

Schengen area: digitalisation of the visa procedure

2022/0132B(COD) - 07/12/2023 - Final act

PURPOSE: to introduce new rules that will enable people planning to travel to the Schengen area to apply for a visa online.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EU) 2023/2685 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1683/95 as regards the digitalisation of the visa procedure.

CONTENT: to make the Schengen visa application process smoother and more effective for third-country nationals and Member State authorities, it is necessary to allow Schengen visa applications to be lodged online, thereby making full use of recent legal and technological developments.

Under the new rules, visas will be issued in a **uniform digital format only, as a 2D barcode**, and contain the facial image of the visa holder. The 2D barcode will be cryptographically signed by the Country Signing Certificate Authority of the issuing Member State. This will reduce the security risks associated with counterfeiting and theft of visa stickers.

The Commission will adopt **implementing acts** to establish technical specifications for the uniform digital format for visas relating to: (a) technical standards and methods for: (i) encoding the data contained in the digital visa; and (b) the facial image; (c) specifications for generating the printable version of the digital visa.

Once the implementing acts as regards the technical specifications have been adopted and eu-LISA has declared the successful completion of comprehensive tests, the Commission will adopt a decision, by means of an implementing act, **setting the date** from which Member States will issue digital visas.

By **1 December 2026**, and every year thereafter until the decision of the Commission setting the date from which Member States are to issue digital visas, the Commission will submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the progress with regard to the implementation of this Regulation.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 27.12.2023. The Regulation will apply from the date set by the Commission.