How is personal data protected?

Each visa application file is stored in VIS for no more than five years. Each Schengen country is solely responsible for amending data pertaining to the applications they submit to VIS. Each is responsible for ensuring the security of data contained in their respective national systems before and during transmission. Each ensures the security and physical protection of data it receives from VIS. Unauthorised persons are denied access to national systems to prevent the unauthorised processing of data in VIS.

Any person has the right to be informed about his/her data in VIS and any person may request that inaccurate data about him/her be corrected or that unlawfully recorded data be deleted. This process is managed by the appointed national authority and all requests have to go through them.

Fast facts

- **26 countries use VIS**
- **Worldwide deployment of the system by mid-2015 based on a gradual regional roll-out**
- **Up to 100 000 visas to be issued each day in 2015**
- **Processing power of up to 450 000 transactions per hour by 2015**
- **3 to 5 seconds — average time of search at a border post**

eu-LISA: supporting safe free movement

eu-LISA is the European Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. We manage IT systems that help make free and safe movement of people in the EU a reality.

The agency provides 24/7 operational management not only for VIS, the IT system that allows Schengen countries to share visa information, but also for:

- the **Schengen Information System** (SIS II) — the largest information system for public security and law enforcement cooperation in Europe; and
- **Eurodac** — a centralised EU database that collects and processes the digitalised fingerprints of asylum.

eu-LISA has offices in Tallinn, Estonia and Strasbourg, France.

Find out more

Visit: *www.eulisa.europa.eu*

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VIS
Visa Information System

eu-LISA: supporting secure and hassle-free travel in the EU

Publications Office

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What is the Visa Information System?

The Visa Information System (VIS) allows countries that are part of the Schengen area to exchange information on visas to avoid 'visa shopping' and help fight illegal immigration. VIS helps make the Schengen area safe and in turn improves the European Union's (EU) internal security.

The Schengen area has no internal border controls, making free movement at the heart of Europe a reality. It covers all EU countries except the UK, Ireland, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Croatia. It also covers non-EU countries Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

What eu-LISA does

eu-LISA is the European agency that manages large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice. The agency provides the technical and operational expertise to ensure that European citizens and non-EU citizens have the freedom to live, work and travel across the Schengen area.
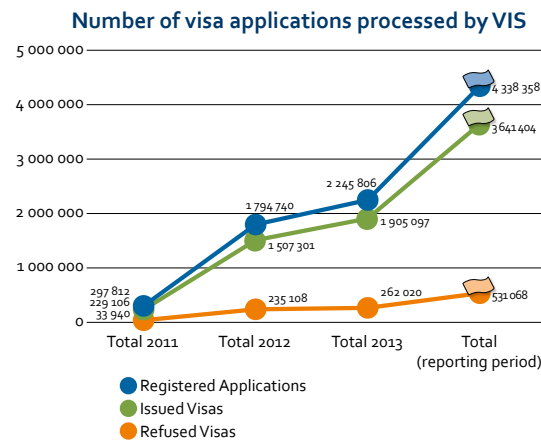
The agency keeps VIS operational and in service 24/7, allowing national authorities to constantly exchange and share information. The system's overall processing capacity improved after a major upgrade in April 2014 and more development work is planned in 2014–15.

eu-LISA is responsible for carrying out security measures, training on the technical use of the systems, producing statistics and reports, and monitoring relevant research.

VIS's added value

The system offers the following benefits:

- clearer and quicker procedures for travellers needing a visa to enter the Schengen area;
- more security and protection for travellers through the use of biometric technology, which helps to detect travellers using another person's documents and protects travellers from identity theft;
- improved consular cooperation and consultation between central visa authorities;
- reduced visa shopping and fraud risk;
- identification of persons who may not, or may no longer, fulfil the conditions to enter or stay in the Schengen area;
- facilitation of checks at external border crossing points and inside Schengen countries.

Number of visa applications processed by VIS

	Total 2011	Total 2012	Total 2013	Total (reporting period)
Registered Applications	297 812	1 794 740	2 245 806	4 338 358
Issued Visas	229 106	1 507 301	1 905 097	3 641 404
Refused Visas	33 940	235 108	262 020	531 068

● Registered Applications
● Issued Visas
● Refused Visas

Source: Report on the technical functioning of VIS, eu-LISA, 2014

Who can access the system?

Access to the system is limited to:

- visa authorities;
- authorities responsible for carrying out checks at external borders;
- asylum authorities;
- national law enforcement authorities and Europol, for the purposes of preventing, detecting and investigating terrorism and serious crime.

What information is stored?

The system records:

- applicant history related to visas requested, issued, refused, annulled, revoked or extended;
- photographs in digital format;
- fingerprints in digital format;
- links to a person's previous application(s) or different visa applications submitted, for example, by groups travelling to a conference.

VIS in action

Philip who is not an EU citizen would like to visit Bilbao, Spain for 10 days and also make a day-trip to Biarritz, France during that time. All he needs to do is to apply for a visa that will allow him to travel freely to all Schengen countries.

Philip goes to a Spanish consulate to request his visa. The consulate then creates the application file in VIS, by entering his biographical data, including a photograph and his fingerprints in digital format. The authority checks in VIS whether a previous application has already been registered for Philip. If this is the case, they link this new file to the existing one.

The visa authority also consults VIS for previous decisions relating to this application, for example, whether the request has been annulled, revoked, extended or shortened.

Philip's application is also checked against the Schengen Information System (SIS II) and national databases. This step helps to identify whether, for example, the applicant has been refused entry into the Schengen area. Depending on the applicant's nationality, other Schengen countries may be asked to check the application.

If Philip meets all the requirements he can return to the consular post to collect his visa, which is affixed to his passport.

When he arrives at the airport, the border authorities will carry out all necessary checks against VIS and will search the system using the visa reference number. They will also verify his fingerprints to confirm his identity and/or the authenticity of the visa and/or whether the conditions for entry to the Schengen area are fulfilled.