



EUROPEAN UNION

OFFICE TO HONG KONG AND MACAO

Introduction of the Visa Information System (VIS) on 12 October 2015

As from 12 October 2015 all applicants for a Schengen visa will be required to provide their biometric data (10 fingerprints and a digital photograph) when applying. It is a simple procedure that only takes a few minutes. The implementation of the VIS is part of the gradual worldwide deployment, which began in 2011.

When applying for the first time, all applicants will have to appear in person at a consulate or an external service provider. Biometric data, along with the data provided in the Schengen visa application form, will be recorded in the VIS database and stored for five years. Frequent travellers will only have to complete the procedure once within this period, as the fingerprints will be copied from the previous application file in the VIS.

The VIS will contain all Schengen visa applications and the decisions taken by any Schengen State's consulate. This will facilitate visa application procedures and checks at external border of the European Union, as well as enhance security. The recourse to biometric technology will protect visa applicants better against identity theft and prevent false identifications, which in certain cases lead to a refusal of a visa or entry to a person who is entitled to enter. This will also allow to establish more easily the lawful use of previous visas and applicants' travel history (e.g. when applying for a multiple-entry visa).

Exemptions from the fingerprinting requirement are provided for a limited number of applicants, including children under the age of twelve and persons for whom the collection of fingerprints is physically impossible. Diplomatic passport holders are not exempted.

Schengen visas issued before 12 October remain valid.