

Visa information system: Council adopts regulation to strengthen checks of visa applicants



In response to changing migration and security challenges, the EU is improving its Visa Information System (VIS), a tool used by authorities of the member states to register and check persons applying for a short-stay visa to enter the Schengen area. The Council today adopted a regulation amending the Visa Information System. The legal act now needs to be adopted by the European Parliament and signed before being published in the EU Official Journal.

The main aims of the amending regulation are to:

- further strengthen the security of the short-stay visa procedure
- include long-stay visas and residence permits in the VIS database
- ensure interoperability between the VIS and other relevant EU systems and databases

In recent years the EU has consistently worked to improve controls of those entering the Schengen area, through the adoption of the travel authorisation system (ETIAS), the entry/exit system and the interoperability of databases. The update to the VIS is the next step in this direction. The new rules will allow for better checks of visa applicants to identify those who may pose a security threat or risk abusing our migration rules.

Eduardo Cabrita, Minister for Home Affairs of Portugal

Under the new rules, the VIS will not only include information on short-stay visas as before, but also cover long-stay visas and residence permits, as these documents allow for free movement within the Schengen area. In addition, a scan of the biographical data page of the travel document will be included in the VIS.

Before issuing a visa or residence permit, the new rules will allow for enhanced background checks on the applicant in relevant security and migration databases. The VIS would automatically launch a query of these databases and any hits will be manually verified and followed up by the competent authority.

Background

The Visa Information System, which has been operational since 2011, is a database to facilitate the short-stay visa procedure. It helps visa, border,

asylum and migration authorities to check third-country nationals who need a short-stay visa to travel to the Schengen area. It connects member states' consulates around the world, as well as all external border crossing points. On 16 May 2018, the Commission submitted a proposal to amend the VIS regulation.

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