

16 June 2025

Towards a modern and holistic EU Visa Policy

The common EU Visa Policy is a key component in the effective functioning of the Schengen area, fostering people-to-people contacts while mitigating migration and security risks. It plays an essential role in a well-managed migration system and serves as a powerful tool in relations with third countries.

Member States have called for a more strategic approach to EU visa policy, particularly to ensure a balanced consideration of both Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs interests, where migratory and security aspects are duly taken into account. We who have signed this paper, fully support the Council conclusions adopted on 12 December 2024 and expect the forthcoming EU Visa Strategy, as announced by the European Commission, to be guided by these conclusions. We also welcome the Commission's commitment, as outlined in the new EU Internal Security Strategy, to fully integrate security considerations into the upcoming Visa Strategy.

Moreover, we consider the following elements essential for the forthcoming strategy:

1. A comprehensive overview of visa liberalisation criteria and grounds for suspension

Article 1 of the Visa Regulation outlines, in a non-exhaustive manner, the criteria for granting visa exemptions. These include, for example, illegal immigration, public policy and security, economic benefits, and the Union's external relations with relevant third countries. Article 8(2) lists the grounds

for suspension, which are primarily linked to migration risks and security concerns.

While the revised visa suspension mechanism takes important steps toward aligning the criteria for visa liberalisation with the grounds for suspension, significant discrepancies remain. The criteria for visa liberalisation should correspond more closely to the grounds for suspension, be as specific and measurable as possible and fully take into account the comprehensive impact on Member States, including regarding internal security. Inspiration could be drawn from the visa policies of the United States and Canada. For instance, the U.S. Visa Waiver Program assesses countries individually based on specific criteria and their potential impact on security and law enforcement interests.

2. Strengthened monitoring and evaluation of all visa-free countries

Currently, monitoring is primarily conducted through the report on the functioning of the visa suspension mechanism, which focuses on countries that have undergone a visa liberalisation dialogue and a few others. Visa-free travel is a privilege, and proper follow-up is necessary to ensure that it is not abused and that the criteria continue to be met.

The ambition should be higher, with monitoring extended to all visa-free countries, particularly those that may pose migration or security risks to the Schengen area, whilst ensuring that administrative burdens are minimized. Again, the U.S. Visa Waiver Program offers a useful model, where each participating country undergoes biennial evaluations and may lose its status if requirements are no longer fulfilled.

3. Revision of the Article 25a mechanism

As part of a broader revision of the Visa Code, the Article 25a mechanism should be reviewed with the aim of streamlining and enhancing its efficiency. Decisions should continue to be made jointly by Member States and implemented in a harmonised manner, which is a key strength of the mechanism.

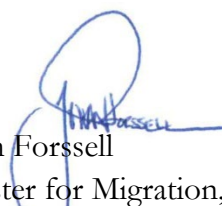
The mechanism could be further strengthened by building on existing measures, introducing more targeted actions to incentivize enhanced readmission cooperation, and clarifying the procedures for both imposing and lifting restrictions. It should also be explored whether a lack of cooperation on returns could be considered a migration risk that justifies the refusal of visa applications.

Furthermore, in line with EU's Internal Security Strategy, which highlights the need to incorporate security considerations into the EU's Visa Policy, the mechanism could include broader grounds for imposing restrictions, such as hybrid threats, the instrumentalization of migrants and significant deterioration to the Union's external relations with the relevant third country.


To ensure the effective use of visa policy as leverage, ongoing discussions and negotiations on visa liberalisation with new third countries should not be concluded until the strategy and any potential revisions to the legal framework have been adopted.

We remain fully committed to contributing to a stronger and more sustainable EU visa policy and look forward to close cooperation on this matter.

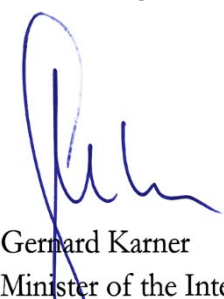
This paper is signed without prejudice to Norway's and Iceland's agreements with the European Union.




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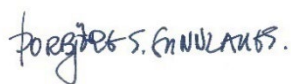
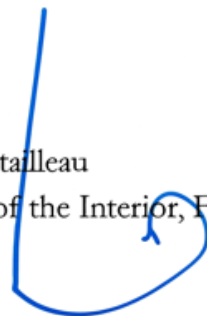


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