

Mobility: Immigration alert

June 2023



European Union

Online Schengen Visa application process to be launched

Executive summary

On 13 June 2023, the European Council and the European Parliament provisionally agreed upon rules to digitalize the Schengen Visa application process, which will allow eligible individuals to apply for a visa online. The new system would replace the existing visa sticker regime, wherein Schengen Visas are printed and placed in applicants' passports.

Background

In April 2022, the European Commission submitted a legislative proposal aimed at digitalizing the Schengen Visa application process. The COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a slowdown in visa operations as well as recent migration and security challenges, have created the need for digital procedures.

Key developments

The proposed digitalization is intended to simplify the Schengen Visa application and issuance process by limiting in-person consular applications and increasing security in the Schengen Area by reducing the risk of falsification and theft of visa stickers.

Once the new rules are approved, a new online platform will be launched, which will allow eligible individuals to file Schengen Visa applications and pay the processing fees online. The platform will then forward the application to the immigration authorities of the relevant country, and applicants will be notified of the outcome electronically. Visas will then be issued in digital format, as a 2D barcode, cryptographically signed.

The online application process will not be available to individuals who file initial Schengen Visa applications or applications based on a new travel document (e.g., renewed passports), or are required to submit biometric data as part of the application process (e.g., in cases where the biometric data they provided as part of a previous application is no longer valid).

The agreement must first be approved by the EU Member States before the European Council and European Parliament can implement the new digitalization rules.

Impact on employers

The new online system is expected to streamline and expedite the Schengen visa application and issuance processes.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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