



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

Delegation of the European Union to  
the Republic of Lebanon

Beirut, 24 April 2012

### **Press Release**

## **Schengen countries launch the new Visa Information System (VIS) in Lebanon on 10 May 2012**

Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon, informed today H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Adnan Mansour, of the introduction in Lebanon of the new Visa Information System (VIS), which will facilitate visa procedures for the 26 Schengen countries\*.

As of 10 May 2012, Lebanese applicants at consular posts need to appear in person for the collection of the biometric data: ten fingerprints and a photograph are collected from persons applying for a visa. For subsequent applications within five years, fingerprints can be re-used from the VIS file unless there is a reasonable doubt regarding the identity of the applicant, while new photographs may be required.

Certain categories of applicants are exempt from the requirement to give fingerprints, including: children under the age of 12; persons for whom fingerprinting is physically impossible; Heads of State and members of national governments, and members of their official delegation when invited for an official purpose.

The VIS contains biographic and biometric data of persons applying for a Schengen visa. Its main objectives are to facilitate visa application procedures, checks at external borders and the exchange of data between Schengen countries on visa applications, as well as to assist in the fight against fraud and to enhance security.

The VIS is progressively being rolled out in the different regions of the world, starting with North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) on 11 October 2011, the Near East (Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) on 10 May 2012, and the Gulf region (Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen) on 2 October 2012.

For more information: <http://ec.europa.eu/vis>

### **\* Background**

- A Schengen visa is a visa for the Schengen area which comprises 26 countries: 22 European Union Member States (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden) as well as 4 associated non-EU countries (Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). These countries require visitors to obtain a common visa, which permits entry to the whole Schengen area.
- Uniform Schengen visas for stays up to 3 months (short stays) are issued on the basis of the rules set out in the Visa Code and are, in general, valid for travel to and within the Schengen area.

- In Lebanon 13 Consulates (11 EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland) deal with visa applications for the 26 Schengen countries.
- The Schengen agreement, which was signed in the Schengen town in Luxembourg, entered into force in 1995.