

Schengen Area

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

These FAQs are general in nature. The information given does not take personal or specific circumstances into account and should therefore not be considered as constituting personal, professional or legal advice to the user. Users requiring personal or specific advice should consult the relevant departments in the Member States.

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1 Which countries are part of the Schengen Area?

The Schengen area covers 26 countries ("Schengen States") without border controls between them. These countries are: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

2 What is a Schengen visa?

The visa takes the form of a sticker that is affixed to the travel document. A Schengen visa is an authorisation issued by a Schengen State for:

- A transit through or an intended stay in the territory of the Schengen States of a duration of no more than 90 days in any 180 days period ("short stay visa"),
- A transit through the international transit areas of airports of the Schengen States ("airport transit visa"). Generally the visa issued allows you to visit any of the Schengen States during the same trip, within the validity of the visa.

A Schengen visa is not appropriate, if you wish to remain in a Schengen country for longer than 90 days, take up employment or establish a business, trade or profession.

3 Do I need a visa to enter a Schengen State?

To find out if you need a visa to enter a Schengen State, you can consult the overview on our [website](#).

1. Select your nationality and it will be indicated if you need a visa or not.
2. If you need a visa, you should select your country of residence and Schengen State of destination.
3. The consulate where you should apply will then be indicated and there will be a link to the website providing detailed information.

Please note, this information is not exhaustive and is intended as guidance only.

4 Where do I submit my visa application?

You must lodge the application for a Schengen visa at the Consulate of the country that you intend to visit, or – if you intend to visit more than one Schengen State, the Consulate of the country where you will spend the longest period.

If you intend to visit several Schengen States and the stays will be of equal length, you must apply at the Consulate of the country whose external borders you will cross first when entering the Schengen area.

As a general rule, you must apply for a visa at the Consulate with territorial competence for the country in which you legally reside.

For more detailed information, please visit the [Where and how to apply](#) section of the website.

5 How long is a Schengen visa valid?

The Schengen visa is a short stay visa. The definition of “short stay” is a stay of "90 days in any 180 days period". This means that the duration of stay is of maximum 90 days, in a period of 180 days.

The precise length of validity your visa is indicated on the visa sticker under the heading “Duration of visit”.

With a single-entry visa you can enter the Schengen area only once. This is indicated on the visa sticker by "1". A multiple-entry visa which allows for several entries during the validity of the visa. This is indicated on the visa sticker by "MULT".

You will find information on how to read your visa sticker on this page of our website: [How to read the visa sticker](#).

6 How long does the visa procedure take?

As a general rule, once a Schengen visa application is submitted to the Consulate, a decision is taken by the Consulate within 15 calendar days. This period may be extended up to 30 days or 60 days. More information is available on our website on this page: [Processing of a visa application](#)

7 How long before the start of the intended visit should I apply for a visa?

Applications can be lodged no more than three months before the start of the intended trip. It is advisable to lodge an application at least 15 calendar days before the intended visit. However it is also recommended that you lodge the visa application taking into account national holidays of the country of destination and of application. Holders of a multiple-entry visa (valid for a period of at least six months) may lodge the application for a new visa before the expiry of that visa.

8 How much does it cost to apply for a visa?

The visa fee of EUR 60,- must be paid when you submit the visa application. Children from the age of six years and below the age of 12 years shall pay a visa fee of EUR 35.

Nationals of countries with which the EU has concluded Visa Facilitation Agreements shall pay a fee of EUR 35. Please consult the list [on our website](#).

The visa fee is waived for applicants belonging to one of the following categories:

- children under six years;
- school pupils, students, postgraduate students and accompanying teachers who undertake stays for the purpose of study or educational training;
- researchers from third countries travelling for the purpose of carrying out scientific research
- representatives of non-profit organisations aged 25 years or less participating in seminars, conferences, sports, cultural or educational events organised by non-profit organisations.

Member States also apply other optional visa fees waivers. You can obtain detailed information on that from the consulate where you intend to apply.

If you submit the application at an external service provider, you will be charged an additional service fee.

9 My passport expires in two months' time. Can I apply for a visa?

In principle you cannot. It is a requirement that the expiration date of your passport is 3 months AFTER your return from the Schengen State. However, in justified cases of emergency, the Consulate may deviate from this rule.

10 Which documents do I need to provide when submitting my visa application?

Information on the documents to be submitted can be found on the following page of our website: [Required documents](#).

11 My visa has been issued by, for example, the German Consulate. Could I use this visa to make a trip to other Schengen States?

Yes. According to the Schengen agreement, the Schengen visa is generally valid for all the countries in the Schengen area. Please note, however, that you always have to apply at the consulate of the country which is your primary destination (see FAQ no 4). The territorial validity of your visa is indicated on the visa sticker: "Schengen States". If the visa only has limited territorial validity this is indicated by "LTV" and an indication of the Schengen States for which it is valid.

12 Can I leave the Schengen area and return again with my Schengen visa?

Schengen visas may allow for a single-entry or multiple entries. With a single-entry visa you can enter the Schengen area only once. This is indicated on the visa sticker by "1".

A multiple-entry visa which allows for several entries during the validity of the visa. This is indicated on the visa sticker by "MULT".

13 I have a valid long stay visa/residence permit for a country that is part of the Schengen area. Do I need another visa to travel to other Schengen states?

No. As a long stay visa or a residence permit issued by a Schengen State allows, you may travel or stay in other Schengen States, while respecting the maximum duration of a “short stay” (a stay of "90 days in any 180 days period").

14 Do I have to present any other document at the Schengen external borders apart from my travel document with the Schengen visa?

The short-stay visa does not automatically entitle you to enter the Schengen area. At border (or during other controls) you may have to show the visa but also provide additional documentation, for example information on that you have sufficient means to cover the stay and the return trip. It is therefore recommended that you carry with you copies of the documents which you presented when applying for the visa (e.g. letters of invitation, travel confirmations, other documents stating the purpose of your stay).

15 I have two connecting flights, with at a Schengen state airport. Do I have to apply for an airport transit visa or a short stay visa?

It is important to distinguish 2 situations:

- transit through the international transit area of an airport (onward journey where you do not leave the international transit area of the airport)
- transit via the territory of a Member State albeit limited to an airport (onward journey where you leave the international transit area of the airport).

An airport transit visa (ATV) authorises you to pass through the international transit zone at an airport located on the territory of the Schengen State and to await a connecting flight to a non-Schengen country. The ATV does not allow you to enter the Schengen territory (to stay at a hotel or to take an onwards flight to another Schengen State, for example).

Traveling to a Schengen State via another Schengen State airport is not considered an airport transit neither is travelling to a country via 2 Schengen state airports. All flights between two or more Schengen States are considered to be «domestic» flights. Depending on your nationality, you might need a short stay visa as you enter the Schengen area – even if the stay of only lasts a few hours.

16 Can my visa be extended?

When applying for a visa extension, you must show that due to force majeure or for humanitarian reasons it is not possible for you to leave the territory of Member States before the expiry of your visa or the authorized period of stay.

The visa can only be extended if you have stayed less than 90 days the Schengen area, in the course of the past six months, and if your current visa is not expired.

Check with the Home Affairs authorities of the Schengen State for identifying which authority can extend your visa.

17 My visa has been refused. What should I do?

You may appeal against this decision. The decision to refuse a Schengen visa and the reasons for the refusal are notified 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.

You are free to re-apply again if your application has been refused earlier. However, it is recommended that you note the reasons for the earlier refusal before submitting a new application and make amendments, where applicable.

Link to Visa policy: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/index_en.htm