



European  
Commission

# A STRONGER, MORE EFFICIENT AND SECURE EU VISA POLICY

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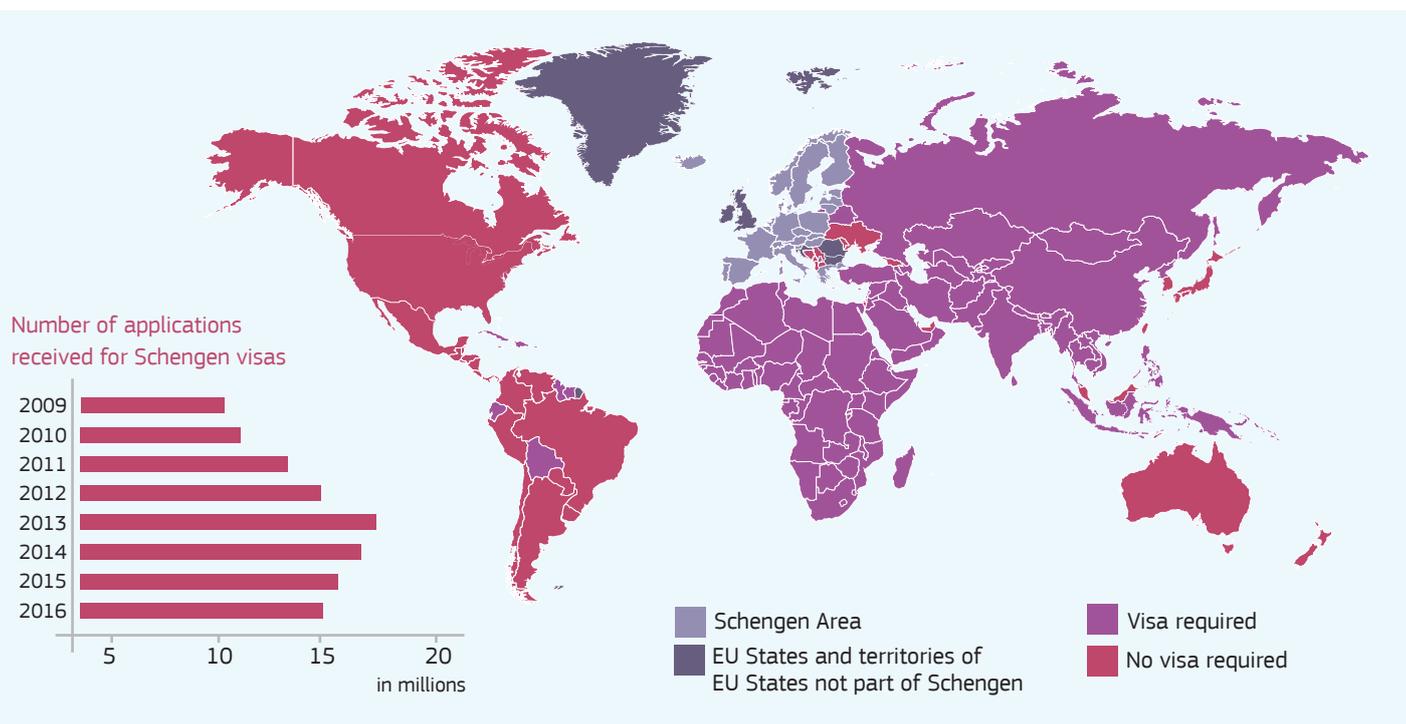
The Member States of the European Union are among the world's leading tourist destinations – in 2017 alone, over 14 million Schengen visas were issued to travellers visiting the EU. The common EU visa policy makes travelling to the European Union for tourism or business purposes easier. This has a positive impact on the EU's economy and growth, people-to-people contacts and cultural exchanges.

However, lengthy and cumbersome procedures can deter tourists from travelling to Europe, affecting the EU's economy negatively. In addition, increased security concerns, challenges linked to migration and new opportunities deriving from technological developments call for an update of the visa policy - the visa rules have not changed since the EU Visa Code entered into force in 2010.

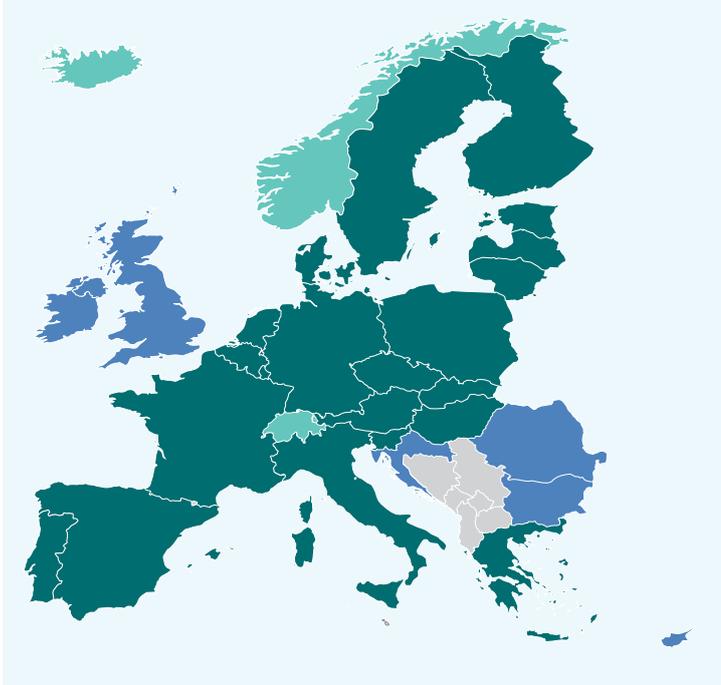
The revised visa rules will allow the EU to better respond to these new and emerging challenges, while at the same time make it easier for legitimate travellers to visit the EU.

## WHO NEEDS A VISA TO TRAVEL TO THE EU?

Currently, citizens from 105 non-EU countries or entities are required to hold a visa when travelling to the Schengen area for short stay visits.



## WHERE CAN TRAVELLERS GO WITH A SCHENGEN VISA?



A Schengen visa allows travellers to visit:

- ▶ the 26 countries of the Schengen area for tourism or business purposes;
- ▶ for a maximum duration of 90 days in any 180-day period.

The Schengen area consists of:

- EU Schengen States
- Non-EU Schengen States

Some EU States are not part of the Schengen area:

- EU States not part of Schengen

## HOW WILL THE NEW RULES MAKE THE EU VISA POLICY MORE EFFICIENT AND SECURE?



### SIMPLIFIED VISA APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Travellers will benefit from easier, more flexible, and faster procedures through:

- **Easier applications:** In most cases, applicants will have the possibility to submit their application directly from their country of residence. Where available, they may also fill in and sign the application form electronically.
- **Family friendly:** Minors between 6 and 18 years old may be exempted from the visa fee.
- **Better advance planning:** Travellers will be able to submit their visa applications up to 6 months ahead of the planned trip, instead of the current 3 months.

### EASIER TRAVELLING FOR FREQUENT VISITORS

Regular travellers with positive visa histories will no longer have to apply for a new visa every time they travel to the EU. The new rules will ensure that travellers with a positive visa history applying for subsequent visas can benefit from:

- Multiple-entry visas allowing for repeated visits to the EU.
- Clearer rules regarding the period of validity of multiple-entry visas, starting from 1 year up to a maximum of 5 years.

Travellers' fulfilment of entry conditions will be thoroughly and repeatedly verified in all cases.



## REINFORCING THE SECURITY OF THE VISA PROCEDURE



The cost of applying for a Schengen visa – currently €60 has remained unchanged since 2006. A moderate increase of the fee to €80 will ensure that Member States have sufficient financial resources to:

- Maintain a wide consular coverage worldwide;
- Upgrade IT equipment and software and provide faster and user friendly procedures for visa applicants;
- Improve the capacity to detect potential security and irregular migration risks during the visa application procedures, including by reinforcing consular staff to speed up the application process.

This will also bring the fee in line with the level it would have reached based on the general EU-wide inflation rate since 2006. By international standards, the fee will remain comparatively low, with equivalent visa applications costing for example €125 for China, €133 for the United States, €100 for New Zealand and €90 for India.

## IMPROVING COOPERATION ON RETURN AND READMISSION



Whilst the visa reform aims to facilitate travel for legitimate travellers, the new rules will also better address challenges linked to irregular migration. The European Union has engaged with countries of origin to improve cooperation on return and readmission, but EU Member States are still experiencing difficulties in returning irregular migrants.

With the new visa rules, the conditions for processing visa applications (for example on processing time, visa fees or the issuance of multiple-entry visas) can be adapted depending on whether a non-EU country cooperates satisfactorily on the return and readmission of irregular migrants.

The new rules will not call into question the right to submit an application for a visa or to be granted a visa.