange visa data. VIS enables border guards to verify that a person presenting a visa is its rightful holder and to identify persons found on the Schengen territory with no or fraudulent documents. Using biometric data to confirm a visa holder's identity allows for faster, more accurate and more secure checks. The system also facilitates the visa issuance process, particularly for frequent travelers. VIS will help in fighting and preventing fraudulent behaviors, such as "visa shopping" (i.e. the practice of making further visa applications to other EU States when a first application has been rejected).

Biometric technology enables the detection of travelers using another person's travel documents and protects travelers from identity theft.

VIS makes it easier to determine which EU State is responsible for examining an asylum application and to examine such applications.

VIS assists in preventing, detecting and investigating terrorist offences and other serious criminal offences.