

## Information Guide



# Travelling in Europe for Non-EU Citizens

## The Schengen Area

The Schengen area is currently composed of 22 EU countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden - as well as 4 non-EU countries: Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

In these countries the Schengen Visa Scheme is in force. This scheme allows people to travel across the countries within the Schengen area using only one visa obtained from any of the Schengen area member countries subject to its validity and timeframe.

The Schengen area covers the majority of European countries, except for the United Kingdom and countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Ireland (soon to be part of the agreement). These countries are therefore not part of the Schengen Visa Scheme. As a result, a non-EU citizen in the UK or Ireland wishing to visit one or more countries within the Schengen area will need a Schengen visa.

## The Schengen Visa Scheme

Regarding the nature and/or purpose of the travel, there are several types of Schengen visa issued by the designated embassy or consulate.

### 1. Uniform Schengen Visa (USV)

The Uniform Schengen Visa is a permit from one of the Schengen area member countries to transit or reside in the desired territory for a certain period of time up to a maximum of 90 days per six month period starting from the date of entry.

According to the purpose of travelling the Uniform Schengen Visa is divided into three categories, "A", "B" and "C":

- **"A" category – Airport transit visa:** allows its holder to travel through the international zone of the Schengen country airport without actually entering the Schengen country. An airport transit visa is mandatory for citizens travelling from one non-Schengen state to another non-Schengen state through a change of flights at a Schengen country airport.
- **"B" category – Transit visa:** allows its holder to transit within no more than 5 days through more than one Schengen country by car, coach or plane on the way to a non-Schengen country.

- **“C” category – Short-term visa:** allows its holder to reside in a Schengen country for a certain period of time depending on the visa validity.

## 2. Limited Territorial Validity Visa (LTV)

This type of visa allows you to travel only in the Schengen state that has issued the visa or in some other cases, in the Schengen states specifically mentioned when applying for the visa. The visa is invalid for any other Schengen country not specified beforehand.

## 3. National Visa

The national visa or “D” category is granted to certain individuals who are going to be studying, working or permanently residing in one of the Schengen countries. The national visa can be for a single entry, granted for people who will be residing in the Schengen country for a certain period of time or for a sole purpose, after which they will return to their country of origin.

You can also apply for a **multiple entry visa**, which allows you to enter the Schengen area several times. This means that you can return to your country of origin and re-enter the Schengen area again at a later date. Please note that not all embassies issue multiple entry visas.

A **single-entry visa** allows you to enter the Schengen area only once for a certain period of time. Once you leave the Schengen area the visa validity expires, even if the time period has not run out.

## Where to apply for a Schengen visa

- If you will be visiting only one country in the Schengen area, apply to the embassy or consulate of that country.
- If you plan to visit two or more countries in the Schengen area, apply to the embassy or consulate of the country which represents your main destination, namely the country in which you plan to spend the most time during your trip.
- If you are visiting two or more countries in the Schengen area without having a main destination, apply to the embassy or the consulate of the country where you will first enter the Schengen area.

## How to apply for a Schengen visa

Application procedures differ from country to country. Check the website of the relevant embassy or consulate, or contact them, to get information about the application process, eligibility criteria, visa fees and documentation required.

Every person that wishes to apply for a visa in order to visit a Schengen member country is obliged to apply in person, gather all the mandatory documents and first and foremost accordingly to the rules and regulations, make an appointment in advance. The person that will be applying for a visa has to make sure he/she holds a valid passport, namely a passport that has been issued no longer than ten years ago and has a period of six months until its expiration date.

## What documents will you need to provide?

Documents required may differ slightly from country to country, but they usually include:

- A completed application form.
- Original passport or travel document, as well as copies of previous visas.
- Recent passport photographs. The exact number required varies between countries.

- Proof of the purpose of your visit, e.g. invitations from friends or conference organisers, or hotel reservations. You must have a copy of the reservation for the return ticket for the time you intend to be travelling. It is not recommended to buy the ticket before getting the visa, unless absolutely necessary.
- Evidence of sufficient funds to complete your trip, e.g. bank statements or credit card statements.
- Evidence of student status. You will need to provide documentary evidence from your institution confirming that you are a full-time student.
- Medical insurance to cover the entire trip. Health insurance policy has to cover expenses up to €30,000, the sum depending on the number of days you will be staying, and also it has to be valid in all Schengen countries.

Note that most Schengen states require your student visa to be valid for a certain period beyond the end of your trip. The length of time required will vary, but may be as long as six months.

## Visa fees

The Schengen visa fee is mandatory and non-refundable, even in the event a visa is denied. It is advisable to check the current visa fee and which forms of payment are acceptable before submitting your application. Fees can usually be paid in the designated consulate or embassy via cash, debit or credit card. Please note that some consulates may not allow you to pay by credit card.

Generally, the regular fee (in euros) is:

- Airport transit visa €60.00
- Short stay Schengen visa, less than 90 days €60.00
- Long stay visa, more than 90 days €99.00

The visa fee is waived for applicants belonging to one or more categories, including school pupils, postgraduate students and accompanying teachers who undertake stays for the purpose of study or educational training; as well as representatives of non-profit organisations aged 25 years or less participating in seminars, conferences, sports, cultural or educational events organised by non-profit organisations.

Nationals of countries with which the EU has concluded [Visa Facilitation Agreements](#) shall pay a fee of €35.00.

## How long will the application take?

As a general rule, a decision is taken by the Consulate within 15 days. This period may, in individual cases, be extended up to 30 days and, exceptionally, 60 days, if a more detailed examination of your application and/or additional documents is required. It is therefore essential that you plan any trip to the Schengen area well in advance.

The application must, in principle, be submitted to the consulate **at least 15 days before the intended journey and cannot be lodged earlier than three months before the start of the intended journey**. You may have to book an appointment before lodging the application.

The decision to refuse a Schengen visa and the reasons for the refusal are notified to the applicant using a standard form. The decision to refuse the visa must include the reasons on which the refusal was based, and the procedures and deadlines for submitting an appeal. For information on appeal procedures, please contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Schengen state you intend to visit.

## Useful links

- [Cardiff University Student Support Centre: Visas and Immigration](#)  
Information and advice from experienced International Student Advisers, including 'How to apply for a Schengen visa'.
- [EUROPA: Summaries of EU Legislation: The Schengen Area and Cooperation](#)  
Information on the history and development of the Schengen area.
- [BBC News: Q&A: Schengen Agreement](#)  
Questions and answers about the Schengen Agreement, including a map of the Schengen member states.
- [Schengen Visa Services: Schengen Visa Application](#)  
Information about the Schengen Visa Scheme, including a guide to the visa application in English, Spanish and Chinese.
- [European Commission: DG Migration and Home Affairs: Schengen, Borders & Visas](#)  
Related legislation, documents, information and updates on the Schengen Area. Schengen Area: Frequently Asked Questions: [PDF](#)
- [EUROPA: Your Europe: Travel documents for non-EU nationals](#)  
Includes information on travel documents for non-EU citizens.

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**June 2015**

Original compilation: 2011 (Ian Thomson)  
Revised: 2013 (Alessandro Sitzia)